FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

Preserving Inyo County's Past for the Future

FECM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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info@fecm.org 760-878-5089

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021

UPDATES: WHAT'S NEW

Museum Update:
The Museum is currently open every day, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Following County guidelines, masks are required.

As the Museum's new Administrator Shawn Lum takes the reins, many plans are underway for new and revised exhibits with a goal of illustrating the flow of life in the region and increasing understanding of how all the various influences (Native American, Anglo-American, Central and South American, ecological, and economic) intersect and interact. These will take some time to implement, and we will report as things evolve. And be assured that your much-appreciated membership and donation funding will help this effort.

The Jane Bright Memorial Rock Garden work is close to being finalized. The most recent addition is explanatory signage at each of the rocks lining the pathway, so that in the future, those of us who are not geologists will be able to identify what we are seeing when we go hiking.

The Slim Princess is back! For all of you train aficionados, the engine is back home after spending several months in Colorado, so stop by and say hello!

Finally, we thank all who responded to the Museum's request for volunteers to help with various projects. If you can donate some time, please call the Museum at 760-878-0258.

In this issue and other updates:
In this issue, we feature the history and related photographs of Lillian Hilderman, one of the many women whose hard work and tireless activities had such a great impact on the area. The article is written by former Museum Curator and current FECM Board member Roberta Harlan. We also feature a number of recent donations to the museum, with thanks to the donors and to Heather Todd, current Museum Curator.

In recent issues, a number of our readers have contributed photographs of the area and the stories that go with them, or have told us about their favorite item(s) in the Museum. If you'd like to share yours, please feel free to contact us.

Another in an occasional series about the Women of Inyo County

Lillian Larson Hilderman of Keeler, California

by Roberta Harlan c. 2021 R. Harlan

Eastern California Museum will miss her visits in her dusty pale blue sedan as it wheezed and rattled up to the front door. She piloted the old vehicle all over lnyo County almost until her 89th birthday. No one knows how she obtained a driver's license with practically no hearing and eyes weakened from gazing out over the glaring alkali sands of Owens dry lake. The power of the spirit is indeed great and Lillian had plenty of that. INYO MUSEUMS NEWS *Bulletin* March 1976

Lillian Larson Hilderman's collection of personal items of clothing and accessories, household items, correspondence, along with local ephemera, photographs and postcards, was donated to the Eastern California Museum by her family in 1976. According to Mrs. Viola L. Mackhardt, Lillian's sister, "Lillian took a great interest in the Museum and mentioned it often with great pride."

Who was Lillian Larson Hilderman? Lillian Larson was born on May 18, 1886, in St. Peter, Minnesota. She lived there with her family until January 1909 when she came to Independence to marry Ludvig Linde. They homesteaded 1½ miles south of Independence, near Symmes Creek. Linde was also involved in the design and development of the Saline Valley Salt Tram. Just prior to World War I their son, Lawson, was born. Ludwig Linde was one of many brave soldiers from Inyo County to lose his life in Europe. Yet Lillian endured and stayed in the Owens Valley. She became the Postmaster in Keeler in 1919 and remained in her position for nearly 38 years. In 1929, she married Harry Hilderman. Mr. Hilderman was employed as the Foreman of Construction on the Saline Valley Salt Company tram project. Unfortunately, Harry passed away suddenly four years later in 1933.

Lillian knew everyone and was wholeheartedly involved in her community. She was not only a wife, mother, and postmaster, she also worked as the Office Nurse for Independence physician and surgeon Dr. Wooden. She was often seen on her day off taking walks through the town and into the surrounding countryside, camera always in hand. For decades, Lillian was known as the Keeler Correspondent for Chalfant Press newspapers (The Inyo Independent and the Inyo Register). Her regular column entitled "Keeler" was enjoyed by many dedicated readers. Whether reporting on sick and injured animals, the War Department's low-flying aircraft, or James Smith's new set of choppers, Lillian always found something to write about. She was known to be a stickler for careful reporting. "Witty, sometimes complaining, sometimes praising, she wrote in a style that can never be matched," wrote Ed Rosendorf in Lillian's obituary column of the Inyo Independent, February 12, 1976.

Lillian retired from the Keeler Post Office in 1956 after 37 years and 8 months of service. Her life took another jolt when, in 1957, her son Hans Lawson Linde, his wife Eleanor, and their youngest son Helding were killed in a plane crash. The oldest grandson, also named Lawson, survived.

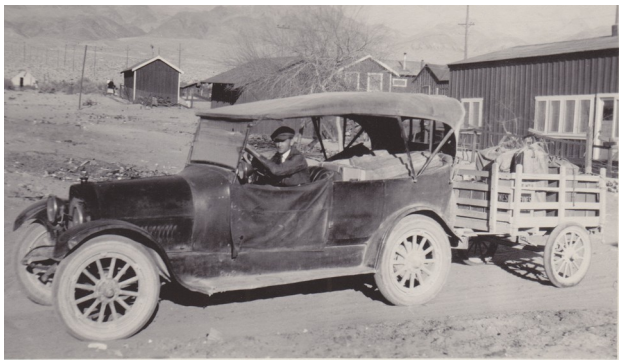
On February 3, 1976, Lillian Linde Hilderman passed away at her home in Keeler, California.

Among the treasures found in the Hilderman collection at the Eastern California Museum are twenty-one leather postcards. Referred to as “novelty” postcards, they were popularized during what was known as the Golden Age of postcard production (1903–1915). In addition to leather cards, other novelty cards were created from wood, copper, tin, and even coconut-husks instead of paper. Created from deer hide, the cards were decorated by pyrography (literally “fire-writing”), also known as pokerwork. This method involved embossing the postcards using the tip of a sharp tool heated by fire. Designs were burned into leather and color was often applied afterward. Notably, pokerwork was a popular craft among ladies. The finished postcard design tended to be based on period stereotypes, with humorous messages and cartoonish drawings related to popular puns of the era, romance and marriage, politics, patriotism, and holiday greetings, especially Valentine’s Day and Christmas.

By 1907, the United States Postal Service began banning the mailing of leather postcards. The public was confused about the changing price of mailing the leather cards, postage stamps did not adhere well to the leather, and format size and shape caused havoc with the postal sorting machines. Even though the short-lived fad of collecting and distributing leather cards ended with the Postal Service ban, souvenir and novelty shops continued to sell the postcards until 1915.

The fascinating collection of Lillian Linde Hilderman shines a brilliant light on early 20th century life in the Owens Valley. She is an example of the strength, determination, steadfastness, contributions, and good cheer of women of the time and place, an example that does not fade with the passing of time.

Lillian Hilderman at work with her many tasks



Lillian the Photographer

Examples of leather postcards in the Museum collection.

All photographs courtesy of the Eastern California Museum

References

Dyer, Florence. “Memories of Lillian Hilderman.” In *The Saga of Inyo*, 203. Southern Inyo American Association of Retired Persons. Covina: Taylor Publishing Company, 1977.

Inyo County Museums *Bulletin*, March 1976.

Letter, from Mrs. Viola L. Mackhardt, Executrix for the Estate of Lillian L Hilderman, to Mr. Charles N. Irwin, Director, Inyo County Museum Department, October 9, 1976.

Progress Citizen, *Inyo Independent*, February 12, 1976. Lillian Hilderman.Obituary

Raub, Henry. “Lillian’s Keeler.” In *The Album, Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono*, 34-40. Bishop: Chalfant Press, Inc., Volume II, Number 2, April 1989.

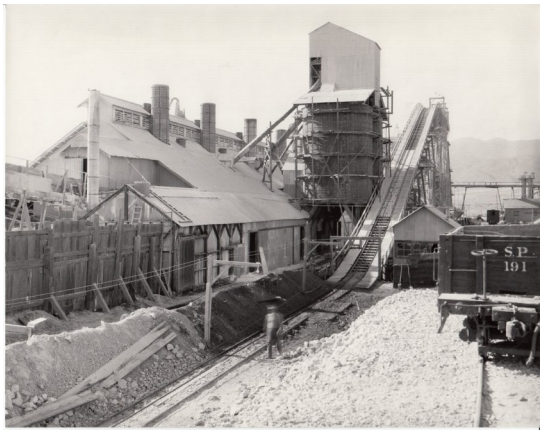
Recent Additions to the Museum's Collections

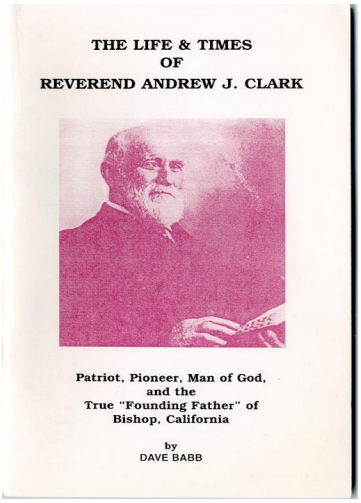
by Heather Todd, ECM Curator

The Eastern California Museum wouldn't exist without the selfless contributions from people who care about preserving the history of Inyo County. With no acquisition budget, we rely on donations of artifacts that tell a story and are part of the fabric of life in the Eastern Sierra region. Here we present and recognize a few of the recent 2021 additions to our collections.
All photographs courtesy of the Eastern California Museum.

2021.13 Gift of Edward Sudway. Donated in memory of Agnes Wilson Sudway. Six baskets made by Susie Bilson Wilson, who was a Shoshone basket maker. The donor was married to Agnes Wilson, Susie Wilson's daughter. These baskets have remained in the family and were never sold.

2021.16 Gift of George Engler. Two dredge buckets from the Natural Soda Products Company (NSP), in operation 1915-1952. Photo is of the Natural Soda Products plant in Keeler.

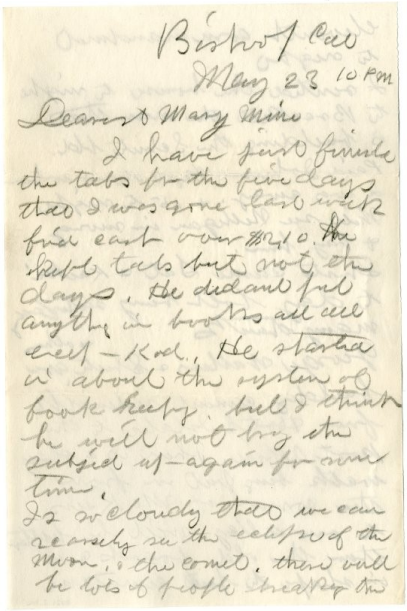




2021.5 Gift of Fr. Brad Karelius. Forty-one books and booklets of regional history, interest, and reference from the donor's personal library.

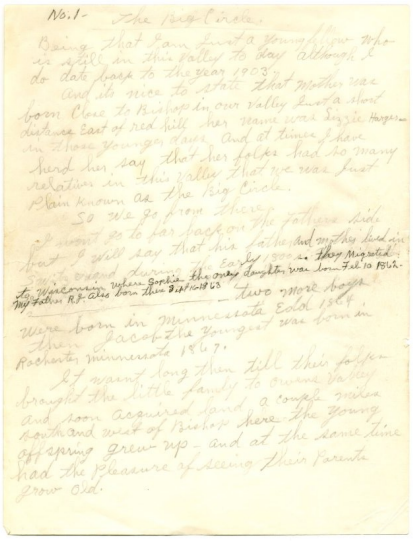
2021.9 Gift of Rich O'Conner. Oral history interview conducted by the donor with Birdie Yandell (1879-1982) and Omie Mairs on December 23, 1976. Photo is of Birdie Yandell as a child.

2021.15 Gift of Sandy Tackett. Scrapbook belonged to the donor's great-grandmother, Nora Woolridge. Donor's great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother were all born in Big Pine. Photo is of the Big Pine High School graduating class of 1916.



Bishop Cal
May 23 10 PM
Dearest Mary Mine
I have just finished the tabs for the five days that I was gone last week four each over 20 & 10. Am short tabs but not the days. He didn't find anything in books all well enough. He started in about the system of book keeping, but I think he will not try the subject up again for some time.
It is cloudy that we can research on the eclipse of the Moon, the comet, there will be lots of people there

2021.2 Gift of Bruce Turner. Three page letter written by photographer A. A. Forbes to his wife, Mary, circa 1916-1917.



No. 1 -
The Big Circle
Being that I am [illegible] a young person who is still in this valley to stay although I do not hope to the year 1923
and do nice to relate that mother was born Close to Bishop in our valley [illegible] Sizzle Hayes
[illegible] East of red hill her name was [illegible]
in those younger days. And at times I have
heard her say that her folks had so many
relation in this valley that we were just
plain known as the Big Circle.
So we go from there
[illegible] the father died
[illegible] and my boy [illegible]
[illegible] in Hays Missouri
[illegible] Feb 10 1842.
[illegible] Where [illegible] when Sophia the only daughter was born Feb 10 1842.
[illegible] Feb 10 1842. Also born three [illegible] two more boys
were born in Minnesota Edol 1867.
[illegible] Jacob the Youngest was born in
Rochester Minnesota 1867.
It wasn't long then till this father
brought the little family to owens Valley
and soon acquired land, a couple miles
southand west of Bishop where the young
off spring grew up - and at the same time
had the Pleasure of seeing their Parents
grow old.

2021.14 Gift of Kim Walker. Thirty-three page handwritten manuscript by John Schober. He was born on November 9, 1903 and died on October 15, 1995. An excerpt from this manuscript was featured in our Summer 2021 Newsletter (available online at www.fecm.org).

NEW/RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS, DONATIONS, CHARCOAL KILNS DONATIONS, FOUNDERS PATIO PAVING STONES
WINTER 2021 - RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER

MEMBERSHIPS

Benefactor
Gayle Creasman

Patron
William Apt
Cindy Pridmore & Gary Taylor

Contributing
Pamela Ford & Ken Alford
Barbara Andrews
Sherry Chiero
Cole and Priscilla Hawkins
Jeannie Kalivoda
Ethan & Joanne Lipsig
Mary Nomura
Mary Shore
Scott Weaver
Carol & Del Wiens

Family
Robert Allebaugh
Thomas Good & Jehnana Balzer
Richard & Laurie Bolles
David & Jayne Hall
Brian & Lynn Lamb
Jim Lewis
Mark O'Connor
Chris & Marsha Phillips
Saburo & Anna Sasaki
Liz Toton

Individual
Norma Brandt
Jimmy Fukuhara
Steven Hupp
George Johnston
Gayle Koch
Catherine Kravitz
Marion Love
Nancy Muleady Mecham
Stephanie Owen
Julie Sasaki- Hom
Alex Sebastian
Ken Zinns

COTTONWOOD CHARCOAL KILNS DONATIONS

Kilns
Steven Hupp

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

Andrew Stevenson/Liberty Mutual Group, Inc.
Schlinger Family Foundation

FOUNDER'S PATIO PAVING STONES

Sponsor
Erik W. Goldstrom & Michael M. Garland: INYO OUR TRAIL BOSS 2014-2018

Friend
Richard M. King: THE KING FAMILY RICH SALLY SCOBY

FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

FOUNDER'S PATIO ORDER FORM

Order your paving stone today and help us build for the future

Yes, I would like to order a paving stone for the Eastern California Museum's Founder's Patio in the amount of:

___ $125 Friend ___ $250 Sponsor ___ $500 Patron ___ $1,000 Founder

I would like the paving stone to be engraved with the following inscription:

Each paving stone is 8" x 8" and can contain 5 lines of text with up to 16 characters per line (spaces between words count as characters). The letters are ¾" tall.

THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM RESERVES THE RIGHT OF APPROVAL FOR ALL PROPOSED INSCRIPTIONS.

DATE: _____

DONOR NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Please return this form with payment to: Friends of the Eastern California Museum
P.O. Box 33
Independence, CA 93526

You can also order and pay online at www.fecm.org, Support Us tab.
Questions? Write us at info@fecm.org.

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.

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

Please email my newsletter and announcements ☐

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS: *The membership year begins on the date your membership dues are received.*
☐ INDIVIDUAL-$25 ☐ FAMILY-$40 ☐ CONTRIBUTING-$100 ☐ SUPPORTING-$150

☐ BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION-$150 ☐ PATRON-$250 ☐ SUSTAINING-$500 ☐ BENEFACTOR-$1,000 & UP

Enclosed is my payment of $_____ Make checks payable to **FECM**; mail to **FECM, PO Box 33, Independence CA 93526**
You can also pay for your membership with a credit card at www.fecm.org. Select the Membership tab.

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