Collectors Edition – Summer 2021

Piñon Hills Chamber of Commerce

Gateway to San Bernardino County

PULSE CUSTOM MAGAZINES

Piñon Hills
Chamber of Commerce

Join Us: 3rd Tuesday of Every month – 6 PM

Chamber Address 10405 Mountain Road – Piñon Hills, CA 92372

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Chamber Trivia:
Our chamber began with meetings being held in a World War II Quonset hut on the north side of the 138, then in 1934 members voted to sell that property and Fred & Maud McGee donated the land to the site we have now on Mountain Road. It took a lot of years before the decision to become a more formal Chamber – and in 1948 this group of pioneering individuals aspired for more and began the arduous task of creating a community thus forming the Desert Springs Chamber of Commerce (…the actual name of our community at the time..).
Their dream – their goal, written in simple language identifies and expresses the will of the people residing in the local area at that time.
In 1977 chamber members – more than 80 strong voted together, renaming this organization to Piñon Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Now there is more to our story and we love to tell the tale. Join US and become a part of history.

Like what you see in this magazine? We are Pulse Custom Magazines and we specialize in creating customized magazines and other media for communities or regions who want to get their story out to the world.

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- Our web-based INFO-guides that help the public interact with and learn about your community
- Public relations campaigns
- Create/design/conduct physical tours of your community

For more information or to get started, please contact us. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Editorial

An opportunity to showcase the area in which you live, where you raised your family and are in business at first seemed like an easy project. We know why we live here but putting that reason into words did not come easy. Working with the chamber board members, we took on the task of compiling articles, photos, history and material that you, the reader, would find enjoyable, interesting, and peak your interest in our communities.

This publication's content comes from a number of great writers, photographers, and researchers that came together to assist in celebrating our community and its assets. They are list them below.

You can shop globally but please BUY LOCALLY. Support our members and advertisers.

Thanks to Cliff & Ilene Bandringa, John & Laureen Beyer, Don Fish, Jr., Wendy Walker, Dan Wilson, Michael Palecki, Mark Landis, Carolyn McNamara (deceased), Transition Habitat Conservancy, Walter Feller, and the Wrightwood Historical Society, and the chamber board members. Without their contributions and support from each of them, we would have a lot of blank pages. This has truly been a TEAM effort. My special thanks to Lori Weston, Ed Greany and Wendy Walker, you guys rock.

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1 760 249 3245

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Jim Conkle

Transition Habitat Conservancy

As Jill Bays, Board President of the Transition Habitat Conservancy, spoke – it reminded me of sitting in a college class listening to my professors. The difference was, Jill was actually interesting.

I wondered if this warm and friendly woman was a biologist or botanist by trade. She was so knowledgeable about tortoises, butterflies, mountain lions, hawks, wildflowers, and other desert plants and animals – it felt as though I was in the presence of a top expert.

"No," she answered in response to my query. "I was in private business before turning my passion toward this cause."

That cause is protecting as much land in the High Desert as the conservancy is able, with the ultimate goal of preserving a lot of the desert landscape for all to visit and enjoy. How much is a lot? As of now, the conservancy has 7,551 acres in three separate project areas in both San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties.

That, my friends, is a lot of land. And they are not done yet.

"When we started the conservancy," Jill stated, "I had no idea how much paperwork would be involved to obtain grants, learn how to manage land mitigations. It was almost overwhelming; there was a lot to learn."

And learn she did. Along with her husband, Bert, and other community members in 2005, they founded a nonprofit organization, 501(c)(3), for the sole purpose of keeping the desert in its pristine condition – which also means the plants and animals that reside there.

One of the issues, according to Jill, is the lack of available water. "There is a lot construction here and only so much water. San Bernardino County allows municipal water to be obtained by any home or business built here. Los Angeles County does not, since the only water source is coming from the San Gabriel Mountains to our south which enters the aquifer below us."

My friend, Patrick Brocklehurst, a volunteer at the conservancy had invited me to check out the project and pointed to a large satellite map attached to a wall in the conference room at the conservancy's office.

"You can see how the water table flows out of the San Gabriel's through Piñon Hills, and ends up toward El Mirage."

The variant coloration of the land was rather apparent on the aerial map. A thin dark line came out of the mountains to the south and flowed northward, widening as it stretched toward the El Mirage dry lake bed. Fertile land to the south and not so much to the north – if I read the map correctly. Another noticeable difference was how many structures were hugging the mountain slopes in San Bernardino County and none that I could see in Los Angeles County. Same mountain range but different images – very interesting.

"We want people to come out and hike the trails we have here and the other project areas," Jill suggested.

There are 365 acres in Piñon Hills, under the control of the conservancy, which has plans to purchase 1,000 more in the near future. "The paperwork takes so long to obtain more property for us. Sometimes up to ten years."

Since 2007, the conservancy has raised over 24 million dollars in grants, donations, and land values, allowing the organization to safeguard the land - protecting the environment, and at the same time allowing hiking and horse trails for visitors.

John R. Beyer, Ed.D./Ph.D.

Author of ***Hunted/Soft Target/Operation Scorpion/Iquitos, The Past Will Kill*** - Police Thrillers
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"This land is for everyone's use to enjoy," Jill said. "That's why we started it all."

"How about a tour?" Patrick asked.

And a tour we did. The Piñon Hills location, which includes Puma Canyon, is a beautiful place to visit. There are lookout areas all around the conservancy with benches and picnic areas to just sit and relax.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Jill asked. There was no reason to answer her, the views spoke for themselves. "I am so thrilled doing this work."

I could see why – this is truly her, as well as the community's labor of love.

A few days later, my friend Paul, and I decided to do some more hiking in the conservancy and struck out along a ridge line trail that ventured toward the top of a pretty steep mountain, my GPS put it a bit over 5,620 feet. Paul's declared it at 5,640. We didn't argue over a twenty foot discrepancy, since I knew mine was correct.

There's an American flag on top, placed there by Patrick, with a solar light attached to the pole. There's no official name for the mountain top – so, let's name it Flag Mountain of Piñon Hills. The flag looked beautiful, fluttering in the slight early afternoon breeze as we rested a few minutes before the descent.

The views were fantastic from the top – the entire Victor and Antelope valleys were crystal clear. There seemed to be dozens of trails, both for humans and horses, covering the hundreds of acres in Piñon Hills. As Patrick had mentioned, there's hiking for everyone – easy trails to more strenuous ones like the one Paul and I took to the flag.

I had asked Jill earlier how they kept all the trails so clean and clear of debris. "We have a wonderful community of volunteers who assist in maintaining the entire area for visitors. And when we get a new land acquisition, we are joined by AmeriCorps. They generally send ten volunteers who stay with us up to three months. They blaze trails, clean up the new property, monitor wildlife, and pretty much anything that is needed to ensure the land is pristine in all ways. They are a great help to all of us here."

The Transition Habitat Conservancy has educational functions all year long – botany presentations, the Portal Ridge wildflower event, tortoise counting days, garden parties, and the list goes on and on.

It's a special place to visit and just renew yourself with nature, while getting some good solid exercise in at the same time.

For further information:
https://www.transitionhabitat.org/


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Kiwanis TRI-COMMUNITY

The Kiwanis Club of the Tri-Community has been serving Phelan, Piñon Hills and Wrightwood for twenty-eight years. Our family of clubs includes the Builders Club at Heritage Middle School and the Key Club at Serrano High School. We enjoy dropping into each other's meetings and supporting service projects and fundraisers.

One of our signature activities has been the annual High Desert Veterans Dinner. Beginning in 1994, the dinner now catered by a local restaurant, not only gives the Veteran's a social gathering, it also allows the students a chance to meet, serve and talk to many veterans each November.

The Kiwanis Club was known for many years for organizing the fourth of July fireworks show at Serrano High School. When the Head Start School was in Phelan, Kiwanis provided a Santa and stockings for each child at Christmas. Summer movie nights at the Phelan Community Center has been a mainstay for many years as well, providing a free movie and refreshments for anyone who wants to come.

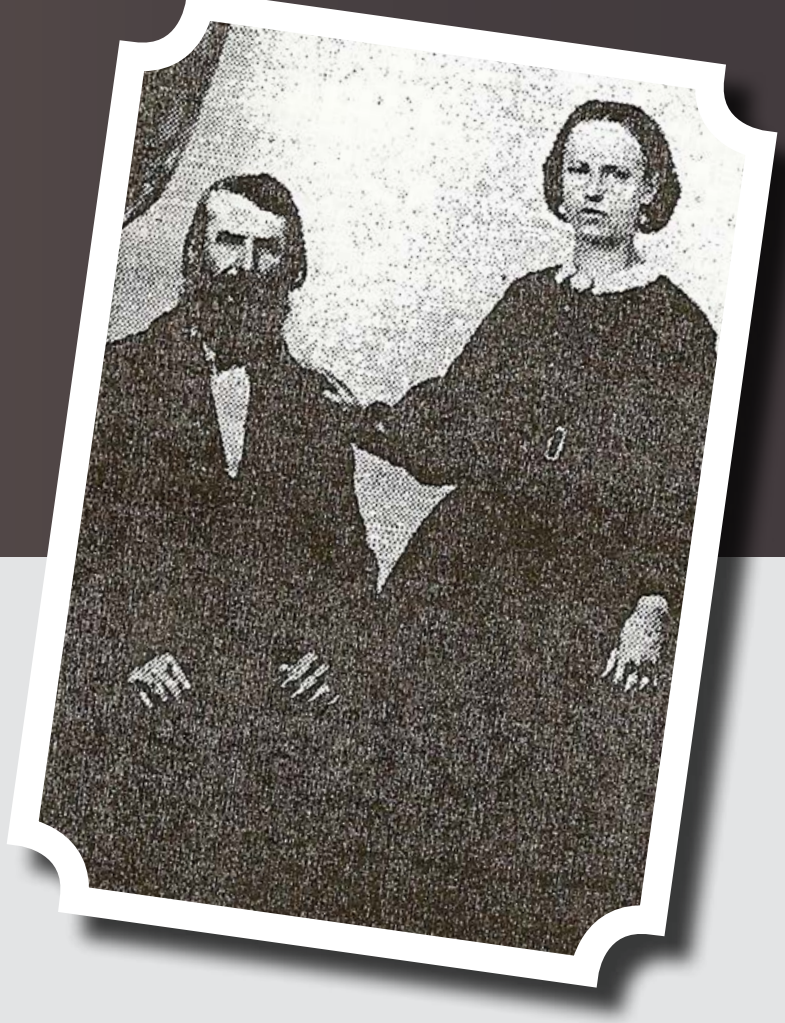
Some activities change from year to year and have included a clean-up at a camp in Wrightwood, Trunk or Treat on Halloween, Piñon Hills Summerfest crafts, Phelan Phun Day games and distributing books to elementary students to build reading skills. In 2020 Piñon Hills Elementary was selected.

Scholarships to graduating Serrano High Key Club members and students from Chapparal Alternative School are a big part of our year. We can do these things and more through fundraising with our annual Horse Derby, Quartermania and donations. We meet at the Pizza Factory the 2nd and 4th Thursday at 6pm and for dinner and a short meeting usually with a speaker from the community. We are always looking for new members and happy to have visitors so If you are interested in hearing more about us, please contact tckicanis1@gmail.com or call Diana Ford at 760-868-0819.

Trail of the Swartbouts

The historic records in the Wrightwood Museum, and many publications that deal with local history, share a common understatement when it came time to cover the beginnings of Clyde Ranch in Lone Pine Canyon; "Almon Clyde bought the ranch from a 'settler' for two hundred dollars in gold and eight head of cattle in 1863." The same comment could be seen on the Wrightwood Chamber of Commerce bulletin. It used to be on local history handouts that the realty or real estate, not capitalized offices passed out, and of course it is on the Wrightwood Historical Time-line in the Ol' Fire House museum.

The man who sold the present day Clyde Ranch to Almon Clyde was named George Swarthout, and he was more than a simple "settler."



The December 20, 1938 issue of The Sun (A San Bernardino newspaper), gave the following praise of this man and his brothers that came to the area with him, "Headed by three brothers, George W. Swarthout {and} the Swarthout family played an important part in the development of San Bernardino valley."

So, where did these folks come from? On the 11th of June, 1847, accompanied by Captain Jefferson Hunt's Mormon Battalion, the Mormons trek for Salt Lake started. They left Council Bluffs, Iowa; and after getting across the Elkhorn River, they started on their way westward. Prior to their arrival at Council Bluffs, the United States government had asked for 500 volunteers to fight in the war with Mexico (1846-1848), these volunteers, which included Nathan and Hamilton Swarthout, were recruited into the Mormon Battalion

The civilian wagon trains traveled up the north side of the Platt River in a company of 666 wagons which included Daniel Spencer's group of 100 wagons. These wagons were divided into groups and addressed as such: Ira Eldredge's 50, Jedediah M. Grant's 50 and Erastus Bingham's 10. The entire company was so large that it was organized with many captains to guarantee the best of order. In long columns they traveled, at two wagons abreast, making two roads. The wagon train literally stretched horizon to horizon.

Ira Eldredge's 50, which were a part of the Daniel Spencer Company, officially started their pioneer trek, with 76 wagons and 177 people. The captains were Isaac Haight, Hector Haight, Samuel Ensign, Erastus Bingham, and George Boyes.

Included in the Daniel Spencer Company was a wagon group that was led by Farnum Kinyon. The following is a list of families that were included in this wagon group: John Adams, John Harris Henderson, Farnum Kinyon, George B. Kinyon, Hyrum Kinyon, Lucinda Kinyon, William H. Kinyon, Ann McMinds, Emily Ann McMinds, James McMinds, William McMinds, Elizabeth Meaks, Peggy J. Meaks, Pridy Meaks, Sarah Meaks, Louisa Norris, Betsy Persons, Carlos Shephard, Charity Shephard, Lydia Shephard, Samuel Shepherd, Charles Swarthout, George W. Swarthout, Horley (Harley) Swarthout, and Tramand (Truman) Swarthout.]

The wagon company divided near Laramie, Wyoming. The Battalion, under Captain Hunt's command, headed for California. Ira Eldredge's group was one of those that continued on to Salt Lake and then subsequently headed for California. In that group was George W. Swarthout.

After the Mormon Battalion was taken out of service in 1847, Captain Jefferson Hunt, of the Mormon Battalion, led another group of settlers into San Bernardino 1848. The Mormon Road stretched from Salt Lake across the Mojave Desert and down through Cajon Pass.

-Photo-looking northeast past the Mormon Monument on present day Hwy 138, you can still see markings where the wagon company made their cut. The Mormon Monument which was erected by Sons of Mormon Pioneers on May 15, 1937 was in memory of a group of 500 Mormons settlers that took the same route in 1851-

The Mormon battalion had survived the harsh desert, only to find themselves in a place full of boxed canyons-and face to face with a narrow draw that was impossible to navigate their wagons through. The only way through the draw with the Battalion's troops and remaining five wagons, was to hewn the hard rock walls with axes to increase the opening.

To reach the promise land, they first had to move a piece of mountain-perhaps a little faith was applied, but it was very difficult physical work that got it done. Men hacked at the solid rock throughout the day. The back-breaking work expanded the narrow gap, but it was still too narrow for wagons to pass through. Already pushed to the physical breaking point by the very difficult trek across the Mojave, the men tossed their axes aside and began to take the wagons apart, piece by piece. In his diary, Sgt. G. Cooke stated that the Battalion named this place as Box Canyon, and not with affection. The location of the narrow gap was in the northwest area of what is now known as Cajon Pass.The wagons were later reassembled on the valley floor, and they passed through small valley just northwest of a group slanting rock formations that are referred to today as the Mormon Rocks.

The wagon group continued eastward through a rocky drainage, down an old migrant trail that two decades later would be known as Brown Toll Gate, about ninety years after that referred to as Route 66, and then onto present day Lytle Creek area to camp. After a moment of rest, the San Bernardino valley spread out before the group to make history there.

The small valley that the Mormons crossed to entry Cajon Pass was north of present day Highway 138 and west of the old Turkey Ranch in West Cajon valley-

According to Wrightwood History, and the History of the San Gabriel, written by John Robinson, the Mormon Colony purchased the San Bernardino Rancho from the Lugos in 1851. Two of these Mormons, Nathan and Truman Swarthout, homesteaded in Lone Pine Canyon. Shortly, they expanded their land holdings to include the valley that now bears their name. The Swarthouts abandoned their holdings when the Mormons returned to Salt Lake City in 1857. Robinson's account was verified by other sources. The December 20, 1988 special issue of San Bernardino Sun Telegram, "Cover Wagons Families," stated that the Swarthout Ranch holdings in Lone Pine Canyon were abandoned was due to Indian problems and bear menace.

Despite the obvious influence and contribution of this amazing family in the San Bernardino, Cajon Pass and Wrightwood area, there is some confusion in previously written local history.

In reality, it was George Swarthout who settled in Lone Pine Canyon and claimed a vast area that extended from present day lower Swarthout Valley, near the Cajon Pass, to the Big Rock Creek area in what is called today Valyermo. Valyermo is approximately 19 miles west of the mountain community of Wrightwood, California. This great expansion of land was what Swarthout called a "cattle claim," and he settled in the area in 1847. It had been speculated that the cattle on this land holding came from the vast number of cows that populated the San Bernardino Valley and was made available when the Lugo cattle ranch was purchased by the Mormons. The Swarthout Ranch holdings in Lone Pine Canyon were not abandoned due to Indian problems and bear menace; Almon Clyde purchased the land from George Swarthout around 1853. Clyde and nearby Glen Oaks Ranch communicated back and forth using mirrors to alert each other of Indian problems. As for the bears in the area, which included black bear and grizzly, the biggest thing to worry about were the bandits and Indian raiding parties in the area. These riffraff easily outnumbered the bear population, and they were a bit more dangerous.

The Swarthouts were just getting started in the San Bernardino area, and what an interesting family it was; we start with Truman Swarthout.

TRUMAN SWARTHOUT

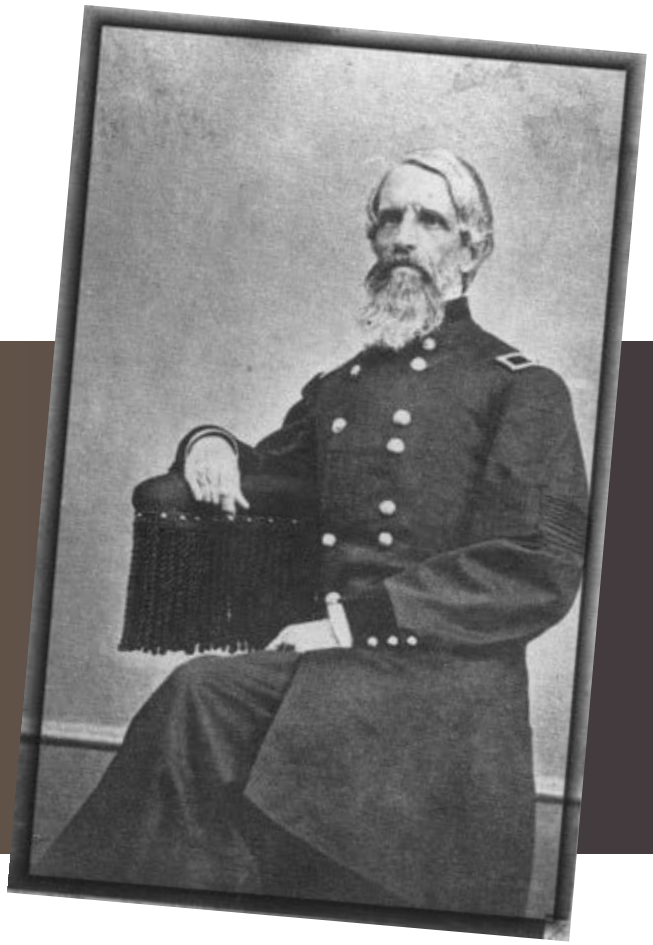
Truman Swarthout remains somewhat of a mystery. Even though local history recorded that he and brother Nathan were part of the Mormon Battalion, there is no record of Truman being with the Mormon Battalion. Local history further recorded that Truman Swarthout homesteaded near present day Wrightwood. The truth was, Truman came to California as the part of the Daniel Spencer Company wagon group, and did not homestead the Lone Pine Canyon (present day Clyde Ranch near Wrightwood, California), but continued on to present day San Bernardino, where he owned a cattle ranch in the San Bernardino Valley.

Assigned to Company A, under the command of Captain Jefferson Hunt, was a private Hamilton Swarthout. Assigned to Company D, under the command of Captain Nelson Higgins, was Private Nathan Swarthout.

Truman Swarthout, along with others, lived in the Fort San Bernardino/ Mormon Stockade for almost a year. Even though Truman Swarthout was listed on San Bernardino property assessment rolls in 1857, at Rancho San Bernardino, there was no other record of Truman in San Bernardino after that. It is speculated that Truman Swarthout returned to Utah with the rest of the Saints. In 1864, he lived in Provo, Utah.

In June of 1851, the Mormon newcomers in San Bernardino were alerted of Indian skirmishes and raiding dangers in the area.

In the center of their new mile-square town of San Bernardino, the leaders set aside eight acres and fenced in a parallelogram. 300 feet wide by 720 feet. Twelve foot high walls protected three of the sides. The fourth side was a series of log buildings jammed close together. All exterior walls were loop-holed and the gateways were indented to allow for crossfire. Ranger Horace Bell, In his book Reminisces of a Ranger, described the structure as "a stockade about a quarter of a mile square with two great gates leading into it. Inside they placed their dwellings, shops and stores. Every night the gates were barred and a sentry kept vigilant watch from the walls against surprise." The Mormons stayed in the stockade for approximately nine months, the anticipated war with the Mojave Indians never occurred. It was in October of 1857, when Brigham Young called the "saints" to "Zion".



On December 27, 1958, when United States Colonel William Hoffman's "Mojave Expedition" camped near the original Cajon, they learned that approximately 1,000 had stayed in the area of San Bernardino. Ironically, historian Horace Bell described all those living in the Mormon Stockade, thus: "I was benefited by my contact with these serious, rugged people. They set good examples for youth. There were no gamblers tolerated in San Bernardino, no rum sellers, no loud characters offering vice for sale. There were no drones there. Persistent industry, intensive husbandry were the impressive features of life there." Now, the Church those who choose to stay behind as "men, whose character is such that he could not be tolerated in Utah" (As reported by Major General, James H. Carleton)

A group of over a hundred Mormon Battalion veterans entered Salt Lake Valley in late September-early October 1847. These battalion men had been discharged in Los Angeles on July 16, 1847. (Both Hamilton and Nathan Swarthout were mustered out with their company July 16, 1847 at Los Angeles, California) No longer under military order, the men formed into hundreds, fifties, and tens, under the leadership of Levi Hancock. There were 223 men in this group. They traveled through California's central valleys, past Sutter's Fort, into the Sierra Nevada. When they were near Donner Summit, they met James Brown with a letter from church authorities telling the men about the destitute situation in the valley and recommending that they return to California and "work a season."

Several diaries of these men contain the notation that "about half went on and half went back" to work for Captain John Sutter at Sutter's Fort. The Hancock Company went directly to Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Nathan and Hamilton Swarthout were in the group of "half" that continued on with Levi Hancock to the Sutter's Mill area after meeting James Brown in the Sierra.

Records had revealed that Nathan Swarthout returned to the San Bernardino area by 1850, and Hamilton Swarthout lived in Monterey, California in 1850 and died in San Bernardino, California March 16, 1894.

Mormon Bar was founded in 1854, during the gold rush in Sutter's Mill. Even though it was not considered to be in the area of the mother lode, it was known to be the southern terminus of the Mother Lode. Even after 150 years, a large number of the original buildings still stand. The semi- ghost town is just south of Mariposa.

Mormon Bar was first mined in 1849 specifically by members of the disbanded Mormon Battalion;(thus the reason for it's name) two miles south of Mariposa, California, on an old stage route to Wawona and Yosemite. As of 2001, the place known as Mormon Bar was put on the market, most of the mining equipment and evidence of the quarry has been removed. This is the mining area in which the Swarthouts (Nathan and Hamilton) were for a short time, prior to returning to San Bernardino. Even though there is no record of claims, it was the Levis Hancock Company who worked the claim. It was this company that Nathan and Hamilton Swarthout had been assigned to being ordered to "work for a season' instead of returning to Utah with the rest of the saints.

What destroyed the dreams of many Battalion members at Mormon Bar was a big mouth named Sam Brannan. Brannan was a Mormon elder who had brought a boatload Saints around the Horn to San Francisco in 1847 to scout for a modern "Mormon Eden" amongst the Mexicans in California. He traveled to Mormon's Bar (after receiving word of the mining going on in the area) to find his fellow churchmen eagerly mining gold from the American River. "Reminding" them he was the surrogate of the prophet Brigham Young in Salt Lake City, he "relieved" them of 30 percent of their gold as church tithes.

It's fair to say that the gold Branner seized never saw a collection plate. He used it for his own enterprising ideas. With gold in hand, he set up stores at Coloma and Mormon's Bar to go with the one he rented at Sutter's Fort. Then he cornered the market in mining equipment, buying every pick, shovel, pot, and pan he could find in the territory in the process. Hungry for more business, he took a genuine bottle

GOLD! GOLD! GOLD FROM THE AMERICAN RIVER!

full of Mormon gold dust, rushed back to San Francisco and dashed through the streets of Portsmouth Square shouting: "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River." The gold rush that the newspapers had failed to generate, was kicked started by Branner's big mouth. It would be called the Gold Rush of 1848, and the Argonauts who responded to Brannan's siren call of El Dorado would be known as the "48ers."

History would later report that the gold discovery in Mormon Bar was minimal in the beginning, and most of that went into Elder Brannan's pocket. The Mormons were quickly replaced, approximately after one year, by other miners, including a large number of Chinese. Suddenly, Mormon Bar turned into a mother lode. The diggings were reported to have yielded about $2 million and were active through the 1870s, and again in the 1930s! An historic marker is at the site, located 500' southeast of the intersection of SH 49/Ben Hur Road, 1.8 miles south of Mariposa. The Mormon Bar was also called Mormon Island.

At least one Swarthout returned to the San Bernardino Valley after the gold mining venture of the Mormon Bar, that was Nathan Swarthout.

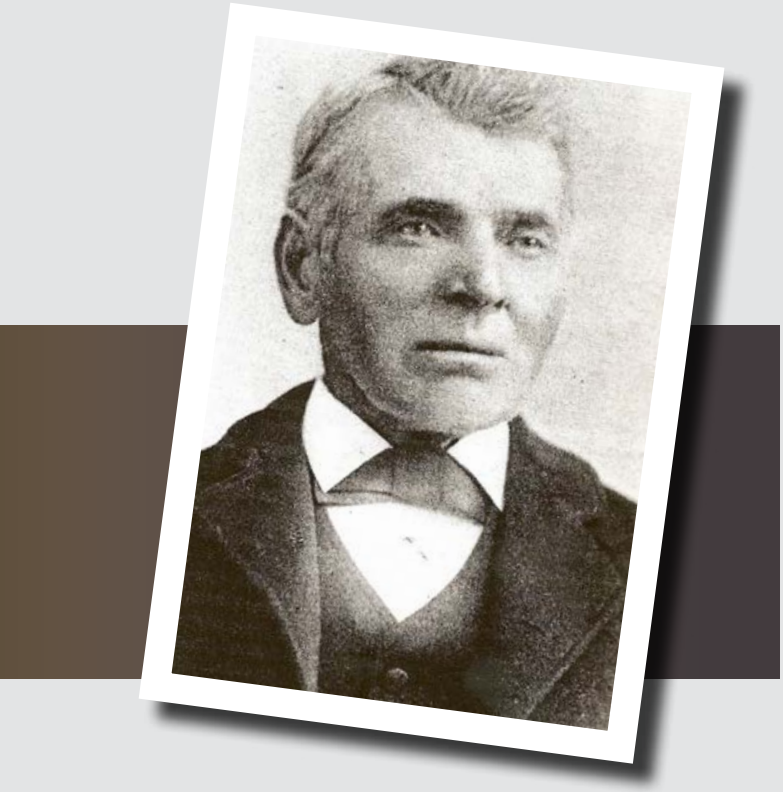
The Swarthout clan remained strong and influential in the San Bernardino area. Four Swarthout ranches were reported to be in the San Bernardino area and Cajon Pass (From the Sun Newspaper; Nov. 11, 1963 issue; "The ranches extended from Little Mountain, south to

"Old Time cattlemen of Big Bear country at a 1937 Moonridge gathering; they are left to right- Cliff Shay, Dale Gentry, Harry Allison (county clerk) Al Swarthout, John Cram, John and Will Talmadge, Will Shay and Sheriff Emmett Shay." -From Foxfire, 100 years of Cow Ranching in the San Bernardino Mts/Mojave Desert, by Kendall Stone; 1989 Sagebrush Publishing-

Baseline from E Street and west beyond I Street." They belonged to George W., Nathan, and Albert "Swarty", and Harley Swarthout. There were four Swarthout brands: The first was George's "2S" at present day Clyde Ranch. (The "S" was backward in the brand). The last one registered was registered by Al "Swarty" Swarthout of the famous Heart Bar Ranch, this was the Box ST (a box with the letter S inside)

NATHAN SWARTHOUT

Nathan Swarthout's contribution to the area of Cajon and San Bernardino was great. Nathan Swarthout, considered to be one of the oldest pioneers of San Bernardino County died of natural causes at his home on G Street, north of Base Line, on January 10, 1903. Swarthout was part of the Mormon Battalion that came to the Cajon Pass and San Bernardino area; he was a private in Company D, which was under the command of Captain Nelson Higgins. A member of the San Bernardino Society of Pioneers, he was very prominent in the early development of San Bernardino. The need for structures and fence post for the early ranchos of the areas caused Swarthout to take charge of work crews to cut cedar trees in the area of Saw Pit Canyon. During this large undertaking, he constructed the Bailey Canyon road in the Sierra Madre area that connected to the Bandini Road, which opened what once used to be a huge timber area. In doing so, the large amount of valuable timber assisted greatly in the building up of San Bernardino.



Nathan Swarthout was buried Monday, January 12, 1903, in the San Bernardino Cemetery by Rev. D. Mc. Gandler, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. One of his pallbearers was William Holcomb, the miner whose discovery of gold in the Holcomb Valley that started San Bernardino's biggest gold rush. (Summary from Nathan Swarthout Obituary, San Bernardino Sun, Jan 12, 1903)

GEORGE W. AND WIFE ELIZABETH BRAIN SWARTHOUT;

San Bernardino pioneer, first settler of present day Clyde Ranch on Lone Pine Canyon Road

George Swarthout arrived in the San Bernardino area in 1847, as part of the Daniel Spencer Company wagon train group. George W. Swarthout reached the area later known as Swarthout Valley, where he ran scattered amount of cattle from the Swarthout Valley, now known as Wrightwood, over the ridge of Table Mountain and unto the Mohave desert floor to the outskirts of the Llano and Victorville. In 1857, Almon Clyde acquired the Swarthout Ranch on Lone Pine Canyon, where he ran a few cattle and grew fruit.

Almon Clyde made an agreement with George Swarthout that he could life the rest of his life on Clyde Ranch if he wanted. He was true to his word, and George Swarthout lived in the place that he obviously loved. Swarthout lived in a line shack that he built when he developed his ranch. The line shack was approximately ¼ mile to the east and down canyon from the present day main house of Clyde Ranch. The cabin is no longer there, but if one would look hard enough, they might find its old foundation. There he lived, until he passed from this life. According to California death records, George W. Swarthout died in December 27, 1872

After leaving the West Cajon valley area, the Mormon wagon train took this old migrant trail that two decades later would be known as Brown Toll Gate, about ninety years after that referred to as Route 66-

AL SWARTHOUT: THE SWARTHOUT CATTLE COMPANY - HEART BAR RANCH

Over in the upper Santa Ana River headwaters (Big Bear area), cattle and sheep of Dr. Benjamin Barton and Matthew Lewis had grazed since the 1860s. It was there in 1884 that Charles Martin and Willie Button created the Heart Bar Ranch and registered that brand. Twenty-three years later, thirty-five year old Albert "Swarty" Swarthout would acquire that ranch.

An association began with the notorious McHaney Gang, who were reputed to be outright rustlers – soon became the undoing of Martin and Button. Charlie Martin, also known as Glen Martin, was a convicted thief and cattle rustler. Through the relationship with the outlaw McHaney gang, he later was a defendant in a famous murder trial. He survived a vicious knife attack from an altercation in a local bar by shooting his attacker. The killing was deemed justified. He eventually tried to go straight and was appointed San Bernardino Chief of Police in 1917.

The only mention of Al Swarthout in the area was in the historical archives in San Bernardino, Victorville and Lucerne Valley. In 1896, Swarthout bought land from W.W. Brown in Lucerne Valley, where he quickly formed the Bar S and begin running cattle. Swarthout move to Old Woman Springs in 1897 when water and feed became scarce. Old Woman Springs, now known as Cottonwood Springs, became part of the Heart Bar Ranch after Al Swarthout acquired it. In 1907 Albert "Swarty" Swarthout and partner Charlie Martin, purchased Heart Bar Ranch, south of Big Bear for summer graze. By 1918, both had sold out, and in 1921 Swarthout again bought the Heart Bar. This time his partner was San Bernardino businessman Dale Gentry. Their cattle were driven to Heart Bar Ranch via Rattlesnake Canyon in the spring, and returning them to Old Woman Springs Ranch in the fall.

Prior to obtaining Heart Bar Ranch, AL Swarthout moved the Bar S from Lucerne Valley to the Old Woman springs area. Due to drought in the lower valleys, Swarthout was forced to run scattered amount of beeves in Big Bear's high country near Coxey Meadows. Winter graze was on the land around Old Woman Springs in Lucerne Valley. The partnership in the Heart bar Ranch was perfect with Swarthout raising the cattle and Dale Gentry handling the business end. However, in 1938, they decided to split up. They could not agree on one selling to the other a half interest in Heart Bar and the Old Woman Springs Ranch they had acquired. After nine years of court proceedings in 1947, Swarthout got Heart Bar and Gentry, Old Woman Springs.

Around 1947, one hundred years after the Swarthouts appeared on scene, the intrusion of resorts and residential developments were gradually bringing an end to the cattle business. The decline began when the creation of the lakes at Arrowhead, Green Valley and Big Bear had taken away choice grazing land. Later, improved roadways and mode of transportation brought increasing numbers of visitors into mountain country that had once been open range land. The inevitable finally arrived, cattle ranching a nd m odern life-styles became absolutely incompatible and the final herd came down from the mountains.

The ranches that faded from time was Al Swarthout's Heart Bar Ranch, Hitchcock Ranch, Shay Ranch (bought out by the Talmadges, the main operation moved to Joshua Tree National Park), the IS ranch (also later owned by the Talmadges. It actually stayed in operation until 1954).

Prior to the slow death of Al Swarthout's Heart Bar Ranch and the Swarthout Cattle Company, the ranch operations reached from the Lucerne Valley, to the west slope of the San Bernardino hills to The Oasis of Mara, which is located near the present day Joshua Tree National Park. The Oasis was first settled by the Serrano Indian who called it "Mara",meaning "the place of little springs and much grass".

In the early years, the desert was open range and cattlemen moved their animals seasonally from one area to another in search of adequate food and water. The cow puncher life was explained in a simple way by an old Swarthout Cattle Company hired hand named Jim Hester; "In those days, if you were a cowpuncher, you had a pair of chaps, a horse and a pack horse, a bedroll, salt, staples, a six-shooter, and a big chew of tobacco."

Al "Swarty"Swarthout was well liked and deeply respected by the other ranchers in the Big Bear area. Kenadll Stone, in his book Foxsong: 100 Years of Cow Ranching in the San Bernardino Mts./ Mojave Desert, remember "Swarty" this way: "Swarty, a small man physically, ran the toughest ranch of the four and made up for his size by having and using what was obviously a high IQ." Swarty raised

American saddle bred horses, they were good mountain cow horses. Their speed and athletic ability made them tops.

It is unknown when exactly Al Swarthout came to the Lucerne Valley, Bear Valley area. Knowledge of the area, and the ability to use the beneficial attributes of the land for a thriving cattle ranch, was

obviously passed to him by Uncle Nathan Swarthout, the brother of George Swarthout, who was the original settler of present day Clyde Ranch in Lone Pine Canyon.

Al "Swarty" was ten months old when his father (George Swarthout) died, leaving him to be raised by the surviving Swarthout clan in San Bernardino. Al Swarthout, who was born February 11, 1872, died at the age of 91 in 1963.

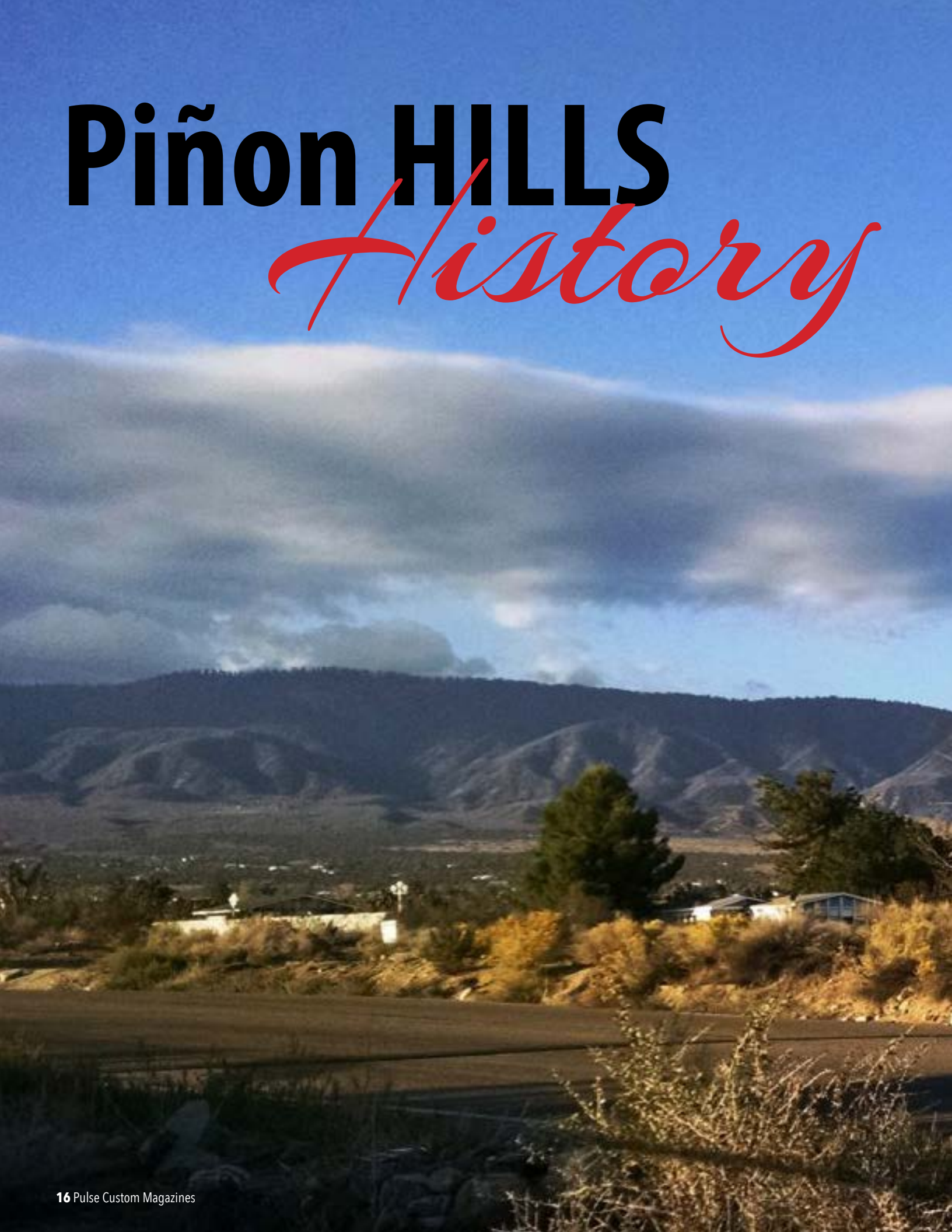
The Swarthouts...just plain ol' settlers? Not on your life!

Statement clarification:

"Now, the Church those who choose to stay behind as "men, whose character is such that he could not be tolerated in Utah" (As reported by Major General, James H. Carleton)" was supposed to have been...

"Now, the Church declares those who choose to stay behind as "men, (in San Bernardino) their character is such that he could not be tolerated in Utah" (As reported by Major General, James H. Carleton)

Piñon HILLS *History*



The earliest inhabitants of the Piñon Hills dates back to approximately 4,000 years ago, aboriginal peoples occupied the higher elevations of the San Bernardino Mountains. The earliest uses were as gathering sites for food, both plants and animals. The Serrano Indians, approximately 1000 - 1,500 years ago, established permanent summer camps, coming down to the lower elevations in winter. The Shoshonian, primarily mountain Indians inhabited the Jaw Bone Canyon. For many centuries they used a trail which was later known as the Fort Tejon Road. The Barrel Springs received its name from the Indians who lived in the canyon because they would fill their barrels with water for the stagecoaches that came through the area. The first white man in recorded history appeared in the Mojave Desert in March 1776 when Francisco Garces, a Spanish Franciscan priest, followed an old Indian trail along the Mojave River looking for a practical route from Arizona to Northern California. In 1851, under the direction of Charles C. Rich, Mormon colonists from Utah were sent to found a settlement around this area.

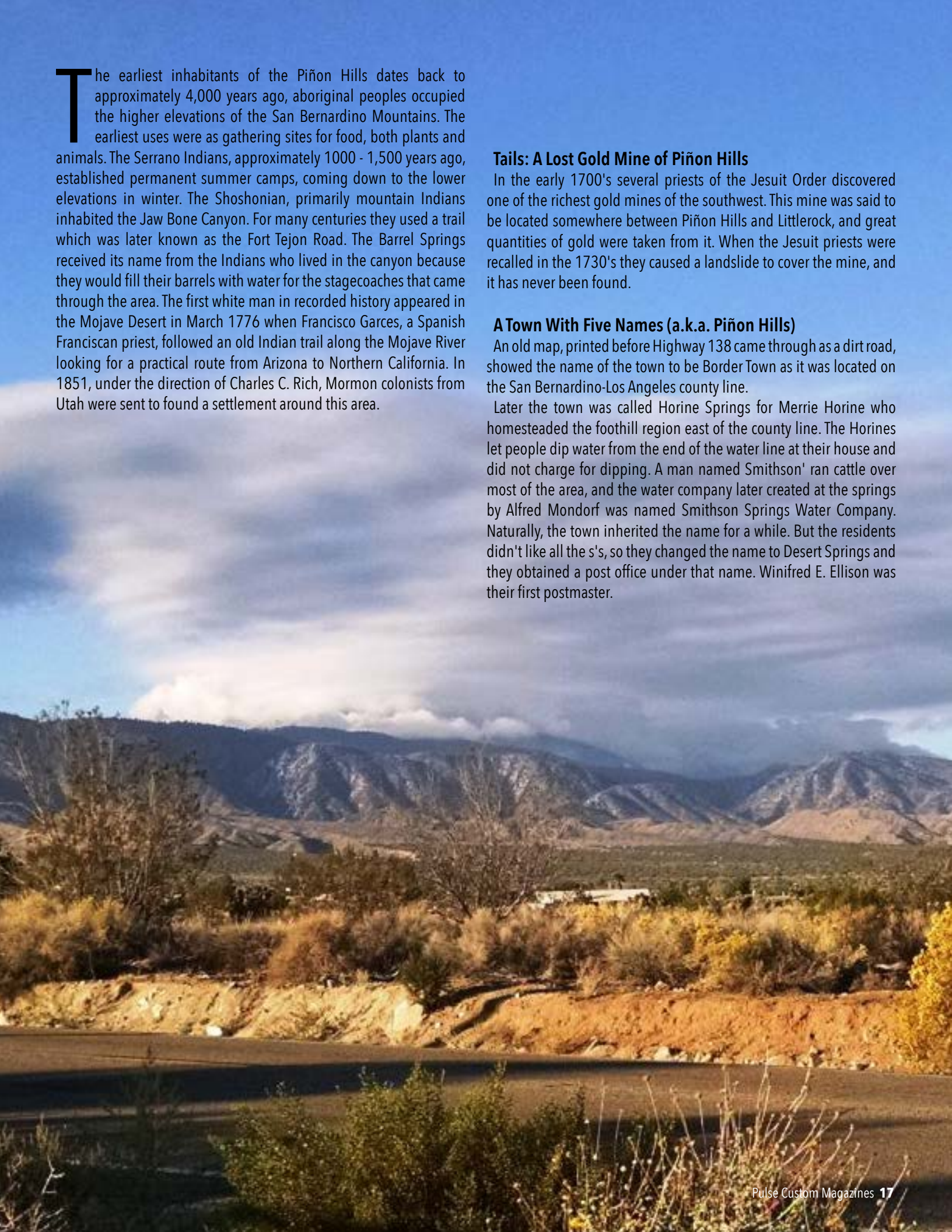
Tails: A Lost Gold Mine of Piñon Hills

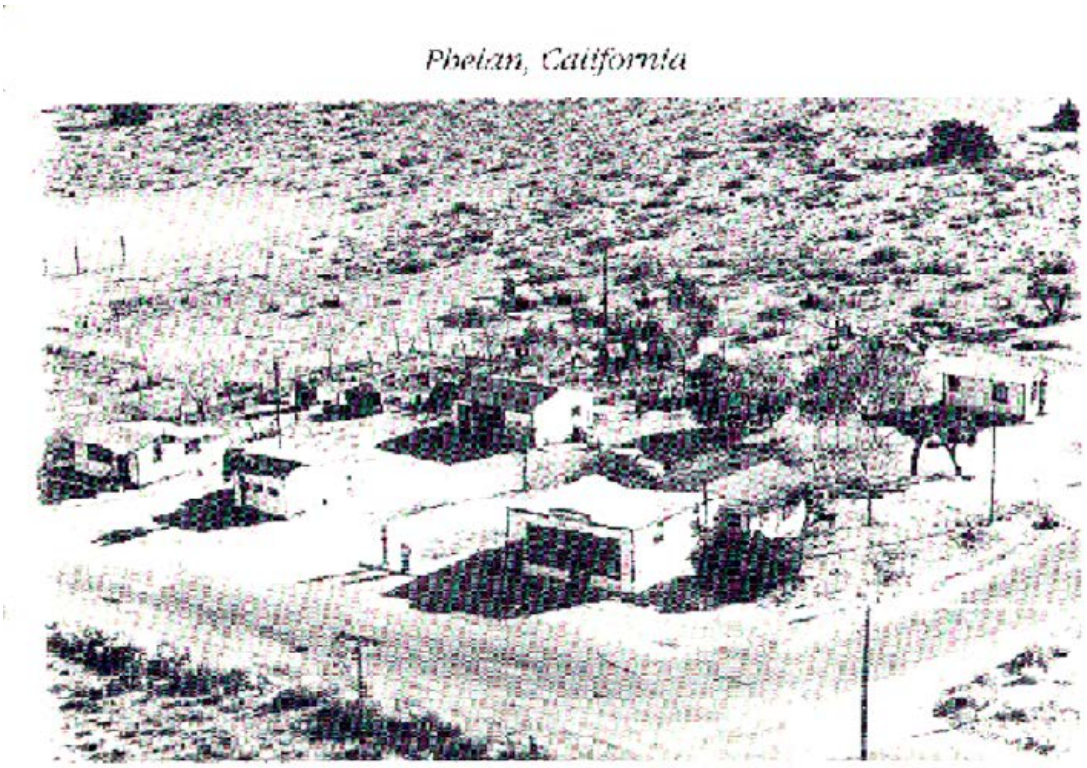
In the early 1700's several priests of the Jesuit Order discovered one of the richest gold mines of the southwest. This mine was said to be located somewhere between Piñon Hills and Littlerock, and great quantities of gold were taken from it. When the Jesuit priests were recalled in the 1730's they caused a landslide to cover the mine, and it has never been found.

A Town With Five Names (a.k.a. Piñon Hills)

An old map, printed before Highway 138 came through as a dirt road, showed the name of the town to be Border Town as it was located on the San Bernardino-Los Angeles county line.

Later the town was called Horine Springs for Merrie Horine who homesteaded the foothill region east of the county line. The Horines let people dip water from the end of the water line at their house and did not charge for dipping. A man named Smithson' ran cattle over most of the area, and the water company later created at the springs by Alfred Mondorf was named Smithson Springs Water Company. Naturally, the town inherited the name for a while. But the residents didn't like all the s's, so they changed the name to Desert Springs and they obtained a post office under that name. Winifred E. Ellison was their first postmaster.





Phelan Road and Sheep Creek, 1949

There was trouble in the wings for Desert Springs. The San Bernardino Post Office mail sorting division, threw the mail too fast and letters directed to Desert Springs went to Desert Hot Springs much too frequently (today, the zip code method would keep that from happening - anyone want to go back to Desert Springs?)

The Area receives its Final Official Name, Piñon HILLS after a secret ballot by settlers at the Chamber of Commerce building the name Piñon Hills was the winner.

There aren't too many other locations with the distinction of having had five names in 20 years. The name Piñon Hills comes from the Pinus monophylla (pinyon pine) that dominate the desert-facing slopes.

Stagecoach Route

The Butterfield Stagecoach Route was an important stage line in the 19th century. It would stop at the old mailboxes on the Fort El Tejon Road, which ran through the Frontier Ranch. Catherine Schneider, aided by her father J.G. Schneider homesteaded the Frontier Ranch. In 1926 the 320-acre ranch was a frequent stop by school age students for the pear pies baked by Catherine's mother. The cement slab where the coach halted is in place today.

A few of the early homesteaders of the area were the Grettenbergs, Hale, Kunzel, Schneider and the Detless family. Forty acres on the northwest corner of Smoke Tree and Sheep Creek Road was purchased by Maud Grettenberg, and was known for many years as the Grettenberg Ranch. William Schwarts purchased the Smithson Springs Water Company, along with the Grettenberg Ranch and he was the sole owner of both for many years. Six hundred, forty acres where Deerhaven is now and where the Yucca Inn was permanently located. Mrs. Mabel Beekley, daughter of the Detless family and her

husband, William Beekley built the Yucca Inn. Henry and Winnie Ellison, homesteaders, built the houses on Tamarack Road, east of Mountain Road. They also built the market building on Mountain Road and Highway 138.

In the 20's, Joseph Walker and Henry Anthony, Sr., were pioneers on Spring Road. Joe used to say that he could sit there on the hill and count 31 stills down on the flats during prohibitions. The settlers were in good shape until 1924, when dry years and the Depression forced many of the homesteaders out of the area.

When George Air Force base opened in the 40's many new people were once again attracted to the area

The First Chamber of Commerce

A World War II Quonset hut, north of Highway 138 on the homestead of John and Nettie Jane Hale was used as the first Chamber of Commerce. In 1934, people wanted something on the more populated south side to the highway so they wouldn't have to risk their necks getting across Highway 138. So the property was sold and Fred and Maude McGee donated land for a new building on Mountain Road. It took many years before contributions of money and muscle finally saw to the completion of the building in the late 1950's. Children living in Piñon Hills were educated in the Phelan School; a wood framed building now used as the Community Building.

Throughout the 1950's, the Piñon Hills were growing with home seekers. So much that the San Bernardino County placed a building moratorium on meters for the old water system and restricted building even when the owners agreed to erect an acceptable water tank at a considerable cost to themselves. There were some dry years in the mid-70 when water was hauled in by outside suppliers.

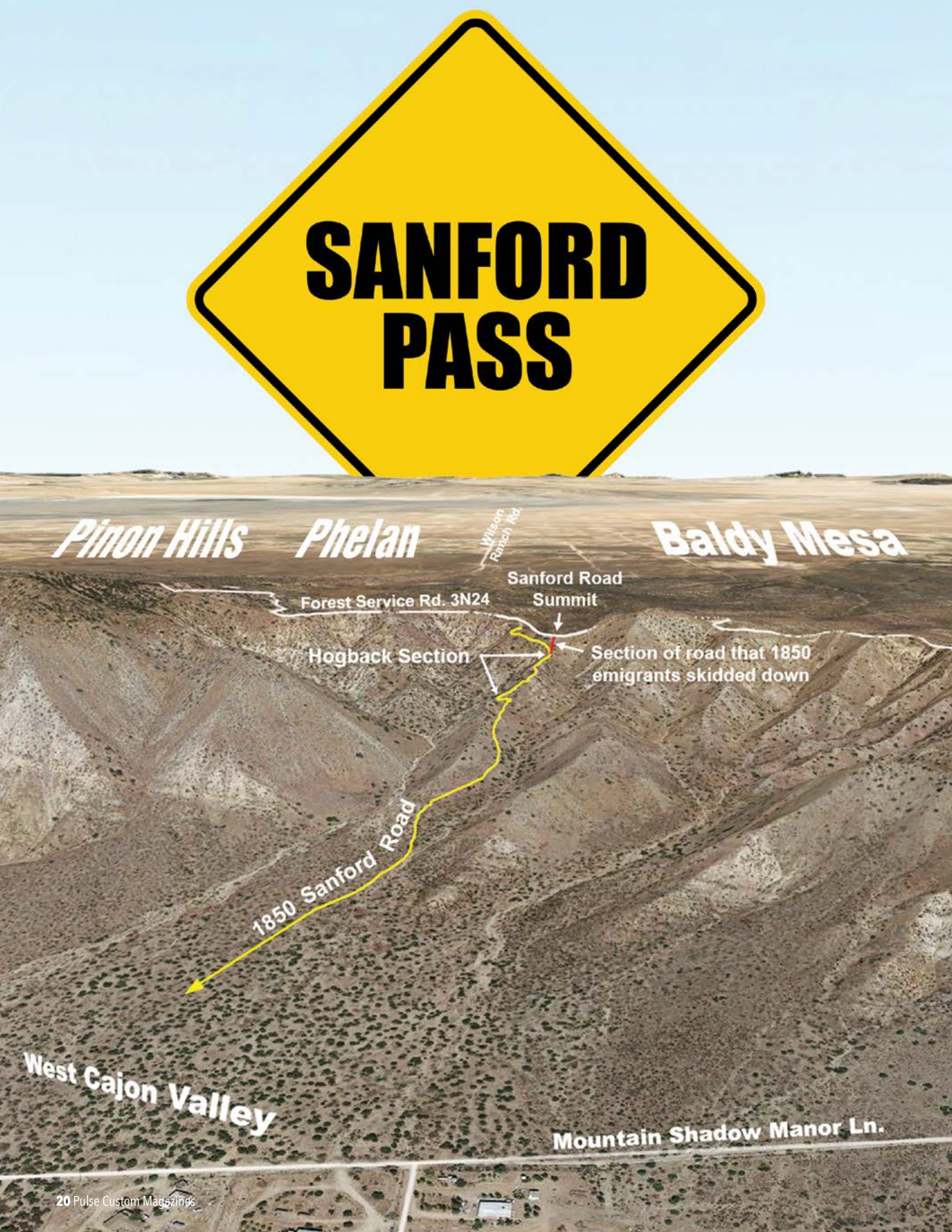
Then in 1978 the Smithson Spring stockholders decided to offer to sell their company to San Bernardino County and seek annexation of the water company's jurisdiction to County Service Area 70, Area Land Zone L. The Zone L system went under a $3.5 million improvement and expansion. The Board of supervisors approved the annexation on April 26, 1978, and lifted the five-year building moratorium on Piñon Hills.

Emergency Volunteers Get Organized

The Piñon Hills continued to grow and prosper. But services were lacking. To assist during emergencies, the Piñon Hills area joined with Phelan to develop a Callman Volunteer Emergency Service in 1978. The call men and women received first aid and fire response training.

Today, the community of Piñon Hills thrives. New homeowners are attracted to this area, many because of its beautiful open spaces, and clean air or who are just tired of the big city. Whatever the reason may be to live in Piñon Hills, families will find a sense of days gone by, where time moves a little slower and you can appreciate nature's splendor.

By Carolyn McNamara


SANFORD
PASS
Pinon Hills
Phelan
Wilson Ranch Rd.
Baldy Mesa
Sanford Road Summit
Forest Service Rd. 3N24
Hogback Section
Section of road that 1850 emigrants skidded down
1850 Sanford Road
West Cajon Valley
Mountain Shadow Manor Ln.

For many years, I've been fascinated by accounts of pioneers who made the arduous journey from Salt Lake City to Southern California by wagon. I recently decided to retrace a section of the famous Sanford Road in the west Cajon Valley known as one of the most difficult parts of the entire trek.

Sanford Road sometimes called "The Sanford Cutoff" was built in 1850 by William T.B. Sanford, and it holds historic significance as the earliest "passable" wagon road through the Cajon Pass.

Sanford was a prominent resident of Los Angeles, and he joined fellow entrepreneurs Phineas Banning and David W. Alexander in a venture to open a trade route between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. In 1855, Sanford built an "improved" road into the Cajon Pass, about 1.5 miles west of the 1850 road.

The Old Spanish Trail had been the main route into the Cajon Pass for many years, but it took an easterly course into the Cajon Pass through Coyote Canyon (known today as Crowder Canyon) that was nearly impossible for wagon travel.

Sanford's 1850 road departed from the Old Spanish Trail near present-day Victorville, and went southwest toward Baldy Mesa and Wilson Ranch Road. The wagon road climbed up the grade to Sanford Pass, and then dropped down a precipitous course into the west Cajon Valley. Sanford Road rejoined the Old Spanish Trail near where the truck scales are on the 15 Freeway.

Mormon Monument on Highway 138, 4.2 miles east of the 15 Freeway. The location of Sanford Pass can be seen by lining up the outer edges of the wagon wheel on top of the monument. The thick patch of Joshua Trees on the summit ridge in the distance is where the pioneers descended on the Sanford Road into the valley. (Photo by Mark Landis)

I wanted to explore the Sanford Pass section so I could see how difficult it would have been for the 1850 migrants to traverse with stock animals, and all their possessions loaded into heavy wagons.

On this excursion, I was joined by fellow history correspondent Nick Cataldo, and researcher Gary Smith. We used the written account of Mormon migrant David Cheesman to retrace the path his party traveled in 1850. They traveled south on the newly built Sanford Road from the Baldy Mesa area, up to the final summit ridge, and then descended into the West Cajon Valley.

Cheesman's words captured the essence of the grueling trip over the summit of Sanford Road. The 1850 migrant company met freighter William T.B. Sanford while traveling along the Mojave River, and he told them he had recently improved a route into the Cajon Pass, a few miles west of the old Coyote Canyon route. According to Cheesman's journal, Sanford's teamsters "had rendered the canyon passable."

The group approached the summit of Sanford's road in midafternoon, and encountered a short, steep section just below the ridgeline. Cheesman wrote; "all hands, women and all, pushed, so we reached the long desired summit." He then described the narrow "hogback" ridge that intersected the summit. "Once on the summit," he wrote, "the intersecting ridge was so narrow that the fore and hind wheels were on either side."

On the steepest section of the summit descent, Cheesman noted; "for a distance of fifty or sixty feet, it was so steep, that the cattle all slid down. After that the descent was gradual." On very steep grades, teamsters moving large, heavy wagons would typically lock their rear wheels to slow their descent, and the migrants employed this method to descend in a 'controlled skid.

We began our search for the Sanford Road at the recently rebuilt Mormon Monument on Highway 138, 4.2 miles east of the 15 Freeway. The monument was originally built in 1937 to honor the Mormon pioneers who entered the valley on the Sanford Road, and it was rebuilt after Highway 138 was widened in 2017. A wagon wheel was installed on top of the monument which allows visitors to line up a northern view across the wheel's outer edges. The view aligns with a spot on the northern rim of the West Cajon Valley where the 1850 Sanford Road crested, and dropped into the valley.

The spot on the northern rim is marked by a dense patch of Joshua trees that can be used as a landmark to guide you toward the ridge – binoculars are helpful here, and at other locations along the trip.

5-View up Hogback Toward Summit

Once we had located the point on the ridge, we drove .9 miles north on Highway 138, and turned right (east) on Mountain Shadow Manor Lane, then drove .9 miles east and parked on the north side of the dirt road.

The hike began with a gradual slope toward the ridge, and then we entered a trough between two ridges. Shortly after we entered the trough, we started to see the remnants of the Sanford Road traversing the ridge on the left.

We climbed up to the road, which is now a narrow path, and began following it along the side of the ridge, until it made a short switchback to the left, and then turned right onto the ridge. At this point, we realized we were on the infamous "hogback" described by the pioneers.

Years of rain, fires, and variations in undergrowth had certainly changed the road, but the general terrain remains similar to what the emigrants experienced in 1850. We headed up the ridgeline scrambling through occasionally dense brush, and noted the steepness of the grade was increasing.

A few hundred feet further, we came to the bottom of what must have been the steep initial "50 or 60 feet" descent from the summit, described by David Cheesman. The grade climbed sharply for the described distance to the summit of the ridge, where it met the present-day Forest Service Road 3N24. The Forest Service Road runs several miles along this ridge, and can be used to reach Sanford's Pass by vehicle.

According to Britannica, a mid-1800s prairie schooner wagon would typically weigh about 3,200 pounds fully loaded, and a larger freight wagon would weigh substantially more. The shear logistics of rigging and lowering the wagons down this grade and onto the hogback ridge is staggering. The group had to get all livestock safely down the grade as well.

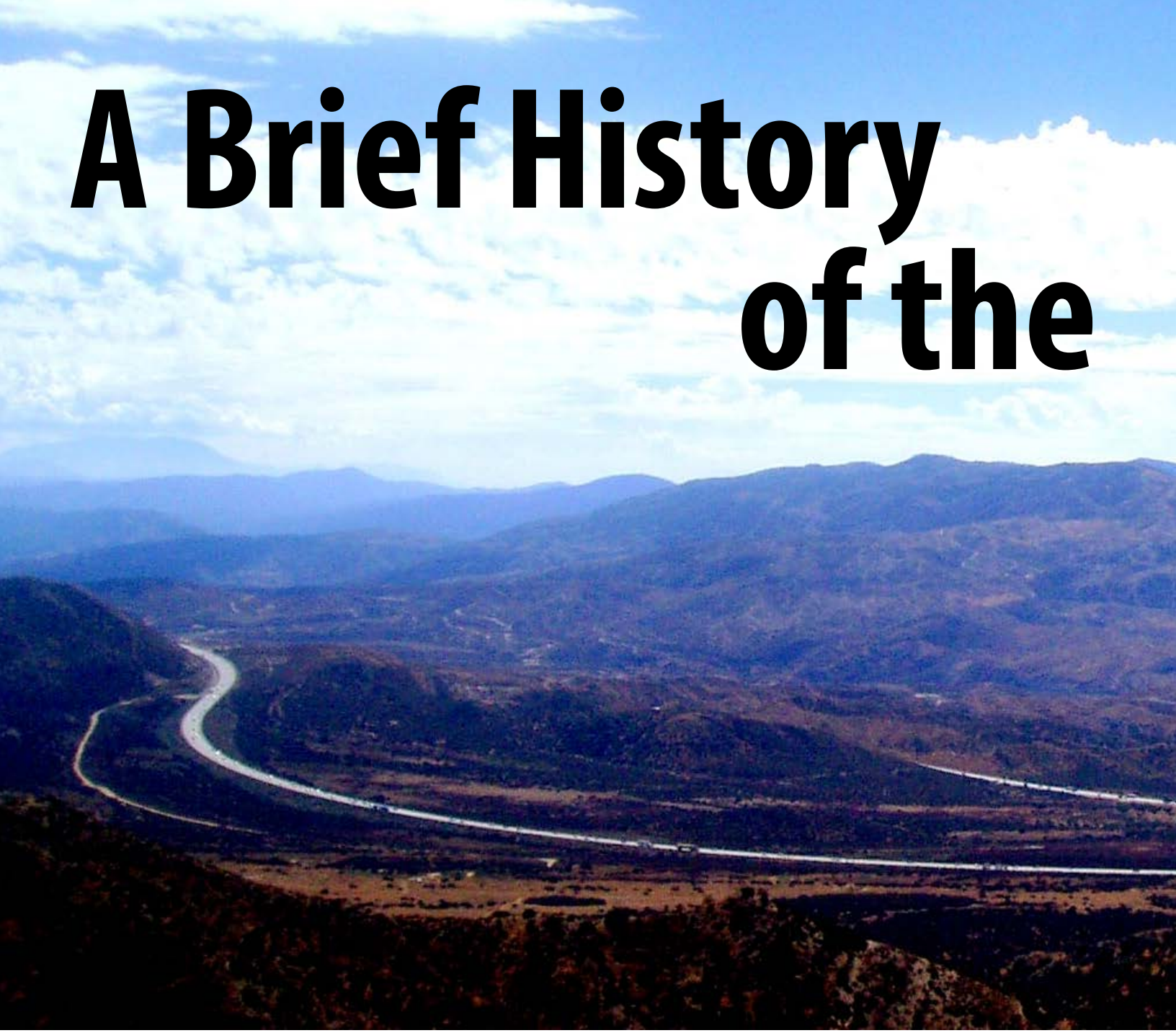
After taking photos and trying to imagine the challenges faced in 1850, we hiked back down the narrow hogback to flatter ground and stopped for a quick rest. As I looked back up the harrowing route, I thought the emigrants must have breathed a deep sigh of relief when they reached this spot, knowing that the most difficult part of their long journey was over.

For more information on the Sanford Road, go to: *http://mojavedesert.net/history/pioneer/toll-road-02.html* and: *https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=80751*

Mark Landis is a freelance writer. He can be reached at *Historyinca@yahoo.com*.

Editor's note: This story has been updated to correct the spelling of Mormon migrant David Cheesman's name.

A Brief History of the



The Cajon Pass is the valley that separates the San Bernardino and San Gabriel mountain ranges. At one time these two ranges were one, formed by the San Andreas fault where two continental plates, the North American and the Pacific plates push against each other. As the years passed a low point eroded by water and helped along by additional faulting formed the valley between the two.

The plates pulled away from and and pushed against each other forming new canyons, creeks and springs. More erosion formed what is now known as the West Cajon Valley or amphitheater leaving the slanted Victorville Apron with the headless and dry canyons we see today where the high Mojave Desert ends creating a passage into the inland valleys and basin below.

Since we do not know when man first came to the land we can only guess when people first laid eyes on the rift between the ranges. Certainly early on man found his way through the pass in one direction or another in his wanderings many thousands of years ago. The Indians, the Serrano in particular, knew the valley well and lived there for hundreds, maybe even thousands of years before the first European ever found his way into the area. For this same indeterminable time the Indians used this valley and the passes and saddles in the mountains as a corridor to trade.

It may never be known, but possibly the first white man to enter the passageway between the two lands could have been a deserter from the Spanish Army. What is known is that Pedro Fages, who was destined to become the Governor of California, was the first to pass through in search of these men. The deserters were said to have been living with Indians in lands not previously explored. Fages rode through the area coming from the south and soon after discovering and naming the San Bernardino Valley. He did not spend long in this

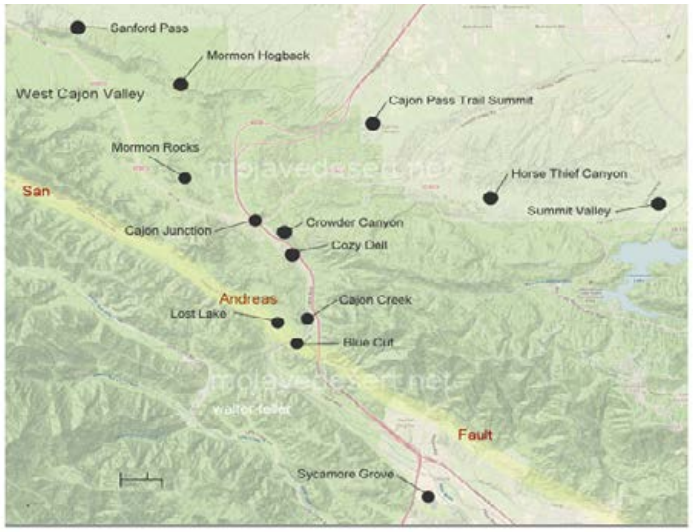
CAJON PASS

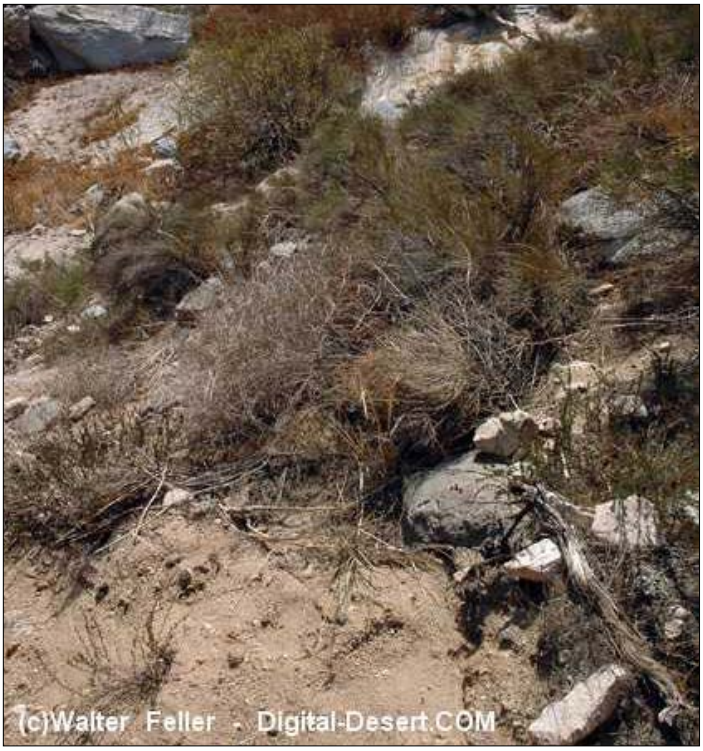
place. From the Cajon he rode west in the foothills along the edge of the Mojave toward the ranges that come together to form the western-most wedge of the desert.

Padre Francisco Garces came soon after at the end of his 1775 crossing of the interior Mojave Desert. Some reports claim Garces crossed through one of the mountain passes to the east and others have him descending the pass into the Southern California area. Next was mountain man Jedediah Smith. Disputes are likewise to Father Garces. Soon after Smith, came Antonio Armijo with his mule train blazing what was to become the Old Spanish Trail bringing commerce between Los Angeles and Santa Fe.

As trade developed the route became known and more and more the Pass was used. The Indians became absorbed into the missions and the village (Muscupiabit) was abandoned nearly completely.

The horses bred on the ranchos in the south were beautiful, strong,





Only miles from Southern California proper the Mormon wagons descended Coyote Canyon to find the would have to unload and disassemble their wagons then carry them over the rocks in order to continue.

and well-fed creatures bringing 10 times the price in New Mexico and much more than that in Missouri than could be had for them in Los Angeles. This was attractive to horse thieves. Indians running away from the missions would steal them and ride across the desert. These desparate men would join together with renegades from other bands and mountain men who were looking for a way to make fortunes stealing horses from the Spanish and later on the Mexicans.

The most famous of these was a Ute Indian named Walkara who became known as the 'Greatest Horsethief of all time.' Walkara, or Walker as some would call him conducted many raids, but was responsible for one raid in which 3,000, maybe even 5,000 horses were stolen. This was the largest raid ever. Mountain men such as Pegleg Smith and possibly several others joined in. One night these volunteers and fifty or so of Walkara's band of renegades used the Cajon Pass as one of the corridors to make their escape. It was said that the dust of the galloping horses could be seen for 50 miles as they raced across the dry desert plains.

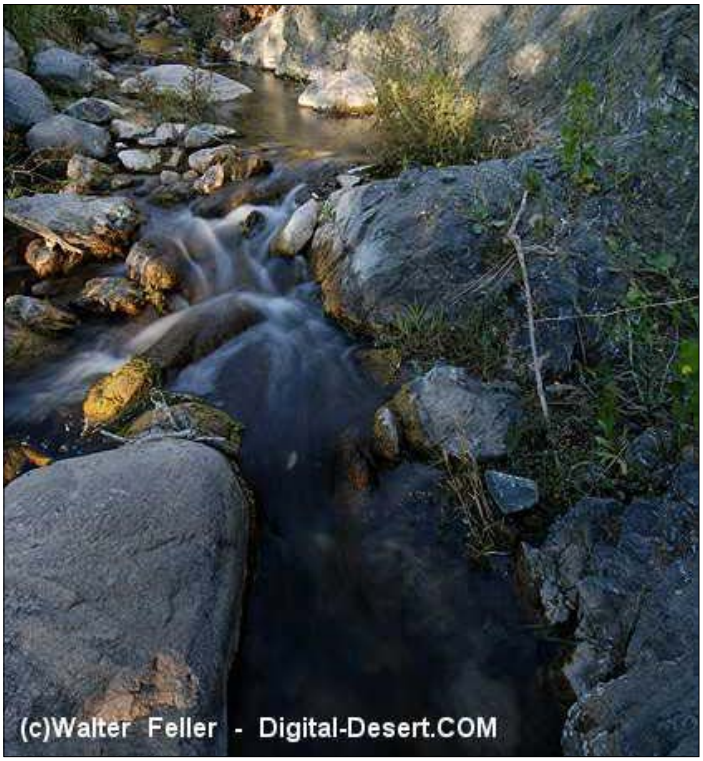
The Mormon Battalion disbanded and many crossed the desert to return to Salt Lake. They were the first to bring a wagon up the pass at the beginning of their journey. A year later Captain Jefferson Hunt, familiarized with the trail by this trip was contracted to lead a party of gold seekers across the desert and down through the pass into California. The wagons they brought were larger and much heavier requiring them to be dismantled and carried over the rocks near the bottom of Coyote Canyon as they entered the main portion of the Cajon. This was very troublesome and caused much difficulty. Other trails into and out of the pass were sought and developed.

Maintaining the wagon road was a difficult job. John Brown was contracted to build a toll road affecting a clear path through the pass. The toll road, however became quite controversial and people found ways to bypass it.

The railroad came through the pass in the 1880s. This was a faster more economical way of moving goods to and from the rapidly growing state of California.

The toll road eventually became the alignment for a paved road as automobile travel became more frequent. This road was called the National Old Trails Highway. This highway in turn became the U.S. Route 66. As America became an automobile culture, mobile hotels (motels) and rest stops were developed to make the journey more pleasant. Of course repair services and restaurants were included in the roadside amenities. A cut in the grade to the summit of the Cajon was made and eventually widened to accommodate State Highway 91. In later years the highway was widened again and became what we know today as the Interstate 15 Freeway.

Cajon: the Spanish word for 'box' was used as a geographical term to describe boxlike canyons. It is included in the names of five Mexican land grants or claims-all in southern counties. Cajon: Pass, Canyon, Creek, town [San Bernardino]. the original Cajon was el cajon que llaman Muscupiavit (the canyon that they call Muscupiavit), as it was referred to before 1806, Muscupiavit being an Indian rancheria, the name of which has been spelled in various ways. On November 24, 1819, Padre Nuez named it solemnly el Caxon de San Gabriel de Amuscopiabit, the name appears in the following decades with various spellings. The abbreviated form Cajon Pass, is used on Gibbes' map of 1852. The town was laid out when the California Southern Railroad (Santa Fe) began operations through the pass in 1885, but a settlement called Cajon had already appeared on Williamson's map of 1853.



As the wagons moved on water was finally plentiful in the creek at the lower narrows. The ordeal was at an end or beginning depending on which way they were heading.

In The Shadows of the San Gabriel Mountains

By Don Fish Jr. - Editor & Publisher Tri-Community NewsPlus

Two prominent geologic features that many who frequent the Tri-Community often ask about are the huge rock-laden "scars" of barren greyish mountainside sitting on the northern slope of Wright Mountain. These "scars" are located just above a small community nestled in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains called Piñon Hills. What they are and how they got there is a story that begins millions of years ago.

While most mountain ranges in California follow parallel to the coastline in a north to south direction, the San Gabriels, known as a transverse range, run east to west. This transverse range resulted from movement between the Pacific tectonic plate and the North American tectonic plate and began about 20 million years ago. A large part of the continental crust trapped between the two plates broke loose and turned 90 degrees as the Pacific plate dragged it to the northeast. Point Conception along the California coast is where this shift occurs as the coastline abruptly changes direction just south of this point. The San Gabriel Mountain Range is located directly inland from Point Conception and can be seen sitting perpendicular to the mountain ranges to the north.

The San Gabriel Mountain range began forming about 5-7 million years ago when part of the continental crust that broke off began rising along the Sierra Madre and Cucamonga fault zones. Geologically speaking, there has been a lot of recent activity as the San Gabriels are thrust up and cut back by erosion. Much of the Los Angeles basin

Landmarks that can be seen from miles around the Heath and Sheep Canyon slides have been causing havoc with locals for over a century.

A quaint mountain cabin, now filled with rocks and mud after heavy rains, released tons of mud and debris from the mountains above Wrightwood in November 1965. Photo Credit: The Hannon Collection/Tri-Community NewsPlus

sits on top of sediments washed off the slopes of the San Gabriels.

The two "scars" are landslides resulting from this geological tug-of-war between the moving tectonic plates and erosion. The grinding Pacific and North American plates create fractured rocks mixed with broken earth thrust up, forming the mountain range. When conditions are right, usually a significant snowpack followed by a quick melt or many days of heavy rains, the earth on the mountain slopes becomes saturated. As a result, the rocks become extremely slippery and dislodge, causing a mudslide and subsequent flooding.

Evidence of these events appears above Heath Canyon and Sheep Canyon in Wrightwood. Runoff and mudflow travel down these canyons into the Sheep Creek Wash and onto the desert floor, creating an alluvial fan. Called the Sheep Creek Wash alluvial fan, it can be seen in satellite photos as a grey triangle sitting on the desert floor that points directly to the two landslides. Mudslides have been occurring in this area for many years; most recently, slides have occurred in 1938, 1941, 1965, 1969, 1971-73, 1978, 1985, and 2004.

The late Susan Gates, founder and publisher of Tri-Community NewsPlus, a local newspaper, lived in Wrightwood during the November 1965 mudslide and gave this first-hand account:

"One of the most vivid memories of people who had watched the storm was the slow oozing of the mud, which resembled wet cement as it made its way down the flood channels, carrying entire pine trees and huge boulders - some the size of a Volkswagen. The rumble of the rocks crashing into each other was awesome."

"Many homes were filled with mud. Informal teams of neighbors armed with shovels descended on these houses to help shovel them out, six to seven feet deep in many cases. You had to be careful when walking by an open window not to get hit with a shovel full of mud being pitched out. One weekend home had electric baseboard heaters in every room (this was the era of Gold Medallion All-Electric Homes). The heaters had been left on low in anticipation of the upcoming Thanksgiving weekend so that house was not only full of mud but hot steaming mud. Once the power was turned off at the meter, diggers had to wait until the muck cooled to get in to clean it up. Even though most traditional Thanksgiving celebrations with abundant food, family, and friends did not occur, it made all of us who lived in Wrightwood grateful for our neighbors and probably brought about an even stronger sense of community."

It is only the beginning of the journey for the San Gabriel Mountains. But, they will shape the future of all that is around them. One thing is for sure; the Tri-Community has not seen the last of the Heath and Sheep Canyon mudslides.

For more Tri-Community history, visit *4newsplus.com* or pick up a copy of the NewsPlus Monthly newspaper from a local business.

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SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

Gone Wrong In Llano

Robbyn, a fan of local history and this column, contacted me, and described a place to visit that she had heard about through family stories. After a few more historical tidbits from Robbyn, I discovered those family legends were indeed based on historical facts.

As with all stories – let's start at the beginning.

At fifty-five years of age, Job Harriman had had it with his law practice and his political aspirations. The defeated California candidate for governor with the Socialist Labor Party in 1898, and the defeated Vice-Presidential candidate for the United States with the Democratic Socialist Party in 1900, and twice defeated for mayor of Los Angeles, Harriman knew a change of scenery was needed.

So, in 1913, the avowed socialist decided he could build a community where all worked together, to make a better tomorrow.

According the to the book, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes* (Yaacov Oved, 1987), Harriman was quoted, "It became apparent to me, that people would never abandon their means of livelihood, good or bad, capitalistic or otherwise, until other methods were developed which would promise advantages at least as good as those by which they were living."

And who wouldn't like those sort of promises?

What Harriman needed was a place to put down roots for his desire

of everyone living in harmony with each other, without disagreements or turmoil.

Hmmm, most people can't get two hours of that at a family Thanksgiving dinner.

Anyway, that paradise was approximately 45 miles northeast of the city of Los Angeles, in the Antelope Valley. Utopia had been waiting for a visionary and Harriman was that dreamer, thus, his socialist enclave would become a reality on May 1st, 1914.

But first Harriman needed money to purchase the nearly 9,000 acres in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County, in the town of Llano.

This is where his friend and socialist banker, Gentry P. McCorkle, from the city of Corona, came into play. Socialist banker? That seems like an oxymoron. But in the book, *Bread and Hyacinths: The Rise and Fall of Utopian Los Angeles* (Paul Greenstein, etal, 1992), Harriman is quoted as proposing his dream to McCorkle, "If you join me and a few other of my friends, we will build a city and make homes for many a homeless family. We will show the world a trick they do not know, which is how to live without war or interest in money or rent on land or profiteering in any manner."

McCorkle was in, and Llano del Rio was soon up and running. Of course, being in the High Desert, there was a need for water, but Harriman and McCorkle had also purchased the water rights from the Mescal Land and Water Company, which had control over most of the water from Big Rock Creek. This stream, active for much of the year, got its water from the San Gabriel Mountains to the south and should be plenty to sustain a thriving colony. Or so they assumed.

In Harriman's magazine, *The Western Comrade*, large advertisements went nationwide inviting like-minded individuals to this sparsely populated but beautiful location in Southern California. He touted how the land would be a bountiful mecca for all sorts of agricultural products.

There were some catches before a person could become a member of the commune – and, isn't there always a catch in paradise?

First, a person had to believe in the tenets of socialism. Second, the person had to have three socialist references. Third, you had to purchase two thousand shares of the Llano del Rio Company at a dollar a share. And fourth, you had to be Caucasian – won't touch that last requirement here.

Of course, Llano del Rio promised a living wage of four dollars per day for labor – that was a good deal higher pay than normal for that time. But, if a person didn't have the money for the shares, they were allowed to purchase three-quarters on credit to the company.

Simple math, one dollar a day to the loan debt, the other daily amount for living expenses provided by the company, and the leftover of an individual wages went into a general account for the community. At times of surplus, all would share in the profits from the combined work.

Turned out, there never seemed to be much of a surplus at all.

People started arriving from around the country, and in the first year, over 150 people lived in Llano del Rio. Most lived in tents with their families, but soon stone structures started to appear. The comrades built stone meeting halls, dormitories, and even a small hotel, among other buildings, making the area a real community. Rather a laudable accomplishment. By the beginning of 1917, nearly 1,100 people resided at Llano del Rio. But as with many dreams, this one of Harriman's didn't quite pan out.

Distrust and accusations started erupting at Llano del Rio between various group members. Some like the Brush Gang, who had private meetings outside (thus the name), complained the board of directors treated themselves better than the rest of the community. True or not, mistrust creeped in.

It seemed, to paraphrase George Orwell, all comrades were equal but some comrades were more equal than others.

By the end of 1917, most members had moved away and in 1918, Llano del Rio filed bankruptcy. Many of the original members, including Harriman had relocated to New Llano, in Louisiana to start over at the end of 1917. That dream also ended in 1937.

As we walked amongst the ruins of Llano del Rio, Laureen and I met a couple from Los Angeles, Chris and Joanne, who were also visiting the site. Chris had explored the area by motorcycle quite often and always wondered what the story behind all the stone remains were.

"So much history and so close to home."

We agreed. It's interesting to walk among the concrete and rock remains of what was once touted as a community for all and which in reality became a community for none.

Mojave Desert Aviation Tour

By Cliff & Ilene Bandringa

A road trip through the Mojave Desert doesn't have to be all about looking at the scenery. It can also include visiting places where aviation history was made and is still being made today. We'll take you on this easy road trip that stretches between Victorville and Palmdale, which is just north of the Piñon Hills / Phelan area, and show you where aviation evolved and was transformed in the Mojave Desert during the last half of the 20th century.

Most people who travel the lonely roads through this desert north of Los Angeles don't realize that this region was, and still is, used by aircraft manufacturers to build some of the most iconic aircraft ever built. That aircraft includes the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, the F-117 Nighthawk, the F-22 Raptor and U-2, Northrup's B-2 Bomber, the Space Shuttle and the legendary XB-70 Valkyrie.

Trip Overview

On this trip we'll also visit other aviation-related sites, including a few aviation boneyards, a dry lake where hobbyists play with their flying machines, and a place where commercial aircraft are put into long-term storage. This storage area was especially busy in 2020 during the Boeing 737 Max fiasco and the COVID pandemic.

Our direction of travel for this tour goes from east to west, from Victorville to Palmdale, which is approximately 50 miles, one-way. You can, however, take it in either direction. The trip is entirely on paved roads but it can be a bit tricky to navigate because there are so many turns. These turns follow a consistent pattern where, most of the time, when you get to the end of a main road, you turn right and then, about a half a mile further, you turn left.

SCLA

We start just outside of Victorville at the Southern California Logistics Airport (SCLA). Before 1992, this was George Air Force Base. Throughout its life, George AFB was mostly used by the Air Force to train pilots for fighter aircraft. Today, the base has been transformed into a unique aviation facility. It's now used mainly by private businesses to paint commercial jetliners, dismantle old aircraft (a boneyard) and repurpose them for parts, convert old jumbo jets into firefighting aircraft, develop and test jet engines, to house an aviation training school, and many other things. But one of SCLA's most noticeable uses is for storing unused aircraft.

SCLA is a lot of fun to drive through and explore. Its main entrance is found off Air Expressway on SCLA's south side by driving north up Phantom West. Small roads leading off Phantom will take you up to the fence to see many of the parked aircraft up-close. More stored aircraft can be seen on SCLA's north side. Find this area by driving around the west side of the SCLA property using Adelanto Road, then turn right onto Colusa Road.

When you're done exploring SCLA, find your way to the beginning of El Mirage Road on the other side of the town of Adelanto. Do this by heading west on Air Expressway, right on Hwy. 395, left on Chamberline, right on Koala, then left (west) on El Mirage (notice that right/left turn pattern mentioned earlier). Reset your trip meter here.

El Mirage Dry Lake

At 5 miles, turn right to visit El Mirage Dry Lake. Here, you'll find a haven for people that like to play with all kinds of things that move, both on the ground and in the air. For decades, this area has been used by car enthusiasts for drag racing and other types of motor fun. Who can resist testing the speed of their vehicle on a huge, flat, dry lakebed with no obstacles? The lakebed also attracts a lot of aviation hobbyists with various flying contraptions. There is a visitor center located at the entrance and an entrance fee to drive on the lakebed.

Boeing 737 MAXs stored at SCLA

El Mirage Airport – Aviation Warehouse

Find your way back to El Mirage Road, reset your trip meter again and turn right. In 3.5 miles, turn right onto El Mirage Airport Road. There are two more places of interest for aviation enthusiasts here. One is an aircraft boneyard and the other is a facility for developing and testing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones. The boneyard is owned by Aviation Warehouse, a private company that sells old aircraft shells for various applications. Remember that

Aircraft boneyard at El Mirage

XB-70 Valkyrie

both of these facilities are on private property. Do all your looking from the roadside and appreciate that these property owners allow you to come this close to such historic pieces of "junk" – oh, I mean "treasures".

Back on El Mirage Road, you'll pass by the small settlement of El Mirage itself. Don't drive too fast or you might miss some interesting desert artifacts along this portion of the trip. Look for the many old, deserted buildings along with some prized private yard art.

Wide Open Desert

After crossing the L.A. County line, El Mirage Road will end. If you look to the far left, you'll see some industrial buildings about 3 miles away. This is another UAV facility operated by the same company as the one we stopped at previously. Before it was a UAV facility, it was used to test stealth aircraft. At the stop sign, turn right, then in half a mile, turn left onto Avenue "O" (there's that turn pattern again).

This part of the trip passes through wide open desert, with views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the south and granite-laden hills to the west and north. The road goes through the community of Lake Los Angeles where you'll encounter the road's one and only traffic light. Further down the road, you'll cross one of those granite-laden hills and pass by Alpine Butte Wildlife Sanctuary. On the road ahead, you'll get your first glimpse of our next stop, Air Force Plant #42.

Air Force Plant #42

Ave "O" ends, so again, turn right, then turn left onto Ave "N". Look ahead to see the runway of Plant #42 come into view. In about 4 miles, you'll come to a 4-way stop. Go straight and in a short distance, the road makes a left turn. Stop here for a good panoramic view of the entire Plant #42 facility. See our virtual video tour (link below) that points out all the different facilities and what notable aircraft were built in each of those buildings.

Turning left here puts you onto 40th Street East. At the next intersection, turn right onto Ave "P". At the next stop sign, turn right to go to the Neil Armstrong NASA facility that houses the airborne SOFIA telescope. Formerly, these buildings were part of Rockwell International and, before that, North American Aviation. Notable aircraft that were developed and built here were the XB-70 Valkyrie and B-1 Bomber.

Blackbird Airpark

Continuing west on Ave "P" a short distance, you'll come to a traffic light. On the corner is Blackbird Airpark which is a worthwhile stop.

Grey Butte UAV Facility with Piñon Hills in the background

There are three very famous airplanes, the U-2, SR-71 and A-12, that were partially built in the nearby buildings.

The A-12 and SR-71 look almost identical but have two different histories behind them. There are also a few dozen other aircraft to see here including the Boeing 747 that transported the Space Shuttles. Some aircraft are related to the Mojave Desert area and some are not.

Like SCLA, you can wander around the airport complex here but, because this is still an active Air Force Plant, security is tighter and many buildings can only be seen from a distance. To see the north side of this facility, take Ave P to Sierra Hwy, turn right, then turn right on Columbia Way.

To take this tour virtually and see what to expect when you drive the route, go to our blog at BackRoadsWest.com/blog and search for Mojave Desert Aviation, or go to YouTube and search for "Mojave Desert Aviation".

Blue Ridge
in the San Gabriel Mountains

By Cliff & Ilene Bandringa

Davidson Arch - Big Pines

Piñon Hills is nestled at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. When it's a hot day down here, it's nice to go up there in the mountains to enjoy the cool air and peer down at the hot desert floor below.

This trip can be done in a single day and is broken into two sections. The first section explores a dirt road that runs along Blue Ridge above the Mountain High ski area and the town of Wrightwood. The second section is a hike to an old gold mining structure built in 1905 located on the slopes of Mt. Baden-Powell.

Make sure to watch our virtual video tour of this trip on YouTube. You'll find out how to find it and our blog post containing more information, including an interactive map revealing all the points of interest in the trip, at the end of the article.

Our trip begins in the town of Wrightwood. Get to Wrightwood by taking Hwy 138 to its intersection with Hwy 2 – Angeles Crest Hwy. Follow the signs to Wrightwood. Once on Hwy 2, you will keep climbing, as the air becomes cooler. Soon, you will be in the town of Wrightwood.

Start of Blue Ridge Road

Once in Wrightwood, you may wish to explore the two block downtown area. This is located on Park Drive, the wide street on the left of Hwy 2 just after passing the Jensons market on the right. By the way, Jensons has a great deli and bakery section where you can buy a sandwich to take with you and eat at the picnic areas along the way.

After you've gotten your fill of Wrightwood, continue west on Hwy 2. You will soon reach the ski areas of Mountain High. About a mile past the first ski area, there will be some buildings on the right, along with a brick structure that looks like a small castle. These buildings mark what's left of the small community of Big Pines.

Believe it or not, Big Pines was going to be the site of the 1932 Winter Olympics. Unfortunately, the 1932 games were moved to New York on account of a lack of snow that year. Big Pines is also the highest spot along the infamous San Andreas Fault. So, you might not want to stick around here too long!

Just after the buildings is a five-way intersection. Continue your journey by making sure to take the branch following Hwy 2.

Continuing up Hwy 2 past Big Pines, you will reach a summit and viewpoint after rounding a few turns in the road. Just before the viewpoint, you'll see a sign pointing a left turn to East Blue Ridge Road. This is the 12-mile dirt road that will take you higher into the mountains.

The road is a little rough in a few places and not recommended for normal sedans. A better vehicle to take on this road is a typical two-wheel drive SUV or truck. Be sure to watch our virtual tour to see what the road looks like.

Hiking trial to Big Horn Mine

Dirt road along Blue Ridge

Big Horn Mine

Blue Ridge Road will take you under the ski lifts of Mountain High and up to the top of a long ridge line which offers spectacular views of mountains, the desert to the north and the L.A. Basin to the south. You might even spot Catalina Island! Along the way, you'll also run across two little campgrounds where you can stay overnight if you'd like to rough it.

To continue an adventure in the San Gabriel Mountains, from the entrance to East Blue Ridge Road and the Inspiration Point viewpoint, continue west on Hwy 2. The road will begin to go downhill and pass by the Grassy Hollow visitor center. You may wish to stop in here to learn more about the area.

About 3 miles past the viewpoint, you'll see a large parking area on the left. Three different hiking trails start here. One of the trails is an old dirt road to the Big Horn Mine. It is a fairly easy hike when compared to the other two trails that start here. Be sure to watch our virtual tour to see what the trail looks like.

Mining at the Big Horn Mine began around 1905 and its large mill building still survives today. Sadly however, the building and many rocks along this hike have been badly vandalized with graffiti. The hike offers some outstanding views of the surrounding mountains.

If you decide to visit this site, do not attempt to walk into the mill building. It is next to a very steep and dangerous drop-off. One can easily lose their footing and fall to their death. Also, there are several mining tunnels located around the site that are very dangerous to enter. Stay out of them and stay alive!

To read more details about this tour and to watch our virtual video tour on YouTube, visit www.BackRoadsWest.com/blog and search for "Blue Ridge".

Passing underneath a chair lift

Who Wrote the Articles?

We are Cliff and Ilene Bandringa, authors of this article and creators of BackRoadsWest.com.

We have been traveling and photographing the world for more than 20 years with a motto of finding the lesser-known, off-the-beaten-path places and then sharing our experiences with others. We do this via our blog, the virtual tour guides we've written, lots of YouTube videos, magazine articles and a sister website of high-quality and stock images. You can find all of these at BackRoadsWest.com.

Piñon Hills Oasis

By Michael Palecki

Nestled in a box canyon straddling the Los Angeles County Line to the west and abutting the National Forest Boundary to the south, Smithson Springs in Piñon Hills has been seeping water into a 48 acre wetland for centuries. Dating back 1,000 years, Serrano Indian People traveled to the area in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to collect tall reeds and grasses from the floodplain used to make tent-like structures. They also fashioned bows and arrows from cottonwood and willow branches. Situated between the scorching heat of the Mojave Desert and harsh mountain winters, Smithson Springs was an ideal locale for hunting camps.

Much later on during the mid-1850s, Shoshone Indians living in the canyon would provide barrels of water from the springs to passing stagecoaches and military wagon trains traveling west on Fort Tejon Road to the Central California U.S. Army outpost of Fort Tejon. However, with exception of the water haulers activities and a few short pipelines installed in the springs by adjacent ranchers and homesteaders, most of the water was absorbed into the desert terrain of Boneyard Canyon for decades.

In 1943, a cattle rancher named Fred Smithson teamed up with Alfred W. Mondorf to establish the Smithson Springs Water Company (SSWC). While Smithson received grazing rights and naming rights for the springs and the surrounding area, it would be Mondorf who was granted a certificate of public conveyance to operate a public utility water system. The new water district encompassed 535 acres with the entire service area located adjacent to Mountain Road and Oasis Road and south of State Highway 138.

The infrastructure serving residential lots and 10 acre homesteads for the next 35 years began at the springs where concrete block weir boxes were constructed in the wetlands and canyon floor, which collected water and directed it into pipelines extending one-mile

north where two 200,000 gallon concrete reservoirs were constructed. There was also a 25,000 gallon storage tank situated at the northwest corner of Mountain and Tamarack Roads used for fire protection, but also available to registered water haulers who had their own key and water meter. The entire system extending from Smithson Springs to water customers was gravity feed.

At the peak of its lifespan Smithson Springs Water Company was producing 18 gallons per minute, which equates to approximately 1,198,000 gallons per year. That figure became evident in 1956 during a hearing before the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California, when landowners outside the SSWC service area attempted to be included in the boundaries. With land values soaring in the service area, that was desirable. However, a stipulation never achieved mandated that "Phreatophyttes Growth" or water-loving plants that grow mainly along stream courses, be trimmed to one-foot of growth in May, July and August. Implementing that procedure would have doubled the water supply and provided for future community growth.

When my Great Uncle Ernest built The Cabin in 1959, his property was less than 200 feet west of Mountain Road and was included in the SSWC service area. That meant he did not have to drill a well or use water haulers, and the monthly water allotment was within his life style. However, by the time my parents inherited The Cabin, the water flow was shut off for 17 hours each day and SSWC was facing bankruptcy. The situation prompted residents to vote for the CSA70 Zone-L San Bernardino County water system in 1978. In 2008, residents voted for a better water system and established the Phelan Piñon Hills Community Services District (CSD).

Today, the CSD as the owners of the Smithson Springs property maintains the wetlands and returns 1,839,600 gallons of water per year to the aquifer. In the future it would be nice to have a conservation easement dedicated so the public could enjoy supervised recreational activities in the Piñon Hills Oasis.

Santa Fe and Salt Lake Trail Monument (parks.ca.gov)

Take a 'monumental' tour of Cajon Pass

Mark Landis, Correspondent
Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

For centuries, the Cajon Pass has been a primary corridor into Southern California, and a series of little-known monuments commemorate the pioneers who blazed the trails over the rugged mountain barrier.

There are nine unique monuments set in historic locations throughout the Cajon Pass. Each one tells a story of the hardships and triumphs faced by the pioneers who made the difficult journey.

The routes through the Cajon Pass began as simple footpaths used by Indians traveling from the inland deserts to the coastal regions of Southern California.

The first white explorer to travel through the Cajon Pass was most likely Spanish military Captain Pedro Fages in 1771, who was leading a band of soldiers hunting for deserters.

Other famous explorers including Padre Francisco Garces and mountain man Jedediah Strong Smith followed various routes through the Cajon Pass.

The most prominent group of settlers that traveled through the pass was a party of 500 Mormons who came by wagon train from Utah in June 1851. The task of hauling their heavy wagons down the steep slopes of the Cajon Pass was the final test of their grueling 400-mile journey.

The monuments are spread throughout the Cajon Pass, and all but three are easily accessible by car. Those that are accessible can be seen in an enjoyable afternoon road trip.

Stoddard-Waite Monument: The first monument set in the Cajon Pass was dedicated May 18, 1913 to commemorate the early pioneers who came by horseback and wagon train through the passage. Sheldon Stoddard and Sidney P. Waite, two of the most well-known pioneers who traveled through the pass in 1849 were honored attendees.

This spire-shaped monument, listed as California Historic Marker No. 578, was placed along the former Santa Fe/Salt Lake Trail. It is located in a thick grove of Cottonwood trees near the CHP truck scales on the southbound I-15, about three-quarters of a mile south of Highway 138. The monument is on private property owned by the San Bernardino County Museum, and is only accessible by special permission.

Santa Fe and Salt Lake Trail Monument: A second monument of similar size and shape was erected in 1917 just a few hundred yards northeast of the Stoddard-Waite Monument. A festive ceremony was held to dedicate the monument, once again attended by pioneers who had traveled the early wagon roads.

The concrete spire, listed as California State Historic Landmark No. 576, is located at the end of Wagon Wheel Road (south of McDonalds), just east of the northbound I-15 CHP truck scales.

Sycamore Grove Monument: This large spire-shaped monument was built in 1927 to mark the site of the 1851 Mormon camp at Sycamore Grove, known today as Glen Helen. The 500 Mormon settlers camped here while the leaders of their party negotiated the purchase of Rancho San Bernardino.

This monument, listed as California Historic Marker No. 573, is located just inside the grounds of Glen Helen Park, on Glen Helen Parkway, .8 mile south of Cajon Boulevard.

Mohave Trail Monument: The Mohave Trail Monument was set on Sept. 19, 1931, on a remote mountaintop northeast of Devore, fittingly named Monument Peak. This small stone and mortar monument was placed by the San Bernardino County Historical Society to commemorate the explorers and frontiersmen who traveled this ancient footpath.

A 4-wheel drive vehicle is required to reach the 5,290-feet elevation Monument Peak site. Take Palm Avenue north from the I-215 until the paved road ends and becomes Bailey Canyon Road. The 5.9-mile trip up the dirt road can be readily found on Google Maps. The monument is located at GPS coordinates: 34 14'43.95"N, 117 21'12.33"W.

Mormon Trail Monument: A modest stone and mortar monument topped by a wagon wheel was built in the West Cajon Valley by the Sons of Mormon Pioneers, and dedicated on May 15, 1937. A small, weathered plaque commemorates the Mormon settlers who passed through this area in 1851. The monument, listed as California Historic Marker No. 577, is located on Highway 138, 4.2 miles west of I-15.

Pioneer Women Monument: On April 16, 1977, this simple concrete and marble monument was placed near the former Mormon campsite of Sycamore Grove to commemorate pioneer women. The plaque is a memorial to the hardships the pioneer women faced as they traveled across the untamed country by ox team and covered wagon.

The monument is located on Glen Helen Parkway at the onramp to the northbound 1-15 freeway.

Mormon Pioneer Trail: This small stone and mortar monument was placed in July 1985 to commemorate the wagon train of 500 Mormon settlers who passed by the site in 1851.

The monument is located on the Old Salt Lake Trail near the 1912 Stoddard-Waite Monument and is accessible only by permission.

Blue Cut: This large concrete monument was erected alongside old Route 66 in a narrow gap of the Cajon Pass known as Blue Cut. The monument, dedicated July 23, 1994, was placed by the Billy Holcomb Chapter of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E. Clampus Vitus. The inlaid brass plaque describes the explorers and immigrants who blazed the trails and roads through the pass, as well as some of the historic events that occurred in the area.

To reach this monument, exit I-15 at Kenwood Avenue and go south to Cajon Boulevard (old Route 66). Turn right onto Cajon Boulevard and go 3.7 miles north. Look for the monument on the left in a wide turnout area, set back among the shade trees.

Summit Train Station Monument: This carved marble monument was placed near the site of the Summit Train Station in 1996 by the Hesperia Recreation and Park District. The weathered text carved into the marble commemorates the site of the Summit Train Station on the Santa Fe Railway, and the nearby site of the Elliot Ranch settled in 1927.

The monument also is near the entrance to Horse Thief Canyon where thousands of stolen horses were driven through this section of the Cajon Pass in the 1800s.

The monument is located in Summit Valley on Highway 138, 4 miles east of I-15 on the north side of the road. It is part of a series of monuments placed by the Hesperia Recreation and Park District to commemorate historic sites in the area.

Traveling a Forgotten Road in the Cajon Pass

By Cliff & Ilene Bandringa

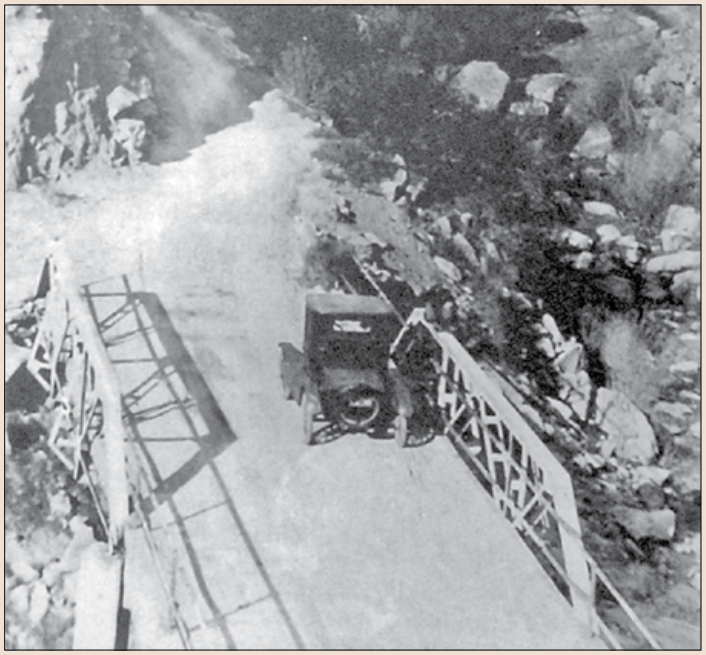
There is a forgotten road in the Cajon Pass that was originally a wagon toll road built in 1861 and, later, was used by many early Route 66 travelers. There are no signs to point out this historic road or to tell you about its connection to the Mother Road but there is still evidence of where it once existed.

This trip focuses on that forgotten historical road. Early automobile travelers used this steep, narrow and hazardous road as a short cut when traveling Route 66 (although it was never used as an alignment for Route 66). Unlike old segments of 66 in the upper Cajon, sections of this road can still be traveled on today.

Our trip begins at the site of the former Summit Inn located at the Cajon Summit (off the Oak Hills Road exit) and ends next to the truck scales located halfway through the Cajon Pass. Half of the trip is on dirt roads with the other half on pavement and it can be traveled in either direction.

Even though most of the dirt road is maintained by the Forestry Service, it is still subject to deep ruts and bumps that make it difficult for normal vehicles. We have seen plenty of standard cars on this road but we don't recommend it. A high-clearance vehicle, such as a truck or SUV, is best.

Road Cut in 1861



Old bridge at bottom of Crowder Canyon

Get to where the Summit Inn used to stand, which is next to a couple of gas stations. Sadly, this iconic roadside café along Route 66 burned down during a large brush fire in 2016. There were plans to rebuild it, but they fell through. Today, the only thing that marks this spot where so many great memories were made is a big empty lot.

From the Summit Inn, continue south on the frontage road paralleling I-15. The pavement ends in half a mile but this short distance of pavement was the alignment of Route 66. The alignment then turned right, crossed the northbound lanes of I-15 and continued down the middle of I-15.

For our trip, continue on the dirt road (when the pavement ends) as it makes a quick left and then heads south. You will quickly see how rough the road is. At a 90-degree left turn, there's a great viewpoint of the Cajon Pass on the right.

Past the viewpoint, the road twists and turns and a road intersection is reached. Turn right here to pass through the obvious road cut. This road cut was originally dug for the Brown Toll Road and probably

Old bridge abutment in Crowder Canyon

hand excavated in 1861, which is when the American Civil War started. Read more about this historical road on our blog.

One of the first cross-country roads built in the USA was the National Old Trails Road. For the road's alignment through the Cajon Pass, the toll road was still usable and it was logical to use the same alignment. However, because this section was steep and treacherous, the new road was realigned in 1918 to where I-15 is today. Thrill seeking Route 66 travelers still used it, though, just like you are today.

Continue steeply down the old road south as it crosses four railroad tracks. Beyond the tracks, you might spot faint patches of pavement from the original road build in 1914.

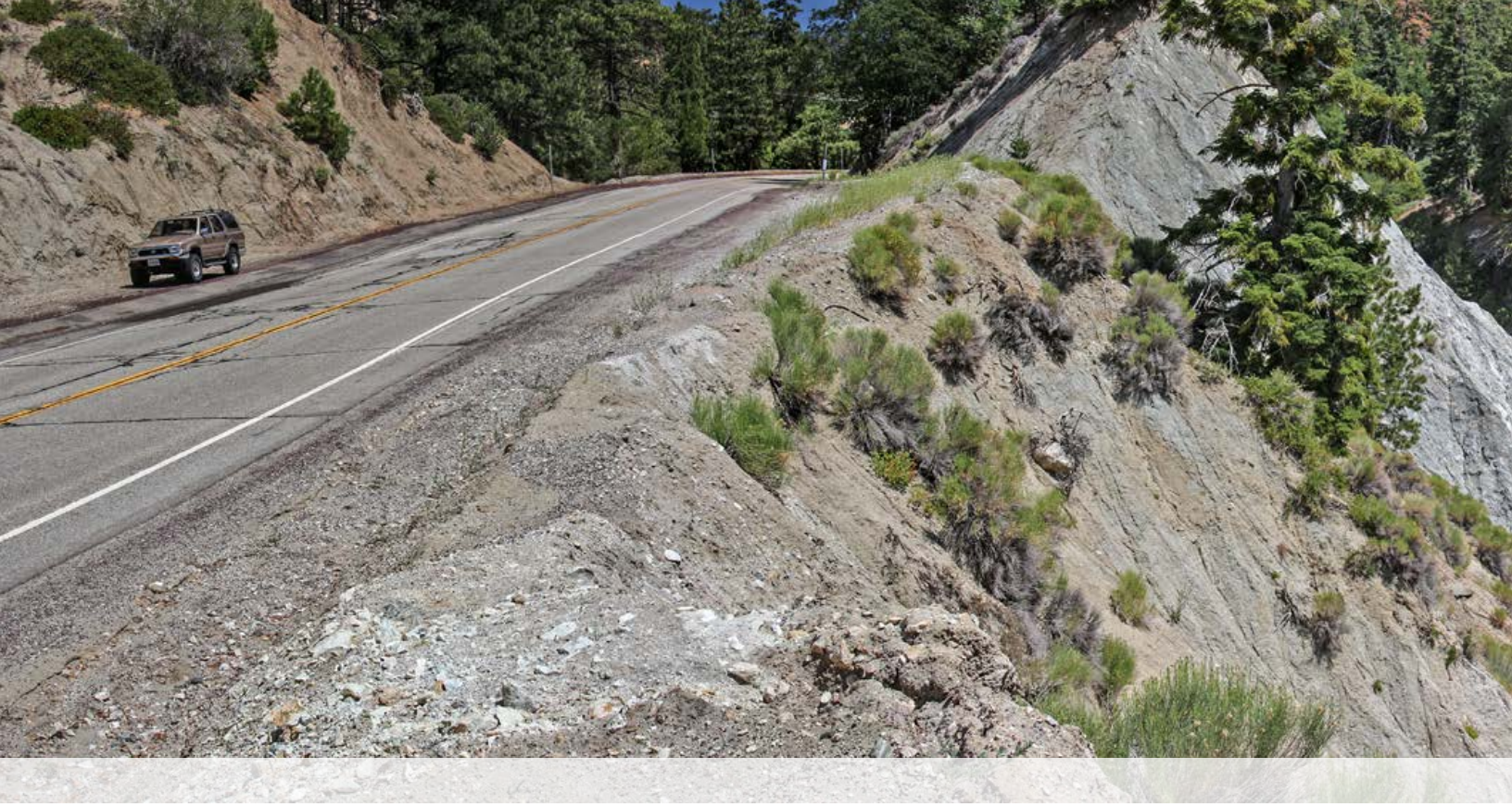
Turn right onto Hwy 138. Here, the new highway was built on top of the old road. Just before 138 turns into 4 lanes, the old road veered off to the left. We will see the other side of that road in a moment.

To walk on the old road, drive past the McDonalds on the frontage road next to I-15. At the end of the road, you'll see a monument. Park here and walk to the end of the road to find a hiking trail. This is part of the Pacific Crest Trail. Walk up into what is called Crowder Canyon. Soon, you'll be walking past an old bridge foundation and on old pavement from 1914, which was the first auto route through the Cajon.

Read an expanded version of this article at *www.BackRoadsWest.com/blog/forgotten-path-route-66*. Along with driving directions, historic maps, pictures of the burnt remains of the Summit Inn, you'll find a YouTube video showing the tour and an interactive map.

Summet Inn before it burned

All that's left of the Summit Inn today



Deep gorge formed by the fault along Big Pines Hwy

San Andreas Fault Tour

By Cliff & Ilene Bandringa

California is world-famous for many things and one of them is earthquakes. A stones-throw south of Piñon Hills is one of the most famous earthquake faults in the World –the San Andreas. This tour showcases a small section of that infamous fault. Our tour starts in the Cajon Pass and traverses the north side of the San Gabriel Mountains. We'll explain what there is to see, where to find it and how it is related to the fault.

Our state is covered with earthquake faults. Most people have heard of the dreaded San Andreas Fault yet many of the State's greatest earthquakes did not happen along the San Andreas. Some of us living in Southern California have heard of other faults like the Helendale, San Jacinto and Elsinore faults but the San Andreas is different. It is a "plate boundary" where the Pacific and North American Plates meet and grind past each other. This grinding action has gone on for millions of years and is what causes earthquakes as well as the features you will see on our tour.

Due to space constraints, we can't give you all the details for the tour in this article so, for more details, watch our YouTube video or see our blog (see last paragraph).

We start our tour at the southern end of the Cajon Pass. Use a map or your GPS to get to the intersection of Cajon Blvd (Route 66) and Swarthout Canyon Rd. Reset your trip meter to zero and head across Cajon Creek and the railroad tracks.

At 0.6 miles, you'll come to the first San Andreas Fault feature - a sag pond. It's located on the right side, on private property next to a residence, and is difficult to see from the road. A sag pond is formed when underground water seeping along the fault line comes to some sort of blockage, is forced up to the surface at a low spot along that blockage, creating a pond. This blockage is often a fine earth material, such as clay, that has been created by the fault's grinding action.

Continue past the second railroad crossing and at 1.3 miles and you'll reach the parking area for Lost Lake. This is another sag pond and one you can access. Walk the short distance here to take in the views of this unique body of water. Notice that the pond is long and skinny and that it is oriented in the same direction as Lone Pine Canyon, the long skinny valley you'll soon be driving up. This pond is right on top of the fault.

Driving on up the dirt road, you'll pass by a few fault scarps that

Line marks fault crossing I-15 near Lost Lake

have been created by numerous earthquakes over the years. A scarp is created in the few seconds during an earthquake when the earth is pushed up or moved sideways during the quake's movement. This surface rupture looks like a small step or offset in the land and can be a few inches or many feet high. Unfortunately, most of the scarps along this trip are hidden by vegetation.

Continue up the dirt road to a stop sign. Turn left onto the pavement of Lone Pine Canyon Road and notice how long and skinny Lone Pine Canyon is. This particular fault feature is known as a linear valley and there are many examples similar to this canyon all along the fault's trace.

At 10.7 miles, you'll cross over a ridge and enter the town of Wrightwood. Before you cross the ridge, however, find a safe place to pull over to look at the view behind you. On a clear day you can see the fault trace run from under your feet all the way to the mountains near Palm Springs, about 70 miles away.

Jackson Lake

Now we'll take you into the neighborhoods of Wrightwood. Using your map or GPS, drive to Twin Lakes Rd and Maple St. Here is the Wrightwood Country Club with its nice little lake. But that's no lake, it's a sag pond. Yes, here again, you're right on top of the San Andreas. From here, head downhill into downtown Wrightwood and turn left (west) onto Hwy 2.

About a mile past the first ski area, look for a Visitor Center on the right. This is Big Pines. The stone structure next to the Center marks the highest point along the San Andreas and behind the building is a scarp that marks the fault line paralleling Hwy 2.

Drive past the Center and turn onto Big Pines Hwy, following the signs to Jackson Lake, and reset your trip meter again. In about 0.6 miles, you'll notice some oddly eroded embankments along the road. At 0.8 miles, look for a safe place to pull over and park. You'll see more erosion of this odd material if you walk across the street (lookout for traffic) and look over the edge. This odd erosion is everywhere. This material is known as "fault flour" and the deep gorge you see over the edge here is the fault.

Down the road at 2.8 miles, you'll reach Jackson Lake. This is yet another sag pond. Again, notice its orientation. Jackson Lake is popular with anglers and nature seekers alike. This is a great place to have a picnic.

Continuing west from Jackson Lake, Big Pines Hwy intersects with Road N4, which goes to the right. Our tour continues straight and passes by Caldwell Lake at 7 miles. This is again another sag pond marking the path of the fault.

After crossing the fault a few times, Big Pines Hwy passes through the small hamlet of Valyermo. At 14.2 miles, turn left onto Fort Tejon Road and then a quick left onto Pallet Creek Road. Our final stop is at 15.5 miles. Park on the wide turnout on the left side of the road and watch out for oncoming traffic.

Trench where geologists dug into the fault

This is the spot where geologists decided to study a specific spot on the San Andreas. They determined it was a good place to dig into the fault to study different fractures that marked historic earthquakes. A short walk on the south side of the road takes you to the trench where geologists have been digging since 1978. A grid made of string marks (providing it is still there) marks the fractures in the fault.

There is more to see along this stretch of the San Andreas Fault including more sag ponds, scarps and long views. Our virtual video tour of the fault on YouTube includes a 3D view over the terrain and route we covered here, plus what the features look like. It can be found by searching for "San Andreas tour near Wrightwood". You can also see the expanded version of this article on our travel blog at backroadswest.com/blog and search for "San Andreas".

Piñon Hills California

Information and Pioneer History

By Dan Wilson
Best Syndication News Writer

The community of Piñon Hills is at the very edge of the Mojave Desert in the hills overlooking the Victor Valley. Situated in San Bernardino County approximately 45 miles northeast of Los Angeles, the high desert community sits between Phelan and Wrightwood.

With more than 6,000 residents, Piñon Hills is part of the unincorporated first district of San Bernardino County. The town center is approximately 28 miles east of Palmdale and 25 miles west of Hesperia and Victorville. Piñon Hills Elementary School is in the Snowline School District and middle school students attend Piñon Mesa while high school students attend Serrano High in Phelan. The Piñon Hills zip code is 92372 and the area code is 760.

The Pearblossom Highway (138) crosses Piñon Hills. East / west cross streets include Oasis and Phelan Road. The post office is located on Oasis Road just south of Highway 138.

Piñon Hills California History

Native Americans lived in Piñon Hills as far back as 4,000 years ago. The Serrano Indians established camps in Piñon Hills approximately 1000 – 1500 years ago. Rather than battle the harsh mountain winters, these Native Americans traveled to the area now known as Piñon Hills. The Shoshonian, primarily mountain Indians inhabited the Jaw Bone Canyon, according to a qnet article.

First White Men in Piñon Hills

The first known (recorded) white man to appear in the Mojave Desert was Francisco Garces in March 1776. Garces was a Spanish Franciscan priest who followed the old Indian trail along the Mojave River looking for a route from Arizona to Northern California. This trail was later known as Fort Tejon Road.

Jesuit priests discovered gold in the 1700s somewhere between Littlerock and Piñon Hills. When the priests were recalled in the 1730s they caused a landslide which covered the mine. Some claim that it was one of the richest gold mines in the southwest. It has not been rediscovered since.

Mormon Trail Through Piñon Hills

In 1851 the Mormons pushed through the Mojave. Charles C. Rich and other settlers moved into the area. There is a marker in the West Cajon Valley that explains that the trail passed up near Mountain Top Café and down the West Cajon Valley into the Cajon Valley and on down to San Bernardino.

Butterfield Stage Route

On October 8, 1858 the Fort Tejon (about 40 miles south west of Bakersfield) became a stop for the Butterfield Stage. The stage traveled along the Fort Tehon Road. The army experimented with camels and Fort Tejon housed the short lived US Camel Corps from Nov. 17, 1859 to April 1860 when they were sold.

Later the stage would stop at the Frontier Ranch. Catherine Schneider and her father J.G. Schneider homesteaded the ranch. In 1926 school age students would stop at the ranch for pear pies baked by Catherine's mother. The cement slab near Fort Tejon Road and the mail boxes may still be there.

The Grettenbergs, Hale, Kunzel, Schneider, the Detless and Beekleys Homesteaders

There were other homesteaders in the area. Maud Grettenberg purchased 40 acres on the northwest corner of Smoke Tree and Sheep Creek Road. Later William Schwarts purchased the Smithson Springs Water Company, along with the Grettenberg Ranch and became the sole owner of 640 acres for many years.

William Beekley married Mable Detless and built the Yucca Inn (sometimes referred to as the Beekley Mansion) on Beekley Road just south of HWY 138. They also built the market building on Mountain and HWY 138.

Henry and Winnie Ellison, were also homesteaders. They built the houses on Tamarack Road, east of Mountain Road. Phelan Road turns into Tamarack where Green Road splits off south of HWY 138.

Walker and Anthony Pioneers

The Great Depression forced many homesteaders out of the area. In the 1920s Joseph Walker and Henry Anthony, Sr. settled on Spring Road. From the upper Piñon Hills area they could see and count 31 liquor stills down on the flats during prohibition. The population was dwindling during the depression.

George Air Force Base and World War II

The Victorville Army Flying School opened in 1941. In 1948 the school was renamed George Air Force Base after Brig Gen Harold Huston George (1892-1942), a World War I fighter ace. This brought residents back to Piñon Hills and the High Desert Area. George Air Force Base was officially decommissioned in December 1992.

Early Piñon Hills Names

Before Highway 138 was paved the town was called Border Town because it was located on the border of San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties. Later travelers began to call it Horine Springs because homesteader Merrie Horine let them water their horses.

Smithson Springs

The upper area of Piñon Hills was called Smithson Springs. Alfred Mondorf, who created a water company along the area of Mountain Road named the area after a cattleman named Smithson.

Desert Springs

The water brought residents. Waterlines were laid around the area of Mountain Road and homes soon sprouted up. Residents didn't like the name Smithson because of all the s's, so they changed it to Desert Springs. A post office was set up and Winifred E. Ellison was their first postmaster.

Mix Up With Desert Hot Springs Brings About Piñon Hills

The name Desert Hot Springs is very similar to Desert Springs and mail was mis-sorted at the main San Bernardino Post Office. This prompted residents to call for another name change. The Chamber of Commerce (located on Mountain Road) had a secret ballot the name Piñon Hills won out. . The name Piñon Hills comes from the Pinus monophylla (pinyon pine) that dominate the desert-facing slopes.

Chamber of Commerce

The first Piñon Hills Chamber of Commerce opened on the homestead property of John and Nettie Jane Hale in a Quonset hut. Their property was located north of Highway 138.

Later residents wanted a location on the south side of the Highway where most of the people lived. In 1934 the property was sold and Fred and Maude McGee donated land for anew building on Mountain Road south of the highway.

It took many years and many contributions before the money was raised to finish a building on the new site. In the late 1950's the new community center was built.

County Service Area 70 and Area Land Zone L Water District

Water is always a major concern in the desert. According to longtime resident Mike Adams, Smithson Spring Water Company was able to provide water from caves dug into the side of the mountain. The Sheep Creek Water Company did something similar in Wrightwood.

Except around Mountain Road where the water company serviced, water had to be hauled in. There were many dry years during the 1970s and the county placed a moratorium on new building in Piñon Hills.

In 1978 the stockholders of the Smithson Spring water company offered to sell their company to the county. On April 26th the county board of supervisors approved the annexation of the water company and created County Service Area 70, Area Land Zone L.

The water infrastructure grew fast. Pipes were laid and wells were drilled. Water storage tanks were placed all around the community along with 3.5 million dollars in improvements to the infrastructure. They were able to lift the five year building moratorium in Piñon Hills.

In 1978 Phelan and Piñon Hills joined together to create a Callman Volunteer Emergency Service. Participants received first aid and fire response training. The County now has a fire station on Beekley Road.

The Phelan Piñon Hills Community Service District (CSD)

On February 5th the voters of Phelan and Piñon Hills voted to break away from the county and create a Community Service District (CSD). The elected 5-member board handles the water, street lights and parks and recreation

Grizzlies in Our Backyard

By Wendy Walker

It was not so long ago that our local mountains were populated with lumbering grizzly bears, one of the largest sub-species in the lower 48. These grizzlies could reach 7-8 feet tall and up to 2000 pounds which is about 400 pounds heavier than the grizzlies in Yellowstone National Park. The reason for this difference is that the California grizzlies, at least the southernmost populations had no need to hibernate. Biologists estimate that California once boasted over 10,000 individuals. The now extirpated, California grizzly was a distinct sub-species known as *Ursus arctos californicus*, and while they were not initially aggressive to humans, a female grizzly with cubs was always unpredictable. As humans moved in, and converted the grizzly's dense brush habitat to pasture land and orchards, the bears began to interact more with humans and they became a menace. They quickly adjusted to their shrinking habitat by raiding farms and ranches, attacking livestock, and gorging on fruits, honey and vegetables. Local tales of grizzly encounters abound.

In 1906, a male grizzly was terrorizing ranchers and miners in Lytle Creek canyon. Harvey Bradshaw, an old rancher had a place several miles up the canyon. One morning the bear, standing on his hind legs, came within 100 feet of Bradshaw and startled him while he was hitching up his team for a trip to town. The bear, after seeing the man, turned heel and lumbered upslope, disappearing over the hill. Bradshaw having nothing larger than a .22 caliber rifle, thought better than to go after him.

On September 29, 1898, T.J. Starke, Ben Tibbots, Will Born and Hube Clyde ran into a monster female grizzly at Big Rock Creek, near Devil's Punchbowl, on a 12- day hunting trip. They tracked her for two hundred yards when she caught wind of them and started aggressively shredding tree bark. Ben Tibbots fired his 30-55 Winchester striking her in the shoulder. After 9 more shots, and close to death, she fought valiantly until she took her last breath. She weighed five hundred pounds and was seven feet and seven inches from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail.

The California grizzly was more at ease in the dense chaparral and brush than open timber habitat. They ranged over the whole state of California with exception of the arid desert land. An opportunistic

hunter, its diet included almost anything it could find, grubs, berries, roots, small mammals, and in the following case, a hunter's cache. In 1900, Bill Ellis and two hunting partners were sleeping on a dusty cattle trail in Cajon Pass when a grizzly visited them at night. They awoke in the morning to find the bear had straddled one of them while he was sleeping and continued on its way. A few days later, they strung up a deer and had just gone to sleep when they awoke again, to the grizzly clawing at their deer carcass. A fight ensued when one of them shot the bear, but that only provoked it. *"There's nothing in this world will change so quick as a man's ideas on bear. I thought I had the beast down pretty fine, but I discovered all of a suddenly that bear are peculiar. This one dove right through that fire. There was a cyclone of sparks, as if a rocket shop had caught fire, while I lit out for the darkness beyond. Winkin' and blinkin', with his eyes full of sparks, the old brute came for me at a pretty slick pace, and if his eyes had been good I'd a been his'n mighty quick."* For the next 30 minutes or so a bear fight, in the dark with several men bumbling around a campsite ensued. With adrenaline flying and bear breath hanging in the night air, the men did their best in the heavy undergrowth. The bear focused on Bill at the end, who was dodging rock, brush and logs to escape. When he lost his footing, he thought for sure he was a goner, but the bear landed on top of him, *"smashin' the wind out of me."* The bear was dead.

In 1884, somewhere between Wrightwood and Piñon Hills, a hunter in the area of Sheep Creek wash, was killed by a grizzly. In 1889, Edward Dolch told of once seeing a grizzly also in the Sheep Creek area. These were to be the waning days of the mighty griz.

The last grizzly killed in southern California was in 1916 in Big Tujunga Canyon by Cornelius B. Johnson. It was a small female that had been raiding his orchard. The very last grizzly killed in the state, was in1922 in Tulare County. The sad tale of Monarch, a grizzly captured in 1889, lived out 22 years of its life in a cage after William Randolph Hearst thought it would be a grand publicity stunt. Monarch was finally put down in May of 1911. The bear on the California State flag was modeled after Monarch.

In 1933, California Fish and Game commissioner, Joseph Dale Gentry, transplanted 18 to 34 black bears into the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains. The bears, trucked in from Yosemite National Park were released in the Big Bear area and near Crystal Lake. It is estimated that descendants of these bears now total 25,000 individuals. While nothing like the great grizzlies of California, they have adapted well in their southern habitat living on in the shadow of their greater counterpart.

Wendy Walker spends her free time outdoors with her dog, Poppy. She is an amatuer naturalist who enjoys writing,exploring, hiking and photography. She works as an Office Administrator for Transition Habitat Conservancy.

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