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Cherokee Miners on the Kern River

By Brian D. Dillon and Richard H. Dillon

Introduction

On Monday, May 25th, 1863, fifteen years after the California Gold Rush began, U.S. government scientist William H. Brewer left Keyesville on the Kern River for Millerton and noted that:

The hotel where we stopped showed a truly Californian mixture of races- the landlord was a Scotchman [sic], Chinese cooks, Negro waiter, and a Digger Indian as stable boy.¹

(Continued on Page 3)

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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 . . .

It's starting to no longer feel like summer! Thank you for reading the fourth and final *Branding Iron* of 2022. For this Fall issue, enjoy our main feature on the forgotten Cherokee argonauts of the California Gold Rush. This article has been forty years in the making, based on a short note by the late Living Legend Richard H. Dillon and expanded by former Sheriff Brian D. Dillon.

If you weren't here for the Rendezvous or any Roundups this season, you can catch up on what you missed through our meeting summaries written by yours truly and student Fellow Alan Griffin.

Craving Western history reading material? Check out two book reviews by Abe Hoffman and Joe Cavallo on titles you might consider adding to your collection.

Many hearty "Attaboys!" to our fantastic contributors who make *The Branding Iron* an enjoyable read for us all. If you would like to share your Western knowledge or experiences in *The Branding Iron*, feel free to get in touch. I would love to hear about your ideas for articles!

Happy Trails!

John Dillon
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Cover Page: Boom and Bust during the Kern River Gold Rush. **Figure 1 (Left):** Excited prospectors abandon their claims and rush off to the Kern River, a humorous sketch by J. Ross Browne, originally entitled *Going to Kern River*. **Figure 2 (Right):** A “skunked” miner after failing to strike it rich, another J. Ross Browne sketch, originally entitled *Returning from Kern River*. Both from Browne’s *Crusoe’s Island*, 1864: 312- 313.

The California Gold Rush attracted people from all the inhabited continents of the world. Many historians emphasize the *economic* peculiarities of that remarkable time and place, but its *anthropological* aspects were much more unique. By the time of Brewer’s 1863 visit, California had become the most cosmopolitan, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual place on the face of the earth. Every major biological group but one was present in California.² From the American East came thousands of Yankees and a few Africans (both slaves and free Blacks). They were joined by many thousands more gold-seekers from Asia, North, South, and Central America, Europe and even Australia. A fact lost upon most *Anglos* then and now was that many of the Spanish-speaking prospectors from Sonora, Chile, and Peru swarming over California’s gold fields were wholly or partially AmerIndian.

By 1863 the 200+ culturally-distinct California Indian groups that the gold-hunters had been confronting for the past 15 years had been lumped together under the pejorative term “diggers.” It was no accident that this insult rhymed with that other racially-charged word in daily use for Africans.³ The most intolerant Whites dismissed the California Natives as sub-human, and treated them accordingly.⁴ Historians are only now coming to grips with this unpleasant truth, one sadly familiar to California Indians since 1542 and to their anthropologist allies for the past 150+ years.⁵ California’s racial composition at the beginning of the Gold Rush was completely different from that at its end.⁶ In 1848 the majority population was AmerIndian, with only a small mixed-race (Indian-European, and Indian-Black) element, a tiny Caucasian component, and a handful of Blacks, all of them Spanish-speaking. Most *puro-blanco* Caucasians were recent arrivals, Mexican War soldiers, sailors or Marines, either *Yanquis* or Catholic Irish potato famine refugees in American

uniforms. Only a decade later, California’s Indian population was in steep decline, submerged by a tidal wave of Caucasian, Chinese, and Latin American gold-seekers with Whites now the majority.

Mainstream California historians often forget that much of the earliest placer mining made use of California Indian labor. Indian gold-panners were recruited by long-established *Californios* and recently-arrived *gringos* alike. They worked during the initial gold rush year of 1848 but with the influx of 49ers the following year, most such California Indian gold panning ceased. Now the majority of recently-arrived argonauts saw the local Indians as simply “in the way,” and forcibly moved them off the known and suspected gold-bearing streams where they had lived for centuries. Many 49ers had tangled with Indians while en route overland across the Plains or the Southwest to the gold fields. Some arrived convinced that *all* AmerIndians were dangerous and not to be trusted, and that differences between individual tribes were both unknowable and unimportant. Many White 49ers believed the inoffensive California Indians to be no different from the warlike Comanche or Apache and denied them any benefit of the doubt.

By the time of the Civil War, California’s Indians were overwhelmed by the new, White, majority. This demographic reversal occurred not just from the influx of White gold seekers, but also from attrition of the native population through endemic murders and occasional massacres. Millerton, Brewer’s 1863 stopping place, was the civilian descendant of Fort Miller,⁷ created during the Mariposa Indian War.⁸ This 1851 conflict was the direct result of miners encroaching upon Indian lands. The Mariposa Indian War was followed by the Tule River Indian War of 1856,⁹ then, on the other side of the Sierra Nevada, by the Paiute War of 1860,¹⁰ and by its offshoot the Owens Valley Indian War of 1862-65.¹¹ These specifically-named conflicts

were, unfortunately, only the most easily identifiable wide spots in the deadly path towards extinction the California Indians were being forced to travel. The monthly, weekly, sometimes even daily, murders of California Indians by homicidal miners went mostly unremarked and unrecorded.

Despite this human tragedy, and unappreciated by most historians, is the fact that some of the prospectors pouring into California in 1849 were not only *not* anti-Indian, but actually the most *American* people of all: AmerIndians from “back East.” One small group of Cherokee Indian 49ers carved out a niche in an out-of-the way corner of Gold Rush California, on the Kern River.

The Forks of the Kern

The southernmost major river of California’s Sierra Nevada is fed by snow-melt from Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states. On May 1st, 1776, Fray Francisco Garcés, exploring northwards from San Gabriel Mission, reached this watercourse where it emerged from the uplands and opened out into the broad expanse of the Great Central Valley. The Franciscan father described it as “a big river, the waters of which, beautiful and crystal-clear, make a great noise as they issue from the...[Sierra Nevada] range.”¹²

Not being able to swim, he crossed the water between two friendly Indians who “swam him over.” Garcés named it the *Río de San Felipe*. Almost exactly thirty years later, Fray Zalvidea renamed Garcés’ *Río de San Felipe* the *Río Porciúncula*.¹³ This name didn’t stick any more than the former one, for the very good reason that European visitation was infrequent and maps were virtually nonexistent. Gabriel Moraga, the most peripatetic of all of California’s early explorers, visited the river years before the first English-speaker did, and a few deserters from the coastal Spanish *presidios* and *escoltas* also reached it. Most of the very few Spanish-speakers familiar with the watercourse called it the *Río Bravo*, or Wild River.¹⁴

Until 1834 no European knew that this river actually arose as two major, paral-

lel, streams, nor that midway between the swampy San Joaquin Valley west of the mountains and the arid Owens Valley to their east, its two courses converged to form a snow-free *Shangri-La* locked away deep in the fastness of the Southern Sierra Nevada. That year Joseph Reddeford Walker became the first non-Indian to venture into the upper reaches of the drainage. Walker crossed the low pass through the Sierra Nevada that now bears his name from east to west,¹⁵ eleven years before John C. Fremont gave the name of his cartographer, Edward M. Kern, to the stream. Competing legends exist: one is that Kern almost drowned in his namesake river, the other that he never saw it, and was never anywhere near it.¹⁶ Today the land once known as the “Forks of the Kern” or the “Kern River Valley” is covered by the waters of man-made Lake Isabella.¹⁷

First People of California’s Kern River Country

The upland Kern River Valley was one of the most benign of all California environments for AmerIndian occupation. It also served as the most important prehistoric pathway through the mountains between the Owens Valley and Great Basin to the east, and the San Joaquin Valley and, eventually, the Pacific Littoral to the west. Its “pathway” status encouraged cooperation between completely different prehistoric neighbors. The Indians who called the Forks of the Kern home (Figure 4) are today known as the Tubatulabal, a generic term meaning “pine nut eaters” in recognition of one of their high-country staple foods. Three small bands made up this Uto-Aztecan group; the Palagewan, or the people on the Kern downstream below its forks, the Pahkanapil, on the upper Kern above its forks, and the Bankalachi, who lived on the western slope of the Greenhorn mountains. The language of each band was distinct enough to distinguish its speakers from the other two, yet in combination all were still so unlike those of their Uto-Aztecan neighbors to suggest a long period of separation and considerably antiquity of residence by the Tubatulabal



*Figure 3: CA-KER-25, a spectacular rock art boulder adjacent to the deep-cut course of the Kern River just below its forks. The rock art site lies within old Palegewan tribal territory. Prominently featured are dozens of depictions of atlatts, used in prehistoric California for thousands of years until superseded by the bow and arrow after approximately 600 A.D. A very young John Dillon, the 4th-generation historian of the Dillon family, and present-day editor of the *Branding Iron*, stands at right. B. Dillon photo, 1999.*

at the Forks of the Kern. Estimates of their pre-contact population range from a high of 1,000 by A. L. Kroeber to a low of only 300 by Erminie Voegelin. Splitting the difference, the combined population of all three bands may have been 500 to 700 souls.¹⁸

Bordering the Tubatulabal to their northwest were the Western Mono, called the Monache by their Yokuts neighbors, while to the north and northeast were the Owens Valley Paiute, sometimes called the Eastern Mono. Due east of the Tubatulabal lay the Koso Shoshone, also known as the Panamint and most recently as the Timbisha. The southeastern Tubatulabal territory took up the east-west stretch of the Kern River, the broad, flat, South Fork Valley, where their southern neighbors were the Kawaiisu, whose homeland lay south in the Tehachapis. All four of these neighboring groups, Mono, Paiute, Koso, and Kawaiisu spoke separate Uto-Aztec languages distantly related to the

Tubatulabal's. Neighboring the Tubatulabal to the west, however, were California First People of a completely different language family, the Foothill Yokuts, or Choinumni, and the Southern Valley Yokuts.¹⁹

Linguistic proximity to their Uto-Aztec neighbors notwithstanding, the Tubatulabal were culturally similar to their Yokuts friends and allies despite the very great difference in language between them. The Yokuts were welcomed as guests within the Tubatulabal high country during certain times of the year for plant food collecting, and the favor was returned to the Tubatulabal when they joined the Yokuts for joint fishing and bird hunting expeditions at times of high water down on the marshes and lake margins of the San Joaquin Valley. Both groups moved up and down the Kern River drainage quite amicably on a seasonal basis. After the invasion of miners in the 1850's, traditional residence and marriage patterns were disrupted,

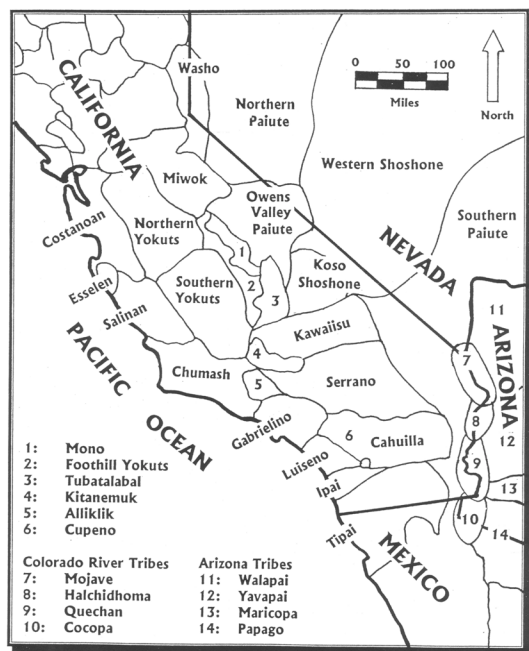


Figure 4: Ethnographic map of Southern California, with territorial divisions circa 1850. The Forks of the Kern River are in Tubatulabal territory (No. 3) at center. By B. Dillon 1998, after Kroeber (1924).

so much so that the Tubatulabal began to intermarry with other Indian groups, particularly with Yokuts, especially after both groups were forcibly removed to the Tule River Indian Reservation.²⁰

The Kern River “Rush”

Most present-day Americans have the impression that the California Gold Rush was a surge of prospectors towards a single destination during 1849. Indeed, most 49ers getting off the boat in San Francisco did head to the fabled *Mother Lode* of the Central Sierra Nevada foothills. But the 49ers were *latecomers*. Hundreds of others had been prospecting all over California since the Spring of 1848. The following year, as thousands more prospectors came every month, the easy pickings were soon exhausted, and new sources of mineral wealth had to be looked for. So the California Gold Rush became many small rushes, one after another, in many different places. In addition to the earliest strikes in the Mother Lode, there was also the Siskiyou

Strike at modern-day Yreka, up in the Cascade Mountains, the Trinity River and the Old Shasta Strikes in the Coast Ranges of the northwestern-most part of the state, the Mono, Coso, and Cerro Gordo Rushes east of the Sierran Crest, the San Bernardino Mountains and very late Cuyamaca rushes in the far southern end of the state, the Fraser River Rush of British Columbia in 1857-58,²¹ and, last but not least, the 1859 Comstock Silver Rush of Nevada, that finally sucked the life blood out of the California Gold Rush and brought it to an end.²² Well off the beaten track, more than a hundred miles to the south of the Southern Mines of Tuolumne County, on the Forks of the Kern River, one of the least-remembered of the many California gold “rushes” took place.

The Kern River drainage was one of the first California streams traversed by Anglo-American explorers, the legendary fur-trapping mountain men. But it escaped notice for the first few years that gold prospectors were fanning out all over California. Precise dating of the initial strike near what later became Keyesville remains contradictory.²³ The earliest date suggested is 1851, the latest 1854. Most historians accept that the first and most important “strike” was by the Cherokee Indian prospector Dickie Keyes in 1853, in *Greenhorn Gulch*, later called *Hogeye*, then, finally, renamed *Keyesville* in his honor.²⁴ Gold seekers were prospecting the Greenhorn Mountains even earlier, for by 1853 some were reported as “giving up” there and going elsewhere.²⁵

At this time the Forks of the Kern were still very much cartographic *terra incognita*. The Gibbes Map of 1852 is hopelessly scrambled, with the Forks of the Kern located down on the San Joaquin Valley floor instead of up in the mountains. This map also locates Walker’s Pass nowhere near the Kern River but far to its south, in the Tehachapis.²⁶ Two years later, the official 1854 State of California Map by R.A. Eddy correctly placed Walker’s Pass as the “gateway” to the Forks of the Kern, but still incorrectly showed this confluence in the San Joaquin Valley.²⁷ The Eddy map located two-year-old Visalia in the middle of what was then called the “Four Creeks” Delta but

no settlements of any kind were shown between Visalia and Los Angeles in either the San Joaquin Valley nor the Southern Sierra Nevada mountains or foothills. When A. S. Hallidie passed through Visalia in 1853 on his way to the Kern River diggings, he noted that “There were [only] three log cabins at Visalia, in one of which was a land office.”²⁸

The first good “color” was found to the west of the Kern River’s North Fork, in Greenhorn Gulch at high elevation, not down by the river itself. Late in 1854 two parties of prospectors from Los Angeles explored the Greenhorn Mountains, and by January 1855 were hauling water into the dry gulches to pan the rich deposits. Exaggerated reports of their finds triggered a mad rush into the Kern River country from the southern mines and from Los Angeles by February, 1855. An estimated 6,000 miners dropped everything, and rushed off to what was then Tulare County to try their luck, making their way over Greenhorn Mountain to the Forks of the Kern. J. Ross Browne, the immensely talented Gold Rush diarist and cartoonist, noted that:

The Kern River excitement threatened for a time to depopulate the northern portion of the state. The stages [Figure 1] from Marysville and Sacramento were crowded day after day, and new lines...[ran] from Los Angeles, Stockton, San José and...other points...²⁹

Harris Newmark, the most remarkable chronicler of 1850s Los Angeles, recalled the initial excitement of the Kern River Rush:

Gold was discovered...in 1854 [sic]; and by the early spring of 1855 exaggerated accounts...spread broadcast over the entire state. Yarn after yarn passed from mouth to mouth...The rush by gold-seekers...began in January, 1855, and continued a couple of years...soon miles of the rough highways leading to the mines were covered with every conceivable form of vehicle and struggling animals, as well as thousands of footsore prospectors...the excitement was a little too much for the Los Angeles editors to ignore; and in March the publisher of the *Southern*

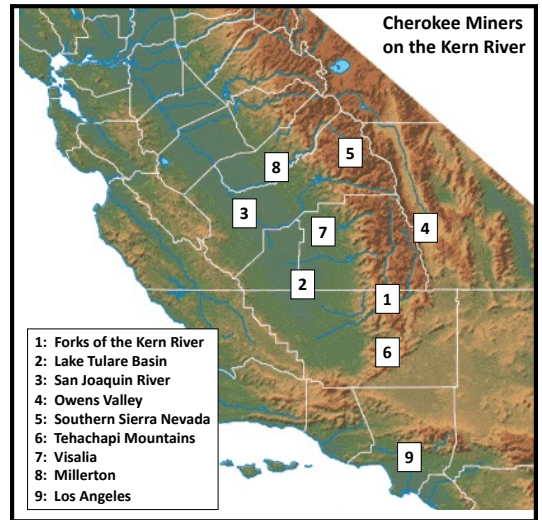


Figure 5: The Forks of the Kern River and other prominent natural features and early settlements mentioned in the text. Base map courtesy of Geology.com, additions by B. Dillon 2022.

Californian, himself losing his balance, issued an “extra” with these startling announcements:

STOP THE PRESS!
GLORIOUS NEWS FROM THE KERN
RIVER!
BRING OUT THE BIG GUN!

There are a thousand gulches rich with gold, and room for ten thousand miners! Miners average \$50.00 a day. One man with his own hands took out \$160.00 in a day. Five men in ten days took out \$4,500.00.³⁰

The most unusual 1855 Kern River “rusher” was James Capen Adams, later famous in San Francisco, the rest of California, and, eventually all of America, as “Grizzly Adams.” Adams brought his tame grizzly bear with the unlikely name of *Ben Franklin* with him to the Forks of the Kern. After eight days of gold hunting, Adams gave up on prospecting to do what he did best, hunting. Now he supplied hungry miners with fresh meat instead of griping about the *slim pick-ins*.³¹ Most of the miners who “rushed” to the Kern River, like Adams, went bust, and referred to the diggings there as the *Kern*

River Humbug. Ten years later, the *Daily Alta California* lambasted the frenzy in its April Fool's Day, 1865, edition:

What old Californian does not remember the stampede to the Kern River country a dozen years ago? And who ever returned from those diggings with a dime in his pocket?³²

Dickie Keyes, Lovely Rogers, and Hamp Williams

By the time of the California Gold Rush, "Cherokee" was more of a cultural-political label than a strictly racial one. Pure-blooded Cherokees, of course, still existed, but many self-identifying Cherokees in the Oklahoma Indian territory were part White, even mostly White, with only a single full-blooded grandparent, great-grandparent, or even great-great-grandparent. But degree of blood was not as important as the history that all self-identifying Cherokees shared, that of dispossession and removal from their traditional homelands, despite generations of acculturation and intermarriage with Anglo-Americans. Trail of Tears survivors in the Oklahoma Indian territory were used to a multi-lingual, multi-tribal, multi-racial life. Cherokee neighbors and relatives were Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and other displaced Southeastern tribes, as well as Whites.

Almost to a man, the Cherokees of Oklahoma were "Southern" in their political leanings. Many had been slave-owning, and most had secessionist sympathies. After all, the Cherokee had been forcibly "seceded" themselves in the early 1830s, separated from their ancestral land, and losing everything they could not carry with them. Most harbored very bitter feelings against the federal government that had exiled them.

The Cherokee mining pioneers of the Kern River Valley were childhood friends and schoolmates. They all came in via Tailholt on the White River. Referred to as Richard M. Keys when infrequently mentioned in the newspapers, he was "Dickie" to his friends and neighbors, and always spelled his last name with "two E's." He was joined by his

nephew, Johnny Keyes, Johnny's wife and stepdaughter, Mary Van Epps, the lead voice in the choir of the tiny Keyesville church congregation. Keyes' two old Cherokee friends Lovely Rogers and Hampton Williams also came to Keyesville.

Half-Cherokee Lovely Rogers grew up near Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, but went to school outside the Indian Nations in Cane Hill, Arkansas. Here, his classmates Dickie Keyes and Hampton Williams were the only other Cherokees, all the other students were White. Rogers was a very common name within the Cherokee Nation of Indian Territory, Oklahoma, and also throughout the original Cherokee homeland of the Southeast, in northern Georgia and the Carolinas. Hampton ("Hamp") Williams, also half White, was the third member of the Kern River Cherokee trio. All three had read about the early strikes in California in the *Cherokee Advocate* newspaper, and all three headed west together to try their luck in early 1849.³³ Like most 49ers, they went first to the central Mother Lode but had little luck in the overcrowded diggings of Tuolumne County. Encouraged by rumors of fellow Southern sympathizers in the great, little-populated Tulare Valley (as it was then called) and still-unprospected adjacent Southern Sierra foothills, the trio pulled up stakes and headed south in 1850.

The Kern River trio were not the only Cherokee Indians of the California Gold Rush. Another small party of Oklahoma Indians was responsible for naming the *Cherokee Flat* diggings in 1853, which became the small town of Cherokee, Butte County, halfway between Chico and Oroville.³⁴ The most famous Cherokee in the California Gold Rush was not a miner, but a poet, newspaperman, and author, John Rollin Ridge, *aka* Yellow Bird.³⁵

Western historians rely upon the appearance of Post Offices as an index of when minor settlements became large enough to be considered towns. Conversely, their disappearance is equally useful in determining when previously-thriving settlements became "ghost towns."³⁶ Postmasters had to be American citizens and English-speaking.

They were typically permanent residents, often shopkeepers, in a central location serving a scattered surrounding population. Keyesville got its Post Office in 1857: J. Caldwell was Postmaster in 1859, Myron E. Harmon in 1862 and 1863.³⁷ Unlike earlier cartographic efforts, George Goddard's 1857 map gets just about everything right, showing Keyesville, the North Fork of the Kern and Walker's Pass in their correct relationships.³⁸ Still missing, however, is the long, fingering, northerly extension of the Kern River's South Fork after its easting past the tiny hamlet of Onyx.³⁹

Kernville, California, in its present location only dates from 1951. Isabella Dam inundated "old" Kernville, which was down on the flats on the west bank of the North Fork of the Kern River. The first settlement there was an 1858 tent city called Rogersville, after the Cherokee miner Lovely Rogers. The place began to grow once Rogers opened his Big Blue Mine nearby in 1860. Rogersville was later renamed Williamsburg, after Hamp Williams, Rogers' friend and fellow Cherokee, but became Whiskey Flat after the its first saloon opened in 1863. Tee-totalers didn't like this name, so a fourth and final name came in 1864: Kernville. This name was formalized when a U.S. Post Office was established there in 1868.⁴⁰

The Keyesville Mines

The little 1853 mining settlement on Hogeys Gulch was first called, simply, *Hogeys*. It lay on a small bench on the steep southeastern slope of Greenhorn Mountain at 2,850 feet elevation. The place was 160 miles northeast of Los Angeles, with plenty of natural obstacles between them, but only around 90 miles south of Visalia. Dickie Keyes, through grit and determination and luck, made a go of hard rock mining at Hogeys, so, around 1855 the place began to be called *Keyesville* in his honor.

For most of the Kern River "rush," instead of the placer mining so characteristic of the Mother Lode, miners had to smash through hard, exposed granite bedrock with picks and sledge hammers to reach the nar-

row, gold-bearing quartz veins. This quartz was then crushed on simple *arrastras* or in "Chile mills," to aid in the separation of the auriferous fraction. The richest "crush" was bagged up and packed down the mountain on muleback to lower elevations where abundant water was available for more complete gold separation. Some of the 1850s mulepaths still exist in the Greenhorn Mountains above Keyesville (Figure 6). The first vertical stamp mill at Keyesville was built by A. F. Lightner in 1855.

By 1857 the Keyesville population had dwindled to only fifty or sixty permanent residents, but the following year at least a few pioneer families were putting down roots near the forks of the Kern. One of the first white marriages, between William Johnson Cummins and Jane Willard, took place "at Kern River, near Keyesville, Tulare County," on January 21, 1858.⁴¹ The isolation of the tiny settlement began to lessen toward the end of the decade, when the *Tulare County Record* proclaimed: "We are gratified to announce that the Mail contract between Visalia and Los Angeles via. Kinneysburg, Petersburg and Keyesville, has been changed from a semi-monthly to a weekly mail. The mail leaves Visalia every Monday morning."⁴²

The Butterfield Stage began regular runs between Visalia and Los Angeles in September, 1858, but most travel to the still-isolated Kern River Valley remained by horse or pack mule. No good wagon road was yet in existence. In early May of 1860 the Tulare County Board of Supervisors voted to appropriate \$1,000 for building and improving the Keyesville road over Greenhorn Mountain, and appointed William T. Kennedy as "Road Overseer" for the newly created Keyesville Road District.⁴³ Just a few months later the *Visalia Delta* began running advertisements by J. A. Young for his "Keyesville Express and General Agency." Young offered to carry mail and cargo between Keyesville and Visalia, where it would connect with the Visalia Wells, Fargo Express office for transshipment. Young promised "to attend to the collection of Bills, and accounts, carriage of coin, gold dust, or other valuables, and also all light packages of express freight."⁴⁴ W. H.

Brewer rode from Keyesville over Greenhorn Mountain, calling it:

"[T]he hardest wagon road I have ever seen...In places the road is so very steep that I cannot see how loads are gotten over it at all. We saw some government teams, where they had to double their six-mule teams to get an *empty* wagon up the hills. Most of the freight is packed on mules."⁴⁵

Like most out-of-the-way, hardscrabble mining camps, reports about Keyesville's mineral riches ran the gamut from the truth, to hearsay and wishful thinking, to outright lies. Attempts to reverse the latter appeared as outraged debunking statements to expose fraud. Dickie Keyes quietly continued hard rock mining, as noted by the reporter going by the *nom de plume* of *Josephus* in the *Visalia Delta* of January 2nd, 1860:

Messrs. Keys [sic] & Co., have recently crushed a lot of quartz from their vein which paid the rise of seventy-two dollars per ton... For a long time the quartz from this vein paid as high as two hundred and fifty dollars and upwards per ton. It has paid regularly and better than any other vein here, and so to speak, has been in a good measure the main artery of this place.⁴⁶

But then, two months later, *Josephus* noted that Keyes had hit a richer vein: "R.M. Keys & Co., [sic] lately crushed a lot a quartz which paid them the rise of a hundred dollars per ton..."⁴⁷ By 1860 Dickie Keyes' primary competitors in hard rock mining were Caldwell, Mitchell, Marsh & Company, Freeman & Co., and A. F. Lightner. Their mines were scattered throughout the Greenhorn Mountains, but all were served by the biggest settlement, Keyesville. The output of most mines was small enough to still be serviced by *arrastras*, for on March 3, 1860, *Josephus* reported in the *Visalia Delta*:

"A lot of quartz from the vein of Mr. Mitchell, lately crushed on the *arrastras* [sic] of Mr. Caldwell, yielded remarkably well.— One report says that it paid fifty odd dollars

per ton, while another has it considerably the rise of a hundred..."⁴⁸

In the same report, *Josephus* indicated that the investors plunking down the big piles of cash necessary for much more technologically-advanced quartz crushing through stamp mills had overreached themselves:

Yesterday we took a stroll over to the Mammoth Mill to witness the closing scene... and see the curtain drop on the farce of Quarts [sic] mining...owing to the non-appearance of certain parties, the Sheriff thought it advisable to defer the sale...last month a portion of this identical property was disposed of by the Sheriff and held to satisfy certain demands against said company [the Mammoth Lead Quartz Mining Company]...Being ignorant of law we are at a loss to comprehend how these things take place...⁴⁹

Stamp mills were expensive to buy, and almost as expensive to transport, in pieces, to the crushing location. They were only warranted if the quartz leads they served were rich enough to keep them busy; few of the ones around Keyesville actually were. The ups and downs of hard-rock mining continued to be of vital interest to the readers (presumably, at least some of them, also potential investors) of the *Visalia Delta* halfway through the final antebellum year:

Rich Quartz- Mr. T. F. Mitchell, of Keyesville, presented us with some rich specimens of gold bearing quartz from his lead near Keyesville. The gold can be distinctly seen with the naked eye. The average yield of the rock is \$200 per ton- some rock pays as high as \$300 to the ton. Mr. M. informs us that all the leads now being worked in the Kern River district is [sic] paying well.⁵⁰

In 1863, fully a decade after Dickie Keyes' initial "strike," in the *Daily Alta California* the anonymous writer "A.P.M." reported that: "The environs of Keyesville contain...many leads of rich gold-bearing quartz, but the general complaint is that in most cases they are only a few inches thick and embedded



Figure 6: Pack-mule path in the Greenhorn Mountains near Keyesville, dating from the mid-1850s. Note the dry-laid masonry revetment where the path crosses a deep gulch. Such pathways were built and maintained to get crushed gold-bearing quartz from simple **arrastras** down to lower elevations where enough water was available for gold extraction. After the introduction of stamp mills in the late 1850s, accessed by much more elaborate wagon roads with more gentle gradients, these old mule paths were abandoned. B. Dillon photo, 1983.

in very hard granite casings.”⁵¹ On May 13, 1863, William H. Brewer rode into Keyesville, having meandered north from Fort Tejón. Brewer observed:

Keyesville [sic]- you can scarcely see the name on the map. It is the largest place within ninety miles-much more on the west, south and east-yet it contains but eight houses all told...A store, with no floor but the ground, a saloon and “hotel” with ground floor and not a chair about the establishment, are the accommodations...We have a bunk of boards to sleep on (using our own blankets)...The spot is picturesque...[and] derives its importance from a few gold mines near, and from being on the road to the Slate Range, Coso, Owen’s River, and other mining districts.⁵²

As late as June 15, 1868, the *Daily Alta California*, quoting the *Havilah Courier*, re-

ported on the continued productivity of the Keyesville mines:

We saw, a few evenings since, a gold brick manufactured by W. Meade, of this place. It is about three inches long, one and half inches wide and half an inch thick. Value: \$465.51. It was made out of rock from the Rip Van Winkle lode, Keyesville District, owned by Fritz Bernard.⁵³

Mining was dangerous work, as reported by “Josephus” in the *Visalia Delta*:

The first serious accident in mining that has happened in these mines [near Keyesville], occurred on the 20th inst. [of February, 1860]. An Irishman by the name of John O’Connor, while at work in his claim on Kern River, was killed by the rolling or falling of a large boulder.⁵⁴

Accidental deaths were also, unfortunately, not limited to adult miners, as noted in the *Sacramento Union* on Saint Patrick's Day, 1863.⁵⁵

Sad Accident.-A child named Orrin McCombs, aged eight years, was accidentally choked at Keyesville [sic] on Sunday, March 8th. He told a companion to notice how many peyones (pine nuts) he could hold in his mouth at once, when one of them slipped into his windpipe, causing his death in half an hour.

And, on June 23, 1860, Judge P. Roman Steck of Keyesville reported to Mr. Shannon, the editor of the *Visalia Delta*, that at "Saltaire" [actually, "Solitaire"] just above the forks of the Kern down on the valley floor, the blacksmith shop of John Nicholl burned down, taking his house along with it, and spreading to the neighboring house of George Clency [Clancy?], who was not present, having gone prospecting to Mono. Two neighboring houses, owned by James Caldwell, were spared.⁵⁶ And, if fire was not bad enough, floods were also soon to come. Two years later the *Los Angeles Star* reported: "At Keyesville [sic], it is reported that the whole town has been washed away, and that mills and mining stock have been totally destroyed."⁵⁷

By 1860 Keyesville (invariably misspelled Keysville) was showing up on most California maps, in its correct relationship to the Forks of the Kern River, and Walker's Pass was accurately shown southeast of the East-West run of the Kern River's South Fork. So too after 1862 would be shown *Camp Independence* north of Owens Lake, east of the Sierra Nevada crest. It later became the Inyo County seat, under its new, simplified, name *Independence*. In 1861 a minor "rush" on Kelso Creek and the South Fork Valley shifted people away from Keyesville. William Scodie, a local Copperhead, built his store at Onyx to serve this new, dispersed, White population. A few Whites also settled in the South Fork Valley. Ranchers, they supplied meat to the miners over on the North Fork. The first two such settlers married local Indian women, and lived peaceably amongst their Indian

kinfolk. The earliest all-white family on the South Fork also arrived in 1861 and befriended their Indian neighbors: these were the grandparents of local historian Bob Powers.

Deadly Dangerous Keyesville

Deadlier than mother nature, however, were the sons of Cain. Keyesville was a rough place, with no officer of the law. Toughs, swindlers, crooks, and even murderers passed through, sometimes leaving bodies in their wake. The *Visalia Delta* of January 7, 1860, reported:

MURDER.- We are informed of the murder of a Mexican (name unknown) near Keyesville by a man named James Matthews. The...Mexican alighted from his horse at the butcher-shop on Kern River, near Keyesville, and was invited in to take a drink on Christmas Day. Matthews asked him for the loan of his horse to go to Keyesville,- the Mexican declined to loan his horse,- Matthews attempted to shoot him then, but was prevented by persons near by. The Mexican then left on foot for Keyesville, and after proceeding about half way was intercepted by Matthews, who fired at him from behind a rock, the ball entering just above the hip, and passing through him. The Mexican was not so much disabled but that he run [sic] some distance, and hid behind some rocks, where he laid until the next morning...Some Americans accidentally found him, and carried him to town, where he was well cared for until he died, about twenty-four hours afterwards. Matthews left, and has not yet been captured, although officers and citizens are in pursuit...⁵⁸

A report in the following week's paper amplified the story somewhat: the initial altercation took place at Erskine's Bridge, crossing the Kern, and the Constable in charge of the posse pursuing James E. Matthews, one Ferguson, had already returned to Keyesville without having captured the suspect. Six months later, the *Visalia Delta* reported another violent crime, culminating in an arrest, an escape, and a re-arrest:

Arrest.- A man by the name of Stephen Hoag was arrested at Keyesville, for an assault to commit bodily injury, and committed to jail...He made his escape from the officer there, and came to Visalia, where he got into a row, was arrested and placed in jail, by Dep. Sheriff O.K. Smith, and...sentenced by Justice McLean, to 14 days imprisonment for misdemeanor. While... [there]...Deputy Sheriff J. N. Ewing came down [from Keyesville] and recognized him; there he remains until the Grand Jury sits.⁵⁹

Three years later, shopkeeper Thomas Rothchild was savagely murdered by a disgruntled ex-employee, as reported by the *Visalia Delta* and then repeated by the *Sacramento Union*:

Killed in Tulare [County].- The *Visalia Delta* of July 30th [1863] has the following: On Thursday last, Thomas Rostchild [sic], of Keyesville, was killed, near the forks of Kern River, above Keyesville, by shooting and stabbing, by some person or persons unknown...Rostchild was building a storeroom in the new town at the forks of Kern River, and had been up from Keyesville on foot to see its progress. A short time after he left on his return, firing was heard, and an Indian ran to the town saying that some white man was shooting another...the body of Rostchild was found shot in three places and stabbed in five or six...and already dead. One Isaacs, formerly in the employment of Messrs. Rostchild, has been arrested, charged with the crime, but we are not informed as to the circumstances leading to his arrest, except a personal quarrel between the parties.⁶⁰

That same week another man was thought to have been murdered not too far away, as reported by the *Sacramento Union* of July 22, 1863:

Missing.-A man named Booth, residing on Kern River, some four miles below Keyesville [sic], is missing, and fears are entertained that he has been murdered. He left Keyesville, bound for his camp, and driving a couple of jacks [mules]; since which time

he has not been heard of. The animals were found, unsaddled.⁶¹

Not all the maladjusted miners of the Kern River Valley were *homicidal*: one unhinged citizen was *suicidal* instead. The *Sacramento Daily Union* of November 4, 1861 reported that:

John A. Kerman was found dead some time since near Keyesville.[sic]...He left the "bay Camp" in Kelso canyon on the morning of the 2nd October, with a load of hay on his wagon, with four mules to the wagon, two of his own and two belonging to William Marsh & Co., of Keyesville[sic]. When he had gone about five miles, in raising a bank, from appearances, he stalled, and the supposition is that he became enraged at the animals, and, taking out his sheath knife, he cut the throats of two of them...then turned the other two loose...got on [top of] the load of hay and killed himself with a five-shooter.⁶²

Not only were *Anglos* killing Mexicans and occasionally themselves, but Indians were also attempting to murder each other at the Forks of the Kern. On March 3, 1860 our old friend *Josephus* reported in the *Visalia Delta*, from his grab-bag of Keyesville news:⁶³

A poisoning scrape occurred here a few days since among our aboriginal inhabitants, in which two of the fairer and one of the rougher sexes participated, and one of the fair dames concluded to put the object of their trouble out of the way. By the timely administration of restoratives nothing serious resulted. Love and jealousy were the cause...

In 1860 there was no jail anywhere in Tulare County, nor would there be until 1873. Prior to that time, prisoners and suspected criminals alike were simply chained to trees. It is important to note that local Indians, especially in light of the ongoing problems in the Owens Valley to the east, were, thankfully, neither blamed nor suspected for any of the murders reported in the newspapers.

The Keyesville Fort

During the 1856 Tule River Indian War the residents of Keyesville, the biggest settlement of any size between Visalia and Los Angeles, rushed to the rescue of the scattered and nervous settlers on the Tule River. William P. Lynn and John W. Williams formed a company of volunteers from amongst the miners and shovelers at work on the Greenhorn Mountain road, eventually enlisting sixty able-bodied men. They marched off to Battle Mountain, leaving Keyesville completely undefended. The local Tubatulabal Indians told the remaining Keyesvillians that the Monache Indians to the north intended to attack their hamlet. As the story spread, the number of hostiles grew until an army of 500 Mono warriors was supposed to be quietly advancing on Keyesville.

So, two of the remaining civic leaders, W.R. Bower (later elected Sheriff) and "Copperhead" Warren (nicknamed for his hair color, not his political leanings) organized a "shovel party" and excavated an elliptical fortification, of two conjoined trenches in the shape of a half-closed eye. This was on an easily-defensible knoll opposite the lower parts of Keyesville. Backdirt from the two trenches was piled up to make an earthen parapet, and to increase cover and concealment. The idea was that, given enough warning, the town's residents could take refuge in the trenches and shoot the Monache attackers without exposing themselves to counter-fire or arrows. The Keyesville defenders then sent word to Los Angeles and to Fort Tejon, begging for troops, but the Tule River War was over long before their requests could be seriously evaluated. The "Keyesville Fort" (Figure 7) stood neglected and unused for the next four years, until the next panic forced its renovation in 1860.⁶⁴

By 1860 although many of its more peripatetic residents had run off to Nevada to try their luck in the Comstock silver rush, Keyesville remained important as one of the very few permanently-occupied settlements in the Southern Sierra Nevada. It was a way-station between the Owens and San Joaquin Valleys, a provisioning center and place

where mail, supplies, remounts or teams and wagons could be obtained.

The Paiute War of May 1860 took place far to the northeast of the Forks of the Kern, yet it rekindled the fear that a general Indian uprising might extend down into the Kern River country. Numaga, war chief of the Pyramid Lake Paiutes, in fact, engineered the worst nightmare of many California miners: unification of several small, scattered tribes into a single force fighting their common enemy, the White man. Different Paiute groups, plus Bannocks and Shoshonis, all came together to inflict one of the most stinging defeats by Indians on any White military force in North American history. Numaga's 1860 Paiute victory would only be overshadowed by Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn sixteen years later. The Paiute Indian War took place entirely within Nevada but most of the Whites involved in the conflict were recent arrivals from California, either silver "rushers," or hot-heads looking for any excuse to fight Indians. California residents who stayed home were, nevertheless, concerned with how the drama just over their eastern border in the Utah Territory might play out.⁶⁵

The conflict began with the murder of Peter Lassen, for whom Northeastern California's Lassen County was named, by parties unknown in April, 1859. "Indians" were blamed for the killing, yet had uncharacteristically left Lassen's camp unplundered. Lassen was a sharp dealer who "gouged" immigrants making their way west, and had no shortage of enemies, both Indian and White. He had been shot, not killed by Indian arrows as many subsequent reports stated.⁶⁶ Later, two miners were also murdered, their bodies "porcupined" with arrows, but only their money was taken, not their supplies. It was again suspected that they had been killed by Whites who "doctored" their corpses to make them look like Indian victims. This notwithstanding, local Paiutes were accused, and they, in turn, pointed the finger of blame at their Washo neighbors. Accordingly, three Washo men were killed by Whites "while trying to escape," the *Gringo* version of the Latin American *ley de fuga*, obviating any trial.

Yet another White man was murdered in



Figure 7: The Keyesville "Fort" a hilltop defensive earthwork dug by nervous miners in response to the Tule River Indian War of 1856. The elliptical, conjoined, twin-trenches at the Keyesville Fort were improved a second time as a reaction to the Paiute War of 1860, and then a third time after the outbreak of the Civil War. Keyesville residents were anticipating a battle between local Copperheads (Confederate sympathizers) and the Union Militia that marched down from Visalia in 1863, but this fight never took place. Keyesville was named for Dickie Keyes, the most prominent of a group of Cherokee Indians who left Oklahoma to try their luck in the California gold fields. Keyes came here at least two years before the Kern River "Rush" of 1855. B. Dillon photo, 1983.

Nevada, in this case undoubtedly by Indians, after the New Year of 1860, and once again the Paiutes were accused. This time they suggested that their warlike Pit River Indian neighbors to the west, over the California state line, were guilty. Indian-White relations in northwestern Nevada hit rock bottom when two young Paiute girls, who went missing while gathering plant foods, were discovered locked in the basement of a store run by Whites; they had been kidnapped for the usual, immoral reasons. On May 7th, a mixed Paiute and Bannock war party rescued the two girls, killed the four White rapists, and set their store ablaze. Those flames ignited the Paiute War of 1860.⁶⁷

News of the killings spread like wildfire through the mining camps of eastern California and Western Nevada, and min-

ers banded together into volunteer militia groups eager to avenge their White brethren *foully murdered by savages*. Four columns of "rangers" set out to punish the Paiutes, under no unified command, with a wide mixture of weapons, and no formal U.S. military involvement. Many of these volunteers floated along lubricated with whiskey. After much squabbling and many defections, 105 of them pushed on to do battle with the Paiutes.

War Chief Numaga led the overconfident Whites into a trap, using decoys to lure them into an indefensible draw, then blocked its only exit. The Whites were now outnumbered by warriors on higher ground on opposite sides, and the Indians killed so many of the panicked miners that they compared this easy victory to a communal rabbit drive. In fact, Numaga spared the lives of several

Whites, pleading with his warriors *not to kill them all*. His merciful attitude notwithstanding, 70 of the 105 volunteers who rode off to do battle with the Indians were killed on the Big Bend of the Truckee River near Pyramid Lake on May 12, 1860.⁶⁸

This Indian victory scared the living daylights out of most Whites in Nevada and California. Federal troops were demanded to protect panicked miners who thought themselves defenseless in the face of seemingly invincible desert warriors. When California got the news of the wholesale slaughter, militia companies were formed in dozens of Mother Lode towns, all of the volunteers thirsting for revenge against the Red Men. Also mustering were regular U.S. Army infantry, dragoons and artillery from their California posts for a relief expedition. The common misperception was that all the remaining Whites in Nevada were now besieged by Indians on the warpath. Before too many days had passed, nearly 800 soldiers and volunteers were marching and riding towards the battlefield where so many dead still lay unburied. After inconclusive skirmishes, the volunteers went back to California, but the regulars remained.⁶⁹ The *Visalia Delta*, of June 16, 1860, reported:

From the Indian War...The Indians have removed from Pyramid Lake [Nevada], plenty of provisions have been sent [to the troops there]. Some 35 or 40 bodies of the first massacre have been found, most all of them horribly mutilated.⁷⁰

As the cold, snowy spring changed to summer, no more battles were fought, and the regulars made peace with Numaga and his Paiutes. But, from 1860 onwards, lurking in the back of every White miner's mind was the fear that a general uprising might occur again and spill over the state line from Nevada into California.

Conclusion

Long after he came from Oklahoma to California, Hamp Williams married a much younger Kawaiisu girl from the Tehachapis,

named Refúgia, and began a tri-cultural dynasty. Williams' wife, born around 1850, was one of many Kawaiisu who found the Kern River Valley a better place to live than the hardscrabble Sebastian Reservation near Fort Tejón. Refúgia Williams became a famous basket maker, her beautiful creations highly sought after. One branch of the Cherokee-White-Kawaiisu Williams family moved to Los Angeles more than a century ago, made a fortune mining in the Southeastern California deserts, then became fully integrated into White society. The other branch of the Williams family continued living in the Tehachapis and Southern Sierra Nevada, holding true to their Indian roots.⁷¹

More than twenty years ago I had the pleasure of working with Hamp Williams' great-grandson, the late Harold Williams (1947-2018).⁷² For many years Harold served as a Kawaiisu consultant on archaeological projects in and adjacent to his great-grandmother's old tribal territory. Inordinately proud of his California Indian heritage, he kept close tabs on the dwindling number of Kawaiisu speakers, which, sadly, grew smaller each decade. Harold was the guardian of the stories Refúgia Williams told his grandparents, who then passed them on to him. He was also on the staff at Tehachapi State Prison for more than two decades. Harold told me that one of his greatest pleasures was the small measure of revenge provided by being an American Indian at the prison built within his own tribal territory where he helped keep so many White people locked up inside its walls.

Acknowledgements

This paper is an outgrowth of a short entry contributed by the late Richard H. Dillon (1924-2016) in 1984 to the local history component of the 4-volume, 1,000+ page Environmental Impact Report written and compiled by his son, Brian Dervin Dillon, for the federal government almost exactly 40 years ago. This massive literary effort was consigned to bureaucratic limbo immediately after its submission, so Brian is thrilled that the present elaboration of one small part

of it can now be shared with a wider, and hopefully, more appreciative (not to mention literate) readership. Many thanks to the late historians Ardis Walker and Bob Powers, the late archaeologists Frank Fenenga, Clem Meighan and Fritz Riddell, and the last descendant of one of the original 1850s Cherokee trio on the Kern River, Harold Williams, for their input during our initial research and again through later years. Thanks also to our two outstanding proofreaders, Ed Riegler and John Dillon, whose skill and thoughtfulness as always, reduces the embarrassment quotient in our writing.

End Notes

1. *"A Truly Californian Mixture of Races:"* Brewer 1974: 394. In 1863 Millerton was the Fresno County seat (Giffen 1963). Brewer's racism and ethnocentrism was not only focused upon Blacks and Chinese but also upon Irish Catholic immigrants. He was an "equal opportunity hater" (Dillon, Dillon and Dillon 2014: 17, 42; 2017: 15).
2. *Gold Rush Racial Composition:* The only human group absent was Australian Aborigines. Other Pacific people, Native Hawaiians, were amongst the earliest gold hunters (R. Dillon and B. Dillon 2021).
3. *"Digger" Indians:* On June 1, 1851, Peter Campbell of Sonoma wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C.: "The California...digger Indians are the most abject poor, stupid and filthy tribe...Their chief food consists of roots, seeds, insects and vermin...they are slothful and indolent" (Heizer 1974b: 185). Joseph Henry Jackson (1949: 3) writing exactly a century after the California Gold Rush perpetuated the stereotype: "the Indians of California...were mild and helpless; they lived in huts made of tule rushes and were given to thievery, basket-making, hunting and fishing."
4. *Endemic Murders and Occasional Massacres of California Indians:* The four standard anthropological works on this subject are by Heizer and Almquist (1971), Heizer (1974a, 1974b), and S.F. Cook (1976). All are chilling in reporting the range, scope and depth of abuse inflicted on the Native Californians, from humiliation to mass-murder.
5. *Johnny-Come-Lately Historians:* Hurtado 1988; Trafzer and Hyer 1999; Lindsay 2012; Madley 2016.
6. *Dating the Gold Rush:* the California Gold Rush began in early 1848, but this initial "rush" ended in 1859, when the subsequent Nevada Silver or Comstock Rush began. So 1859 is usually considered the year that surface placer mining was superseded by underground hard rock mining.
7. *Fort Miller:* The old fort is now covered by Millerton Lake (Crampton 1957: v, 78-79).
8. *Mariposa Indian War, 1851:* Crampton, 1957.
9. *Tule River Indian War, 1856:* Stammerjohan, Gorenfeld and Dillon 2017.
10. *Paiute War of Nevada, 1860:* Egan 1972.
11. *Owens Valley Indian War, 1862-65:* Cragen 1975; Davis-King, 2003.
12. *Río de San Felipe:* Garcés 1967: 48; Walker 1975; Kittle 2017: 157, 164; B. Dillon 2021: 59.
13. *Río Porciúncula:* Gudde and Bright 1998: 192.
14. *Río Bravo:* Gudde and Bright 1998: 192, 317.
15. *Joseph Reddeford Walker:* Many historians have enthused about Walker's supposedly "miraculous" 1834 discovery of the snow-free pass through the Sierra Nevada that now bears his name. They seldom consider that for thousands of years Indians had been traversing that same route connecting the Great Basin with the Great Valley of California, nor that Walker simply followed their very old, clearly-marked, well-beaten footpath.
16. *"Deadly" Kern River:* Gudde and Bright (1998: 192) repeat the story that John C. Fremont renamed the *Rio Bravo* for Edward M. Kern, the artist and cartographer of his third expedition, in 1845, because Kern almost drowned in it. More people have likely drowned in California *flood control reservoirs* than have ever drowned in *floods*, and present-day Lake Isabella, covering the old Forks of the Kern, is no exception. Even more dangerous is the Kern River downstream from the modern dam. The lower Kern has the unenviable record of having the most drownings of any major California stream, more than 300 since records began in 1968. It is also the only American River to have had a Country-Western hit song written about drowning in it (Merle Haggard's *Kern River*, 1985).

17. *Lake Isabella*: was created by Isabella Dam, built between 1948 and 1953. The pre-construction University of California, Berkeley, archaeological and historic survey of lands slated for inundation began in 1947. Led by Franklin Fenenga, Clement Meighan and Fritz Riddell also participated in this investigation. All three visited and advised me during my UCLA follow-up research there thirty-six years later (Meighan and Dillon 1984).
18. *Tubatulabal Population Estimates*: A.L. Kroeber (1925) thought the Tubatulabal population to be as large as 1,000 souls at initial European contact. Voegelin (1938: 9, 39) believed this estimate too large; the tribe was so diminished that it only numbered a hundred people by the final quarter of the 19th century. For the neighboring Yokuts to the west, see S.F. Cook (1955a, 1955b).
19. *The Tubatulabal and their Neighbors*: Stephen Powers (1877), California's first English-speaking ethnographer, studied the Tubatulabal of the Kern River Valley, the Kawaiisu of the Tehachapis, and the Yokuts of the San Joaquin Valley. He blazed the trail for later scholars such as A.L. Kroeber (1925), Erminie Voegelin (1938), Charles Smith (1978), Robert Spier (1978a, 1978b), Bill Wallace (1978), Clem Meighan and Brian D. Dillon (1984), Elliot Gehr and Leslie Conton (1984) and Shelly Davis-King (2003).
20. *Tule River Indian Reservation*: of Tulare County, California, is home to just under a thousand people, mostly Yokuts: Wukchumni, and Choinumni, as well as Western Mono, Owens Valley Paiute, Tubatulabal, Kawaiisu, and Kitanemuk. Originally located (in the 1860's) near present-day Porterville at low elevation, the first Tule River "Indian reserve" was a disgrace. Those running it bilked the U.S. government while starving their Indian wards. Supplies and foodstuffs to feed, clothe, and house the Indians were routinely sold to Whites or *sold* to the very Indians they were supposed to be given to *free of charge*. This disgraceful episode is related by Heizer (1974b: 118-123). Fraud diminished after the Tule River Reservation was relocated upslope in 1873 by order of President Grant.
21. *Fraser River Gold Rush*: B. Dillon 2018.
22. *Comstock Silver Rush, 1859*: Browne 1959.
23. *The Kern River "Rush"*: Just about every different source on the Kern River Rush cites a different date for its beginning. Most later writers simply echo earlier ones who were not participants and who repeated hearsay accounts with misremembered dates. Harris Newmark (1916: 148-149), who never went there, states that Kern River "rushers" left Los Angeles in 1854, while Andrew Smith Hallidie (R. Dillon 2006: 41), clearly states that he and other San Francisco "rushers" left for the Kern River in 1853, confirmed by the *Daily Alta California*, 1865. The date of 1853 is correct for the initial discovery, while 1855 dates the biggest, and somewhat belated, "rush."
24. *Kern River Valley Historians*: Anyone hoping to learn about the Kern River Rush from standard texts on Sierra Nevada history (Farquhar 1965) or the California Gold Rush (Caughey 1948; Jackson 1949; Holliday 1981) is doomed to disappointment. Fortunately, the Forks of the Kern were blessed with two local historians. Ardis Walker (1901-1991), the "Poet Laureate of the Kern River Valley" was born in Keyesville. He was the grand-nephew of Joseph Reddeford Walker. A long-time reporter for the *Bakersfield Californian*, Ardis also published poetry and historical reminiscences (1966; 1971; 1975). He was the driving force behind the Kern Valley Museum and the Kern Valley Historical Society. Bob Powers (1924-2002), the "Cowboy Historian," was born in "Old" Kernville. Many of his closest friends and relatives were *Indian cowboys*. Powers (1971; 1974; 1979; 1981) wrote books on the history, ethnology, and ethnobotany of his native valley. Few self-taught California historians were ever so beloved by their neighbors, both White and Indian. Powers was recently honored by having a mountain peak near Kernville named for him; Walker's monument is the Golden Trout Wilderness on the upper reaches of the Kern River drainage that he was instrumental in creating.
25. *Earliest Prospectors in 1852?*: Williamson 1856, quoted in R. Dillon 1984: 719-722.
26. *Inaccurate Map of California*: Gibbes, 1852.
27. *Official Map of California*: Eddy, 1854.
28. *Log Cabins in Visalia*: R. Dillon 2006: 41. Tulare County was created in 1852, with Visalia its County Seat.

29. *Kern River "Excitement":* Browne, 1959: 3-4.
30. *1855: "Glorious News from the Kern River!":* Newmark 1916: 148-149. Newmark, writing sixty years after the event, can be forgiven for confusing Havilah with Keyesville, for ten years after the initial rush Havilah was booming while Keyesville faded. Newmark also back-dates the formation of Kern County, which was not created until 1866, with Havilah as its first county seat; this error is corrected later in his unique narrative.
31. *Grizzly Adams at Keyesville:* R. Dillon 1966: 176-178. Adams, like most mountain men and unlike most miners, enjoyed friendly relations with California Indians. Like most solitary hunters, Adams preferred Indian company to that of his fellow Whites. Two Indian youths, probably Yokuts, were his constant companions during his ramblings through the length and breadth of California, even accompanying him to the Washington territory and through the Great Basin to the Rocky Mountains and back again (R. Dillon 1966: 30). Adams named his Indian friends after the rivers where he encountered them, one of them *Tuolumne*, the other *Stanislaus*.
32. *"Humbug:"* *Daily Alta California*, 1865.
33. *Gold Rush Excitement in Indian Territory:* *Cherokee Advocate*, 1849a, 1849b, 1850.
34. *Cherokee, Butte County, California:* Wells and Chambers, 1882; Sturgeon, 1961, 1990; Palmer, 1990. First called Cherokee Flat, on a gold-rich tributary to the Feather River possibly as early as 1849, the Cherokee mining camp was established by 1853 by Sol Potter, a Maine schoolteacher who ventured to the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Potter left the Indian Territory, and, with some of his Cherokee students, headed to the California gold fields. Palmer's (1990) UCLA M.A. thesis on Cherokee is not so much history as retro-sociology. She never explains how it got its name, who founded it, nor whether they were, in fact, Cherokee Indians. There were three other "Cherokees" in the California Mother Lode: one in Nevada County, perhaps dating as early as 1850, east of North San Juan, another in Plumas County near the Round Valley Dam, and a third in Tuolumne County, a short distance north of the town of that name (Miller 1978: 34).
35. *John Rollin Ridge:* Burchfield 2005.
36. *Post Offices:* Salley 1976.
37. *Keyesville Postmasters:* *Tulare County Record* 1859a; *Sacramento Union* 1862; 1863b.
38. *Accurate California Map:* Goddard, 1857.
39. *Keyesville Errors:* Gudde and Bright (2004: 93) state that "The ghost town was named for Richard Keyes, whose discovery of gold in Key's or (Keyes) Gulch about 1853 caused the Kern River gold rush." No mention is made of Keyes' Cherokee ethnicity, the 1853 date for the Kern River "Rush" is two years too early, and the original name of the gulch was Hogeys, it was only renamed for Keyes in 1855. By the mid-1930s the almost-abandoned Keyesville mining camp had been designated California State Registered Landmark No. 98 (OHP 1990: 67), but neither the 1937 brass plaque at the site, the Office of Historic Preservation 1990 publication, nor the OHP Web Page make any mention of Dickie Keyes' Cherokee Indian heritage. Adding insult to injury, while the brass plaque spells the place name correctly, the 1990 OHP listing misspells it as "Keysville."
40. *Kernville:* R. Dillon 1984: 822-853.
41. *Early White Marriage at the Forks of the Kern:* *Sacramento Union*, 1858.
42. *Keyesville Mail Service:* *Tulare County Record*, 1859b.
43. *Road to Keyesville Over Greenhorn Mountain:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860d. The first road over Greenhorn Mountain was completed by William P. Lynn in 1856. This was the old "Bull road" for ox teams only. It was so rough that logs were chained behind wagons to serve as "brakes" on its steepest downslope sections. The McFarlane toll road over Greenhorn Mountain was not finished until 1864.
44. *Keyesville Express:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860i.
45. *Hardest Wagon Road:* Brewer, 1974: 394.
46. *Dickie Keyes' Gold Mine:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860b.
47. *A Richer Vein:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860c.
48. *Arrastras in 1860:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860c.
49. *Mammoth Stamp Mill:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860c.
50. *Mitchell Mine:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860g.
51. *Quartz Veins:* *Daily Alta California*, 1863.
52. *Keyesville in 1863:* Brewer 1974: 390-392.
53. *Rip Van Winkle:* *Daily Alta California*, 1868.
54. *Irish Miner Killed:* *Visalia Delta*, 1860c.
55. *Deadly Piñon Nuts:* *Sacramento Union*, 1863a.

A similar mishap a century later had a much happier ending. In the Southern Sierra Nevada my youngest brother, Ross Richard Dillon (b. 1959), aged two, bored, and rolling around on the bed of our family station wagon, somehow inhaled piñon nuts up both nostrils and almost asphyxiated. My father's wild drive sixty years ago down through the mountains to find the nearest Nevada doctor who could, and indeed did, effect their removal, was a unique vehicular experience still remembered by all members of the Dillon family who survived it.

56. **1860 Fire at Solitaire:** *Visalia Delta*, 1860f.
57. **Keyesville Flood:** *Los Angeles Star*, 1862.
58. **Murder at Keyesville:** *Visalia Delta*, 1860a.
59. **Hoag Escapes from Keyesville to Visalia, is Recaptured:** *Visalia Delta*, 1860e.
60. **Murder:** *Sacramento Union*, 1863d.
61. **Presumed Murdered:** *Sacramento Union*, 1863c. Shoot' em ups continued to occur in the Kern River Valley, even past the turn of the 19th century. One of noted poet, historian, and Keyesville native Ardis Walker's uncles shot two men to death in 1924, then was himself later shot and killed. Yet another uncle shot two more men to death, then killed himself (Walker 1971: 150-155).
62. **Bizarre Suicide:** *Sacramento Union*, 1861.
63. **Indian Love Triangle and Attempted Murder:** *Visalia Delta*, 1860c. The last known Indian-on-Indian murder at the Forks of the Kern took place in 1918: this was a witchcraft killing of the kind beloved by anthropologists. Twenty-nine years later, in 1947, Franklin Fenenga was taken out in a field by a local Tubatulabal and shown where to dig up the shaman's bundle, whose use had precipitated the 1918 murder. Thirty-six years later still, in 1983, Fenenga took me to the same field, and showed me where the deadly Tubatulabal artifacts had been deposited.
64. **The Keyesville Fort:** F. Cook 1966: 12; Powers 1979: 16; R Dillon 1984: 747-748. Shortly after studying the Keyesville Fort, I had the pleasure of doing archaeology with one of the most active representatives of the Mono Indian Tribe. We had a good laugh over the baseless 1856 concerns of the Keyesville "defenders," for the Monache were not only unaware of the earthwork, but also of the panic

that inspired its excavation. The incorrect inscription on the 1937 brass plaque, repeated on the OHP web page, erroneously notes that "an earthworks fort [was] built to meet a possible Indian attack in 1863." The earthwork was *reconditioned* in 1863, for the *third* and final time after initial excavation seven years earlier in 1856, and re-excavation three years before, in 1860. In 1863 the Keyesville Copperheads were concerned with defending themselves against Union militia forces, not hostile Indians.

65. **Utah Territory:** In 1860 Nevada was still part of Utah Territory. It did not become a state until 1864, just in time to support Abraham Lincoln in that year's presidential election.
66. **Lassen's Murder, 1859:** Egan, 1972: 16-23.
67. **Causes of the Paiute War:** Egan, 1972: 91-96.
68. **Chief Numaga's Paiutes Kill 70 of 105 White Volunteers in Battle:** Egan, 1972: 125-155.
69. **Regulars March:** Egan, 1972: 172-248.
70. **Paiute Victory:** *Visalia Delta*, 1860e.
71. **Hamp Williams' Descendants:** Walker 1971: 7; R. Dillon 1984: 731.
72. **Harold Williams:** The best recent book about the Kawaiisu (Garfinkel and Williams 2011) incorporates much of the history and folklore passed down from Refúgia Williams to her late descendant, Harold.

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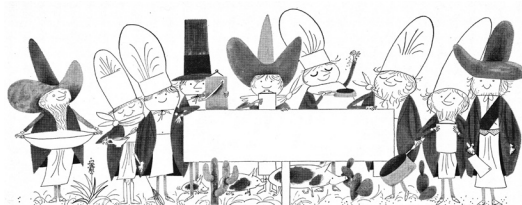
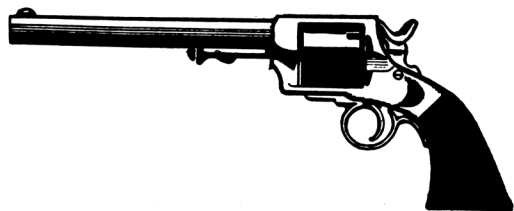
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Special Issue *Branding Irons*, Coming Soon!



By popular demand, *The Branding Iron* will explore special Western history topics in two upcoming themed collections. In Spring 2023, we will relive the dangerous deeds of cowboy guns and gunslingers. And for the Winter 2024 issue, we shall whet our appetites on Western food history.

To be considered for publication in these special issues, please observe a deadline of May 15th, 2023, for *shootin' iron*-themed articles, and a date of February 15th, 2024 for submissions about *cookin' irons*. Additionally, articles on other topics are always welcome and encouraged for future non-themed issues.

For submissions and inquiries, please contact *Branding Iron* editor John Dillon at John.Dervin.Dillon@gmail.com. Thank you!



Our New Web Wrangler!

Patrick Mulvey became our very first Los Angeles Corral Student Fellow in 2014. Cheerful, hardworking, and helpful, he has served as our official photographer ever since his two-year tenure was up. Many of the pictures Patrick has taken have been published in our website and quarterly *Branding Iron*.

Patrick paved the way for the next seven Fellows, all of whom benefited from his sterling example. Despite the various demands on his time, Patrick has always come through when called upon to help other, older, members of the Corral. In recognition and appreciation of his computer programming skills, the Corral recently saw fit to honor him with the position and title of *Web Wrangler*.

In only a very few short weeks in this new job, Patrick has done great things. He has single-handedly overcome the inertia of the past several years of inattention and brought many parts of the Los Angeles Corral's Web Page up to date. Patrick has posted on our website every last *Branding Iron* issue we have ever published, he has added four short bios of our Living Legends—our most distinguished members—and for the very first time he has facilitated the means by which our most recent Brand Books can be ordered through online postings.

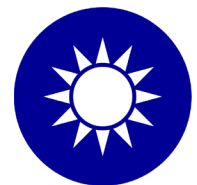
Be certain to log onto our Los Angeles Corral Web Page at: www.lawesterners.org as soon as you can, to see what amazing things Patrick Mulvey has been doing for us.

Bravo, Patrick, and thanks!

Recent Corral Research, Writing, and History with a Capital "B"

Two Los Angeles Corral members have been laboring literarily all this year, and their efforts will bear fruit in 2023. Frank Brito's book will be a collection of his own family biographies from the American Southwest, beginning at least three centuries *before* most modern residents ever set foot in what are now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This is because Frank is descended from at least three different Native American Puebloan people who were present when the very first Europeans made their way to what we now call the U.S.-Mexico border region. In later centuries, Spaniards, Mexicans, even Confederates joined Brito's unique family. The epic story Frank has been writing all year is the culmination of more than three decades of research.

Brian Dervin Dillon's Alice Chong biography just passed the 350 page mark, and should be done by the end of this year. Brian has been working on it for ten years, ever since the Chinese side of his family bequeathed the 300+ letters, the three photo albums, and the newspaper archive left them by his wife's Auntie Alice. Alice Chong was the most remarkable American woman of World War II. Hawaiian-born, she spoke three different Chinese languages, Hawaiian, Japanese, and English. Her war began four years before the Pearl Harbor attack. She was the only Asian female war correspondent behind Japanese lines in China publishing in American newspapers. She got the Ginling College girls out of Japanese-occupied Shanghai then guided them 2,800 miles to safety in far-western China. She ended her war as General Claire "Flying Tigers" Chennault's interpreter and intelligence expert at the 14th U.S. Army Air Force base at Kunming, then returned to Hawaii to teach school.



Rendezvous, October 22, 2022 . . .

The call went out far and wide, and buckaroos from all over gathered at the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners' annual Rendezvous, hosted this year in Newhall at William S. Hart Park. Guests enjoyed an October Saturday of fun with pleasant company, tasty food courtesy of Stonefire Grill, and many educational and entertaining events.

Yours truly and fellow fellow Alan Griffin helped to set up the Corral's yearly book sale, which was organized by Brian Dillon and Therese Melbar. Dozens of folding tables were needed to display the Corral's vast collection, which attracted many roving bands of book-collecting bandits. This author is pleased to have made off with a stack of WW2 newspapers bearing news from the front. Many thanks to Brian and Therese, to our book donors, and especially to our book buyers for making this year's sale a smashing success!

Interspersed throughout the day were several poetry readings by the Los Angeles Westerners' resident, award-winning bards Tim Heflin, Paul McClure, and Gary Turner. Some of these poems were reflective, and others raunchy—Paul found a creative way to rhyme "San Dimas" with words which shall not be republished here!

The Westerners were also entertained by a pair of lectures. Santa Clarita satirist and historian John Boston spoke about local history antics, largely centered on the St. Francis Dam disaster. In one memorable tale, a group of Navajo movie extras on actor Harry Carey's ranch were forewarned of impending doom by their medicine man, and left the valley in the nick of time just before the dam burst. William S. Hart Park docent Roger Basham delivered a talk about the life story of the park's namesake.

William Surrey Hart was born in New York in 1864, but spent the transformative years of his youth constantly moving with his family from one Western state or territory to another. There Hart formed a lifelong fascination and appreciation for its landscapes and native peoples—he even learned to speak Sioux. Hart later pursued an acting career and received a classical education in England, but his imagination never truly left the prairie. After many years of Shakespearean stardom, Hart returned to the subject of the American West in the 1903 play, *The Squaw Man*. Later recognizing the potential of motion pictures, Hart released his first silent film, *His Hour of Manhood*, in 1914. Hart, astride his equine co-star Fritz, rode to Hollywood renown in about seventy Western movies made during the next eleven years. Fame, however, did not necessarily beget fortune, as his self-produced films struggled to compete against big studio productions in the 1920s. Hart retired in 1925, and his Newhall ranch was willed to the County of Los Angeles for use as a park and museum after his death in 1946. Although his silent films are now a fading memory, William S. Hart left an indelible legacy on the mythos of the West, by creating a popular image of cowboy ruggedness and stoicism that has endured to this day.

The final highlight of the Rendezvous was a musical performance by popular Western entertainer, Dave Stamey. Dave strummed his guitar and wowed audiences with classic and original cowboy ballads like "Come Ride With Me," "The Quero Song," "Andy Devine," and the tail-wagging "Good Dog."

So concluded the fun-filled 2022 Los Angeles Corral Rendezvous. Special thanks to Sheriff Pete Fries for planning, William S. Hart Park for hosting, our presenters for entertaining us, and the volunteers whose hard work made everything happen. See you all at the next one!

— John Dillon



***Top Left:** Wandering Western balladeer Dave Stamey plays his guitar and sings for the Rendezvous rabble at Hart Park. **Top Right:** Vicki Turner receives a certificate of Honorary Membership—meaning she’s an esteemed member, not a nominal one! **Right:** Mike Johnson and a certain Branding Iron editor. **Bottom:** Used books galore at the Westerners annual book sale.*



Monthly Roundup . . .



September 14, 2022

George Geary

September's Roundup saw the L.A. Corral welcome guest speaker George Geary as he cooked up a delectable feast for the palette of our nostalgia, guiding us on a trip down one of California's best memory lanes. A celebrity chef with experience ranging from the kitchens of Disneyland to sets of "The Golden Girls", Mr. Geary talked us through some of the highlights of his book, *Made in California: the California-Born Burger Joints, Diners, Fast Food & Restaurants that Changed America*. The book, available on Amazon (ISBN: 1945551917), features a plethora of California's culinary quick-stop favorites, ranging from Bob's Big Boy to Peet's Coffee.

The theme of Mr. Geary's lecture centered on the evolution, including name and location changes, of some of California's most beloved casual eateries. One notable example was his charming anecdote about

the early days of the McDonald's restaurant. The McDonald brothers cut their teeth in the movie industry, and after not having much success in film, decided to purchase a theater in Glendora. When that venture went belly up, the brothers were left with a load of usherette uniforms. Rather than see their stock go to waste, they started a drive-in restaurant and clad some lovely carhops in the surplus duds. However, as Mr. Geary put it, "The boys liked the carhops too much... so they made the guys get out of their cars and order the food from the window." Thus McDonald's, originally called McDonald Brothers BBQ, was born.

Perhaps of particular interest to those of us familiar with the hot rods that descend on Burbank each week to show off their chrome at Bob's Big Boy, is the somewhat unique story of that establishment's early franchise model. Bob's Pantry, as it was originally known, did not franchise its restaurants directly, but rather, it franchised the rights to its burger recipe. So, anyone among us familiar with the Eastern U.S. chains of Shoney's or Frisch's Big Boy now know why the burgers slung in those joints are so similar to those served at our beloved Burbank, California Bob's... they're actually cousins! George also told us about a similar situation with Dinah's Family Restaurant near LAX. Apparently, Kentucky Fried Chicken once employed a similar model in franchising their product, and that's why, long ago, Dinah's had to pay the Colonel 4¢ for every chicken they sold.

George Geary deserves our thanks for his guided tour of California's culinary heritage. His talk reminds us that these tasty treasures are fading fast from our California landscape. A fortunate few have been turned into landmarks and historic sites, but far too many are wasting away, awaiting the wrecking ball of progress. There are few things able to so viscerally connect us to our past as the old haunts of our youth. So, grab a copy of *Made in California*, call up your favorite guy or gal, hop in the old lead sled, and get out there to see these pieces of history before they're all gone. *Bon Appetit!*

— Alan Griffin



November 9, 2022

Michael Johnson

Michael Johnson didn't have a clever *hat* when he showed up at the Roundup in November. Thankfully for us, though, he did have a clever *head* under his usual cowboy hat. Mike used that clever head to edify those of us in attendance on the subject of the Overland Mail Company. The company was, as its name implied, a mail route which ran over land, particularly the southwestern parts of our land from 1858 to 1861, carrying mail between San Francisco in the West and both St. Louis and Memphis in the East.

The Overland Mail Company was founded by John Warren Butterfield (1801-1869) and, as such, is sometimes referred to as the Butterfield Overland Mail. The company's founding was the result of Butterfield winning a bid for a contract offered by the federal government to carry mail to the West. John Butterfield had a background in transportation. Having cut his teeth driving coaches in New York, he progressed to ownership of forty coach lines in Utica, as well as successful ventures into steamboats on lake Erie and trains on the rails of western New York. In 1850 John's stagecoach interests, under the Butterfield Wesson Company, were merged with the express companies of Wells

& Co., and Livingston, Fargo & Co., to create The American Express Company. However, it was Butterfield, under his own name, who won the contract for the route to be run by what became the Overland Mail Company.

The route chosen by Butterfield was the longest overland mail route in the world, and was sometimes known as the Oxbow Route because of the way it curved through the southwestern territories, recently claimed by the U.S. from Mexico. The route, though long, had the advantage of being free of snow, which perhaps gave it an advantage over the Central Route which made its way across the prairie towards Utah.

Although Butterfield adamantly stated, in the rulebook he published for his employees, that no cash was to be carried by the company along the route, one story—a set of rumors shrouded by the veil of time—persists. The consistent threads of its narrative are two men, the sum of \$60,000, and the settings of the Vallecito and Carrizo stations. One story has \$60,000 being taken in gold, by two men, from a coach at the Carrizo station, then sees the two robbers shooting it out at the Vallecito station. Another tells a tale of two brothers arguing and killing each other at the Vallecito station. A third has a driver leaving Yuma with a \$60,000 payload and no shotgun rider. Indians, after waylaying the solo driver, purportedly buried the coach near the Carrizo station, being interested only in the horses. Though, as Mike pointed out, it's a bit hard to imagine the thieves going to the trouble of burying the stagecoach when they could much more easily have burned or left it. Was the Butterfield stage robbed? It's unlikely we'll ever know, but it's not a bad bet.

All good things come to an end, however, and the wild days of the southern stage coach are no exception. The secession of the South and the outbreak of the Civil War saw operations along the Oxbow Route halted, its four-year flash-in-the-pan burnt out. After the war, the new railroad superseded the overland routes, and closed a significant chapter in the history of the West.

— Alan Griffin



*Hat Night at the November Roundup! **Top:** From left to right, Mariachera and second-place finisher for best hat Yessi Hernandez, sailor Joey Amador, and cowboy Mike Johnson. **Left:** Third and first-place hat winners, gardener Dorothy Mutz and three-toed sloth Mark Mutz. **Below:** U.C. Berkeley hippie Brian Dillon reunited with his own long-lost ponytail. **Bottom Left:** Mountain man Gary Turner. **Bottom Right:** Che Guevara back from early retirement in Bolivia.*



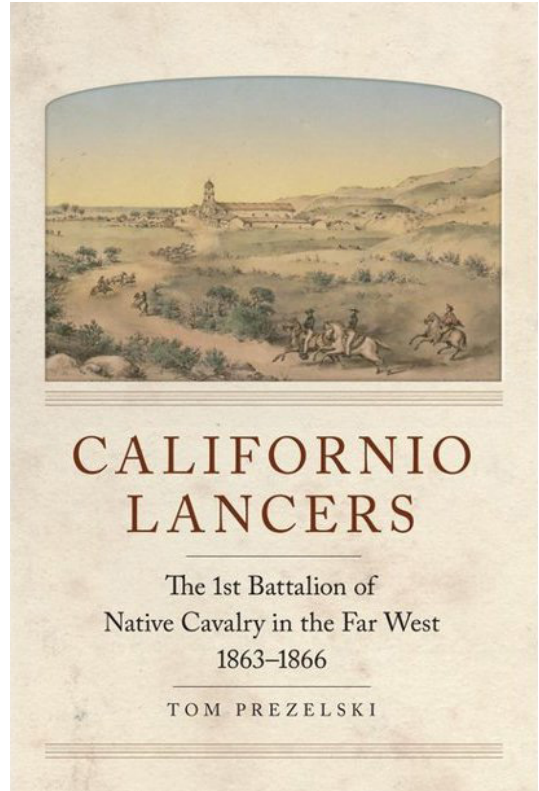
Down the Western Book Trail . . .

CALIFORNIO LANCERS: *The 1st Battalion of Native Cavalry in the Far West, 1863-1866*, by Tom Prezelski. Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2015. 245 pp. Table, Maps, Illustrations, Appendices, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Hardbound, \$32.95.

Historians have generally viewed the Civil War in the West at best as a minor role in a major production. Even less known than the California Column or the Battle of Glorieta Pass, the Californio Lancers demonstrated the will of Unionists in the Far West to do their part in defeating the Confederacy. Todd Prezelski's book is likely to be the definitive study of the Californio Lancers. The experiences of the four companies that comprised their 1st Battalion illustrate the problems of recruitment, training, funding, and desertion in this military unit.

Referred to in its time as the Native Cavalry, the soldiers were mainly Spanish-speaking *Californios* plus a sprinkling of men from a number of nations, some Anglo-Americans, and a few Indians. Prezelski describes the irony of *Californios* living under a flag that many of them had opposed a dozen years earlier in the U.S.-Mexico War, but now were seeking commissions or enlisting in the U.S. Union Army. When the announcement was made about the formation of four companies, men from elite *Californio* families became officers and recruiters. Salvador Vallejo was Mariano Vallejo's brother; José Ramón Pico was Andrés Pico's nephew; Antonio de la Guerra y Oriega came from an influential Santa Barbara family.

Prezelski narrates a story of frustration—recruitment was slow, some officers—Anglo as well as Latino—were corrupt or incompetent, and funds for equipment and salaries were often in arrears. All were factors in a high rate of desertion. None of the companies made it east of Arizona Territory to fight Confederates. Instead, they were assigned patrols to quell Indian rebellions in northern California, to track down and bring back deserters, and, most significantly, to locate and



defeat hostile Apaches in Arizona and over the border in Mexico. Skirmishes were few and inconclusive. The main enemy the soldiers faced was disease, especially malaria. It took so long for the battalion to be trained that by the time they were ready, the Civil War had ended.

Nevertheless, from a California point of view, the Lancers were important. *Californios* mainly sympathized with Benito Juárez and the Republic of Mexico against France's invasion of Mexico and the imposition of Maximilian von Habsburg as an *ersatz* emperor. They celebrated the Battle of Puebla victory on May 5, 1862, and sided with the Union in Lincoln's support of Juárez. They demonstrated this support by forming the lancer battalion, even if they didn't get into actual combat.

Prezelski provides some interesting information on the post-U.S.-Mexico War participants who fought the United States but

later became American citizens. A fair number of them were elected to state and local offices in the 1860s and 1870s, contradicting the impression that Mexican *Californios* lost everything after the U.S.-Mexico War. The book includes rosters of all four companies,

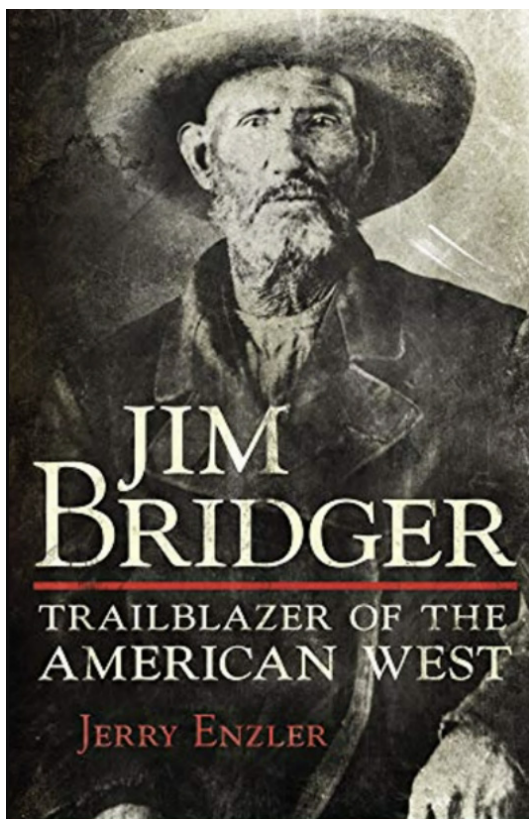
at least as complete as Prezelski could make them. The text is supported by an excellent bibliography and well-researched documentation, and is a worthy addition to the Arthur H. Clark Company's Frontier Military Series.

— Abraham Hoffman

JIM BRIDGER: Trailblazer of the American West, by Jerry Enzler. University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. Hardcover, 371 pages. End notes, bibliography, index, acknowledgements, epilogue, illustrations. \$29.95.

Jim Bridger by Enzler is the most complete and thorough biography of this notable trailblazer, mountain man, and historically important person. It chronologically covers his birth in 1804, to when he left home in Virginia in the 1820s to the end of his life in 1881. Bridger's life parallels Western America's development westward from St. Louis along the Missouri river to the Northwest in the Oregon territory and all through the vast area of the Rocky Mountains, Utah and southward to Arizona, New Mexico and California. The book details America's development by presenting many notable individuals and events that were contemporaries of Bridger, including the fur trade and associated key people like Andrew Henry and William Ashley. Mountain men and other trailblazers like Jim Beckwourth, Broken Hand Thomas Fitzpatrick, and Jedediah Smith are also described. Mike Fink and other keelboat men, Hugh Glass, Joe Meek are notables who met or sought advice from Bridger. The Western artist, Alfred Jacob Miller, best known for his images of the fur trade and Native Americans, knew Bridger and made detailed paintings which give some visual background of the times. Several military commanders, scouts, scientists, topographers and other significant historical figures who met with Bridger, such as General Phil Sheridan and Brigham Young, are also brought into the biography.

Significant historical events recounted in Enzler's book include Bridger's direct involvement with Mountain Man Rendezvous, the building of many Forts which became



supply stations for emigrants moving West as well as military bases, the efforts to try to help the Donner Party (who ignored Bridger's advice), the Mormon colonization of Utah and its environs, the Gold Rush, wagon train and many other emigrants who looked for the best passage West, the location for the best Railroad routes, and the development of the Pony Express routes. Jim Bridger was involved with all these events.

Bridger's career and work began with trapping beaver during a time when this fur was much in demand. This gave him opportunity to learn the lay of the land. But that was only the start. Over the next few decades, he worked and travelled the

whole western region. It gave him opportunity to explore, deal with difficult travel over uncharted land, suffer hardships and dangers as well as communicate with the many tribes of Native Americans and learn to handle many different types of encounters with them. There were many dangers that he faced during his life. For example, one in five mountain men died during their trapping campaigns. Besides the dangers of being killed by Indians, many perished in cave-ins, winter storms, or from starvation, thirst, or by grizzlies, or were even accidentally shot by one of their own compatriots. These lands were unknown to Whites, who were required to build their own shelters, hunt their own food, and find their own way. All this formed Jim Bridger's background.

Bridger was described as strong, resourceful, intuitive, courageous, gregarious, enthusiastic, skilled, knowledgeable, determined, and shrewd yet humble. He was wild and free and truly the American ideal, a hero. Over time, Bridger with his incredible singularly retentive memory that could be called photographic, remembered all the rivers, streams, valleys, trails, passes, watering places and mountains he ever saw. To put this in perspective, this covers most of the vast area of the Western United States. He recalled distances, obstacles and weather conditions for all times of year. Although Bridger never learned to read or write, his knowledge was accompanied by an ability to verbally describe and give accurate directions to any traveler or military man who requested his assistance.

Bridger learned how to work with different Indian tribes and Native peoples. He was a friend to the Indians, respected them, and knew how to communicate with them. He married three Indian wives during his life, from different tribes (Flathead, Ute and Shoshone), one after the other, and had seven children. Bridger spoke English, French, Spanish, and seven Indian languages. Although cautious, he was severely wounded in one encounter that went poorly. Despite this, he never advocated destroying the Indians. The U.S. military did not follow his advice and had many horrific battles

with Native Americans that could have been avoided but were not.

Bridger was the first White man to see the Great Salt Lake and Yellowstone with its geothermal features and natural wonders. How he found these national treasures is recounted and explained. He helped open routes to Oregon and California as well. Bridger retired in 1868. He lived out his final days with some of his grown children and was still available to discuss travel routes to any who asked.

Enzler's biography is an enjoyable read. It covers Jim Bridger's life by not only showing what he did and with whom he did it, but also includes the Western American historical context against which it was played out. Complementary and well-documented notes and a helpful bibliography provide other resources to explore further study into individual areas of history. The sense of American greatness keeps the reader engaged. The American West was virtually unknown to Anglo-Americans. To explore and understand it required people such as Bridger with his unique talents to comprehend and make it home. Bridger's interactions with the many tribes of Native Americans gives us a fresh outlook into how American history might have turned out. It could have been a more fair solution for all.

Enzler has a close personal involvement with his subject and seems intent on presenting a complete, honest, and realistic a view of Bridger. The previous work on Bridger's life was inconclusive and written some seventy-five years ago. Some have quipped that biography belongs to the fiction genre. Not so with this well-documented, clearly written and objective biography.

— Joseph Cavallo



LOS ANGELES CORRAL OF THE WESTERNERS
BRAND BOOK 23



**LIFE, LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT
IN THE OLD WEST**

EDITOR
JOSEPH CAVALLO

Los Angeles Corral Brand Book 23, *Life, Leisure, and Entertainment in the Old West* was the first Los Angeles Corral Brand Book to appear after a very long, 15-year, hiatus. It re-established the Los Angeles Corral as a literary leader amongst Westerners International organizations around the world. Its ten chapters are on topics as diverse as Wild West shows, Hollywood's take on the "old west," a multicultural review of western music spanning four centuries, prostitution in far-western timberlands, even motorcycle racing more than a century ago.

Contributors include Carla Laureen Bollinger, Joseph Cavallo, Paul F. Clark, Brian Dervin Dillon, Mark Hall-Patton, Abraham Hoffman, Deke Keasbey, Gary Turner and Tami Turner-Revel, and Kiara M. Vigil. Joseph Cavallo, editor; hardbound, illustrated, 309 pages, 2019. Price: \$30.00 (includes tax and postage). **To order:** please use the multi-volume order form included in this issue.



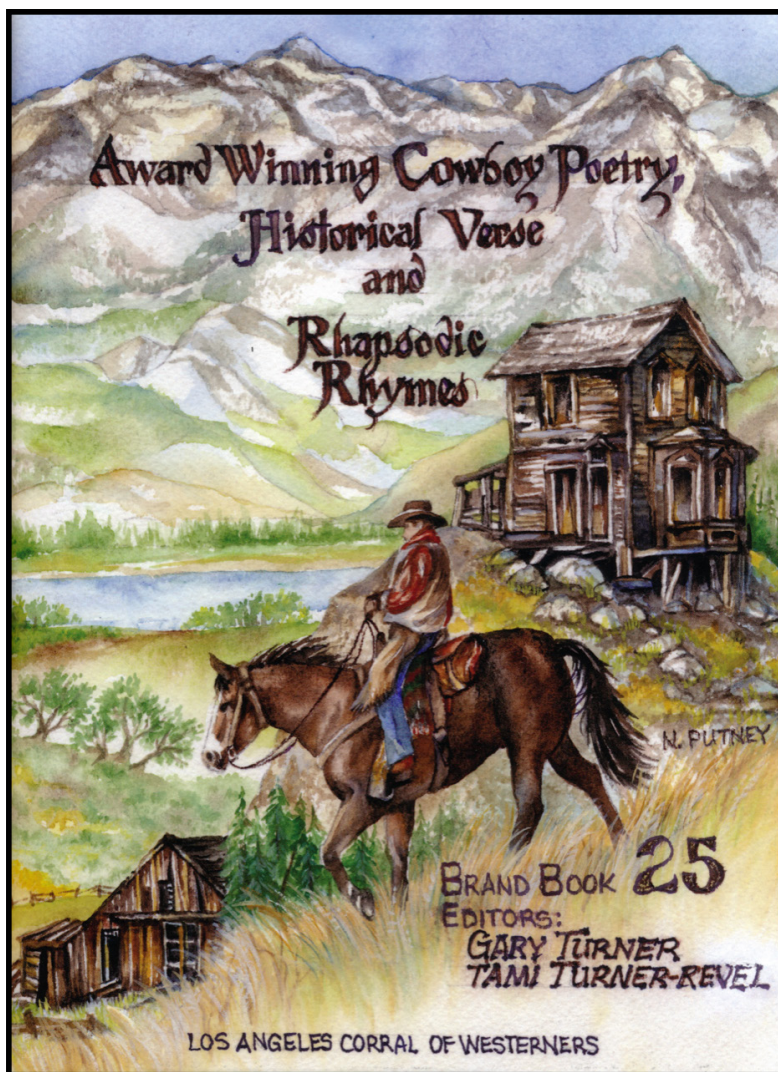
ALOHA, AMIGOS!

**The Richard H. Dillon Memorial Volume
Brand Book 24, Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners**

Brian Dervin Dillon, Editor

Los Angeles Corral Brand Book 24, *Aloha, Amigos!* Is the *Richard H. Dillon Memorial Volume*. Dick Dillon (1924-2016) was a world-famous western historian, librarian, teacher, and public speaker. He was the single most productive historical writer on California and the American West, who published dozens of full-length books, hundreds of scholarly journal and popular magazine articles, and thousands of book reviews over a longer period of time (82 years) than any other writer. Richard H. Dillon was a long-time member of both the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Corrals of Westerners International, and was made a W.I. Living Legend in 2003.

Aloha Amigos! Won the Westerner's International Best Book Award in 2021. It features the first-ever biography of Richard H. Dillon, culture-historical studies and paeans by his friends, colleagues, and admirers, and the first comprehensive bibliography of his published works. Contributors from four different Westerners International corrals include Will Bagley, Peter Blodgett, John Boessenecker, Matthew Boxt, Phil Brigandi, Robert Chandler, David Dary, James Delgado, Brian D. Dillon, Lynn Downey, Abraham Hoffman, Tommy Killion, Gary Kurutz, Valerie Sherer Mathes, James Shuttleworth, Kevin Starr, and Francis J. Weber. Brian Dervin Dillon, editor; hardbound, illustrated, 588 pages, 2020. Price: \$30.00 (includes tax and postage). **To order:** please use the multi-volume order form included in this issue.



Los Angeles Corral Brand Book 25, *Award Winning Cowboy Poetry, Historical Verse, and Rhapsodic Rhymes* has just been published. It is the first full-length book of poetry ever published by any of the 70+ Westerners Corrals around the world, and is beautifully illustrated with original artwork by renowned western artist Nancy Putney. Brand Book 25 reprises poems that won the Fred Olds Cowboy Poetry Award from Westerners International between 2007 and 2019, as well as brand-new offerings published for the very first time.

Contributors include Bill Bender, Joseph Cavallo, Barbara J. Goldeen, Tim Heflin, Abraham Hoffman, Eric Nelson, Pablo/Paul McClure, Kenneth Pauley, Jan Porter, Paul Rippens, Jerry Selmer, Paul & Nolene Showalter, Froylán Tiscareño, Daryl Turner, Gary Turner, and Loren Wendt. Gary Turner and Tami Turner-Revel, editors; hardbound, illustrated, 368 pages, 2022.

Price: \$30.00 (includes tax and postage). **To order:** please use the multi-volume order form included in this issue.

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