FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

Preserving Inyo County's Past for the Future

P.O. Box 33 Independence, CA 93526

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020

UPDATES: WHAT'S NEW

Museum update: In the ever-evolving Covid-19 situation, as of publication, the Museum is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., following all directives regarding wearing masks and maintaining appropriate social distancing. As this is subject to change based on County directives, please check the County website (www.inyocounty.us) or call the Museum at 760-878-0364 for updates if you're planning to visit and want to make sure the Museum is open.

Our Winter 2020 issue includes a story about long-time Owens Valley community resident Anna Kelley. The Museum's Anna and OK Kelley Gallery of Native American Life is named in honor of Anna and her husband, and the rock building on the southeast corner of Independence, now a shoe store, was the service station owned by Anna and OK.

Also in this issue is an image and some history of an extraordinary photograph in the Museum's collection, titled "The Mirage."

And finally, in anticipation of an article in the Spring 2021 newsletter on the Saline Valley Salt Tram, we share some of Don Becker's recollections of his involvement and participation in preserving salt tram history and in the Museum.

We hope your holidays are both wonderful and safe. We look forward to sending you information about our upcoming Board of Trustees election and updates on our annual meeting in late January.

EASTERN CALIFORNIA STORIES

"Eastern California Stories" highlight oral histories and assorted archival materials available through the Museum's *California Revealed* On-Line Archives collection. *California Revealed* is a State Library initiative, in partnership with other local heritage groups, to help California's public libraries and museums digitize, preserve, and provide online access to archival materials - books, newspapers, audiovisual recordings, photographs, and more - telling the remarkable stories of California. Listen to their own words and be sure to explore more *California Revealed* collections at https://californiarevealed.org/. This month: Anna Gracey Kelley.

Anna Gracey Kelley

Anna Gracey Kelley was born in Carson City, Nevada on April 17, 1907. Her father, Robert, was an employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1913, the Gracey family moved to Kearsarge Station in the Owens Valley where Robert was stationmaster until the SPRR closed the agency in 1932. Anna was the youngest of eight children and completed all 12 grades in the Independence school. Anna continued her education by enrolling in 1925 at Oregon State Agricultural College and graduating in 1929. She came back to Independence and started working to save money for furthering her education.

Anna's life took a different direction when in 1931 she married OK Kelley. Their son Jimmy was born November 8, 1932. They purchased the service station property located on the northeast intersection of Edwards Street and Mazourka Canyon Road in Independence. The property's rock building still stands on the southeast corner of town.

During World War II, Anna worked at the Manzanar First Aid Station during the War Relocation Center construction. The photograph at the right is Anna Gracey Kelley, in front of First Aid Station, Manzanar War Relocation Center (photograph courtesy of the Eastern California Museum).

She was also employed part-time for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Throughout most of the war years, however, Anna served as the County of Inyo Welfare Director.

During the 1950s-1980s, Anna was active in the Independence community, the local school, and the Eastern California Museum. In 1957, working through her connections with the Southern Pacific Railroad, Anna Kelley initiated and achieved the acquisition of Engine 18, the 'Slim Princess,' for the Museum and the Independence community. The Slim Princess is housed on Museum property in a building partially funded by FECM and maintained by volunteers associated with the Carson and Colorado Railways.

Anna Kelley passed away at the Big Pine Care Center on September 4, 1994.

California Revealed, Anna Gracey Kelley [Oral History]
https://californiarevealed.org/islandora/object/cavpp%3A18249

UPCOMING: SALINE VALLEY SALT TRAM ARTICLE

We are planning an article on the Saline Valley Salt Tram by Lynn Johnson for our Spring 2021 newsletter. In the meantime, Don Becker and Geoff and Cheryl Best have generously shared a photograph, and Don shares here some of his story on this subject.

Don Becker and Geoff and Cheryl Best at Summit House.
Used by permission of D. Becker and G. Best

I first went to Saline Valley in 1986 to see Beveridge Canyon after hearing about it and Saline Valley. Of course I saw the salt tram towers heading south to Daisy Canyon, so I hiked up the trail to the upper tunnel of the Big Silver Mine nearby to get a good view and with my binoculars saw the tram towers going right up the mountains. Then I stopped at the ECM to find out more and met, I believe, Elodie Drew who pointed out some books and shared what they had in the files. Apparently I made a good impression for in the next FECM newsletter she said I was going to write a book. So I started to search in pre-internet days by going to and contacting any and all libraries and museums that might hold something relating to the tram. I spent many weekends in the Inyo Mountains photographing the tram. Some weekends I would stay at the Winnedumah and met Hatti Schaeffer who told me her husband Fred actually bought some Saline Valley Stock from White Smith in the 1920s. Then in the early 1990s, a job opened up at the ECM for a

weekend attendant and maintenance person. By that time I was already a museum volunteer and I got hired. I really enjoyed working there, helping maintain the outside historic equipment and the museum collections. In the mid-1990s, the Bishop BLM office asked me to assist in the renovation and stabilization of the tram operator's house on the crest of the Inyos. With BLM archaeologist Kirk Halford and others, we rebuilt the walls and the roof according to the few photographs we had. My good friend, architect Brian Webb, drew up plans to BLM guidelines, and we rebuilt it just as it was in 1913. Getting the materials up there was really an experience. We had the Ridgecrest Gear Grinders, a 4-wheel drive club, tie as much lumber as they could onto their vehicles and haul it all up. The picture of Geoff and me was taken at the summit control station #3, next to the operator's house. This station controlled the tram from the crest going down both sides. One more piece of history: Mary DeDecker speaks about vandalism in her book, White Smith's Fabulous Salt Tram. I've seen it. One time the BLM ranger from Lone Pine caught two people stealing tram buckets and asked me to get a value on them to prosecute them. Two of the buckets in the museum equipment yard are from that.

Front and back of Saline Valley Stock Certificate signed by White Smith in 1912.
Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum

FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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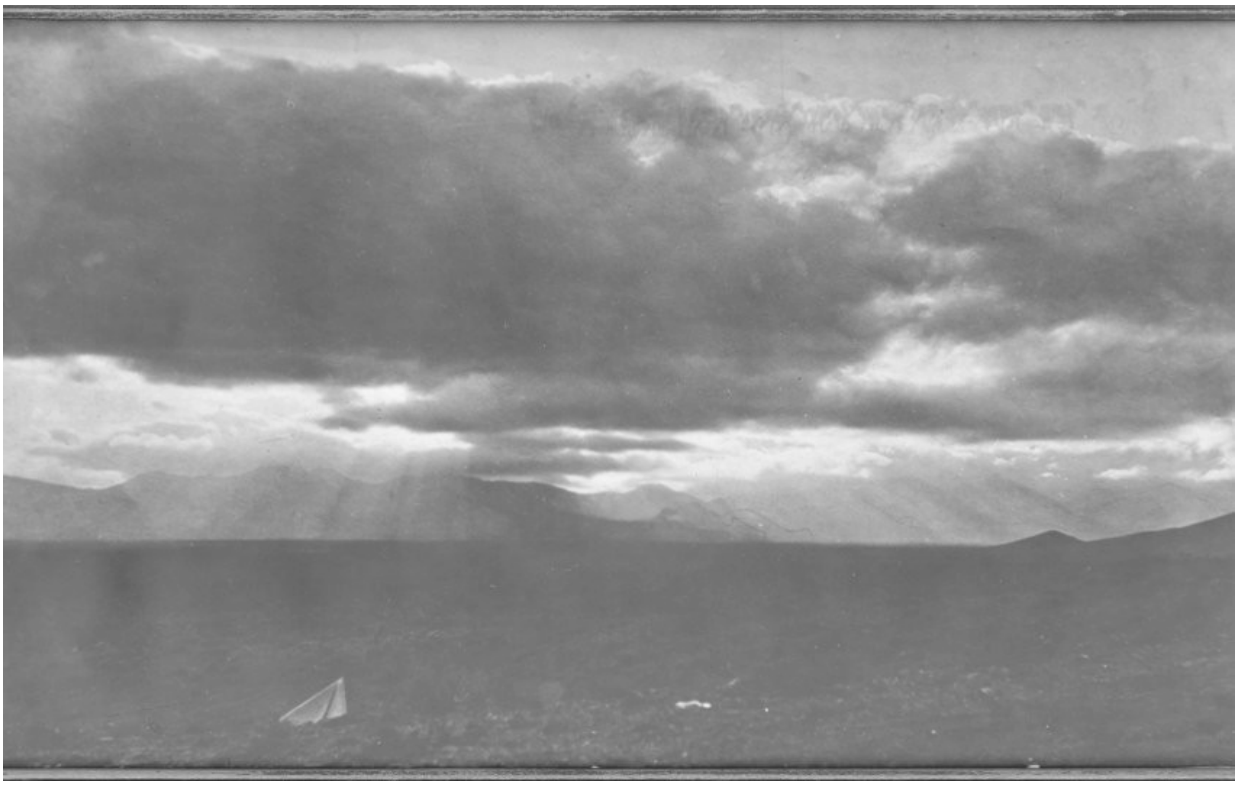
THE MIRAGE

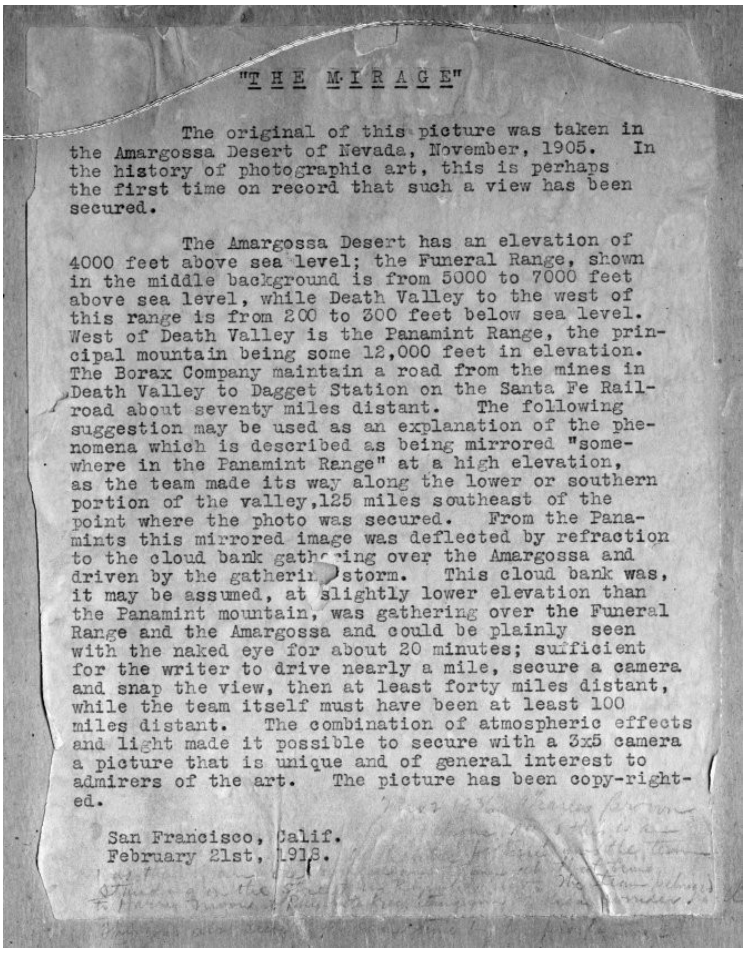
The Mirage is one of the Museum's large collection of wonderful photographs. It was taken in November 1905 in Death Valley's Amargosa Desert, and we include an explanatory description from 1918. The description flags that the photograph is copyrighted.

For our long-time members, visitors, and community residents, we note that the photograph was donated in the late 1970s by George C. Pipkin.



"The Mirage," 1905. Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum

Breakout from "The Mirage" showing the mule train in the clouds.
Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum



"THE MIRAGE"

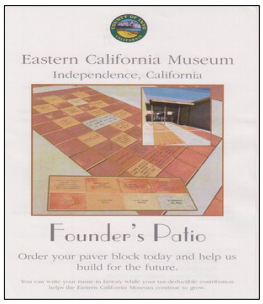
The original of this picture was taken in the Amargossa Desert of Nevada, November, 1905. In the history of photographic art, this is perhaps the first time on record that such a view has been secured.

The Amargossa Desert has an elevation of 4000 feet above sea level; the Funeral Range, shown in the middle background is from 5000 to 7000 feet above sea level, while Death Valley to the west of this range is from 200 to 300 feet below sea level. West of Death Valley is the Panamint Range, the principal mountain being some 12,000 feet in elevation. The Borax Company maintain a road from the mines in Death Valley to Dagget Station on the Santa Fe Railroad about seventy miles distant. The following suggestion may be used as an explanation of the phenomena which is described as being mirrored "somewhere in the Panamint Range" at a high elevation, as the team made its way along the lower or southern portion of the valley, 125 miles southeast of the point where the photo was secured. From the Panamints this mirrored image was deflected by refraction to the cloud bank gathering over the Amargossa and driven by the gathering storm. This cloud bank was, it may be assumed, at slightly lower elevation than the Panamint mountain, was gathering over the Funeral Range and the Amargossa and could be plainly seen with the naked eye for about 20 minutes; sufficient for the writer to drive nearly a mile, secure a camera and snap the view, then at least forty miles distant, while the team itself must have been at least 100 miles distant. The combination of atmospheric effects and light made it possible to secure with a 3x5 camera a picture that is unique and of general interest to admirers of the art. The picture has been copy-righted.

San Francisco, Calif.
February 21st, 1918.

Explanation of “The Mirage.” Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum

Thank you to Linda Ellsworth, long-time FECM member and former Board member, for flagging this photograph as one of her favorites in the Museum. Let us know what some of your favorites are!



FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

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THANK YOU!

Join the Friends of the Eastern California Museum

The Friends of the Eastern California Museum work to promote, preserve and protect the important collections and memories that make up Inyo County's only regional museum. The Friends raise funds and contribute time and work to help maintain and improve the Museum's buildings and grounds. We support special exhibits and arrange for speakers, field trips, and programs that inform and entertain Inyo County residents and visitors who come from far and near. We have partnered with the Carson and Colorado group to display and promote the restored Slim Princess steam engine. We also provide funds to maintain the Museum's collections and enhance its permanent exhibits. Every March we hold our Annual Meeting, with a potluck dinner, silent auction and guest speaker. We invite you to join with us to support the Museum. FECM is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Members receive a newsletter, email invitations to special events, programs and field trips, and a 10% discount at the Museum Bookstore.

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