Friends of the Eastern California

Spring-Summer 2024

FECM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
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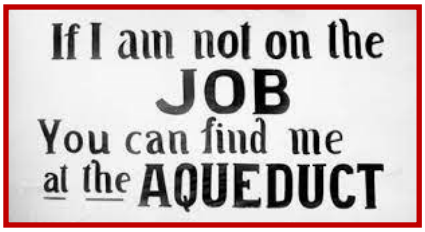
ALABAMA GATES OCCUPATION 1924-2024



HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

Taken from the ECM Oral History Collection, California Revealed Digital Archive , https://archive.org/details/cainecm_000174. OH 20

From: Frank M. Parcher, 420 Alberto Way, Apt. 1, Los Gatos, California, July 15, 1974
To: Henry Raub, Director, Inyo County Museum Department, Independence, California

In response to your request, I am sending you the following information regarding the founding of the Eastern California Museum Association and the Eastern California Museum.

Prior to 1928, there had been considerable discussion throughout the Owens Valley regarding the need for an organization to preserve the historic and prehistoric heritage of Eastern California. In 1928, my mother, Marie Louise Parcher, invited a group of interested citizens to our home at Bishop for a meeting to discuss what actions should be taken in this matter. At this meeting, it was determined that an organization should be established and that its name would be the Eastern California Museum Association. My mother was elected president. In 1929, the Association was incorporated under the laws of the State of California with the assistance of Jess Hession, the County District Attorney.

Marie L. Parcher & W. C. Parcher

Those signing the Articles of Incorporation were: Louise Parcher, Bishop, CA; Douglas Robinson, Bishop, CA; Bessie T. Best, Bishop, CA; William A. Irwin, Independence, CA; Frank M. Parcher, Independence, CA; G.W. Dow, Lone Pine, CA; Charles T. Forbes, Bishop, CA. Note: my mother's name was Marie Louise Parcher, but she often went by the name of Louise Parcher or Mrs. W.C. Parcher. When she wrote for the papers in the Owens Valley, she signed her name as Susan. In a letter sent me by Charles T. Forbes, then Secretary of the Association, he included a list of the active members during the 1929-1930 period. My wife, Florence, will read that list. [Florence speaking:] R.A. Bell, Mrs. Bessie Best, L.H. Branerd, W.A. Chalfant, W.A. Crosby, J.W. Dixon, G.W. Dow, Charles Forbes, Mrs. John Gorman, Belle Gorman, Mrs. Genevieve Grandquist, A.L. Hall, Mrs. Alton Hall, Jess Hession, D.W. Holman, Miss Ann Margrave,

(Cont. on p.2)

Frank Parcher, W.C. Parcher, Mrs. W.C. Parcher, C.A. Partridge, P.E. Rich, Douglas Robinson, William Sandford, Miss Betty Stevens, Guy Wake, C.D. Woodhouse. [Frank speaking:] The Officers of the Association at this time were: Mrs. W.C. Parcher, President; Frank M. Parcher, Curator; Charles T. Forbes, Secretary/Treasurer.

After the Association was organized and a membership recruited, the next step was to find a place to house and store the Museum exhibits. There seemed to be no available space in Bishop, and so my mother went down to Independence and talked to the County Board of Supervisors about the possibility of finding room in the Courthouse for the Museum. There was a vacant storeroom in the basement of the Courthouse and this was turned over to the Association for its Museum. This was just a bare room, without even any plaster on the walls. But the County agreed to plaster the walls and decorate the room so that it would be acceptable as a showplace, and we were soon able to begin to move in and exhibit.

As soon as it was learned that we had the Museum open, gifts of various kinds were received from throughout Owens Valley for exhibit at the Museum. These included family heirlooms, Indian artifacts, geological specimens, and botanical specimens. People enthusiastically supported the Museum and we received many fine gifts, not only of fine specimens but also of equipment, such as showcases, chairs, and so forth.

One of the problems that plague an organization of this kind is financing, and the Eastern California Museum Association was no exception. The only money we had was the money we received from members, which wasn't very much, considering they paid a dollar apiece. So my mother again went to the Supervisors and talked them into making an appropriation to the Museum, this time in the amount of about $50. From there on, for a number of years, she met with the Supervisors at each budget session and got some money into the regular budget, maybe $100 and sometimes $150. This doesn't seem very much now but at that time it was a lot of money for us, and we used it in many good ways.

ECM in basement of the Inyo County

Within a few years after the Museum was opened, it became apparent that we needed a better system of keeping track of the gifts and loans. So the Supervisors hired me to catalog the contents of the Museum. This was quite a job as already there were many items in the Museum of which we had no record as to where they had come from or sometimes even what they were. But with the help of volunteers and the staff of the Inyo County Library, we were able to complete the job and that catalog lasted for quite a few years. Finally, it was abandoned from what I understand.

While the first interest of the Association was to find a proper place to display and house items of interest, still we had another and compelling interest to work to preserve the natural wonders and historic sites that were located in Eastern California and Western Nevada. The first action taken along this line was to make an effort to reduce the vandalism and commercial destruction of the petroglyphs in Inyo and Mono County [sic]. These ancient rock carvings are some of the most beautiful, interesting, and spectacular in the whole of the United States. Vandalism and commercial mining interests were destroying many of them then, and vandalism continues to destroy them today. To help prevent this destruction, we got in touch with President Herbert Hoover, who issued an order withdrawing from entry 30,000 acres of public lands in Eastern California and Western Nevada. This withdrawal covered most of the important petroglyph sites in Inyo and Mono County [sic] and meant that no mining could be conducted in that area. This order also covered the Fish Lake Valley Petrified Forest, now known as The Sump, because it was feared that commercial interests would begin to destroy the geological wonders of that area. Douglas Robinson and Charles Forbes assisted me in developing maps covering these sites, which were sent to the Department of the Interior and were the basis for President Hoover's withdrawal order. We had hoped that this Executive Order would be the start of a series of actions to preserve the petroglyphs. But such was not the case and I understand that in later years the Executive Order was withdrawn without hardly any protest from the Eastern California Museum Association.

(Cont. on p. 3)

At about the same time that the Executive Order was issued withdrawing the lands from entry that covered the petroglyph sites, the Association secured a permit from the Smithsonian Institution for an archaeological survey of Eastern California. This reconnaissance could be carried on by the Eastern California Museum Association or in cooperation with other museums. The Smithsonian permit and the Executive Order withdrawing the land from entry had no connection with each other except they covered the same general territory. But in later years, some confusion developed in the minds of some people regarding the two and some thought that they were in one package. As a result of the Smithsonian permit, the Association, in cooperation with the Southwest Museum, conducted an archaeological survey of the Saline Valley. This was a small but successful reconnaissance and some interesting artifacts were discovered. A report was written and given to both the Southwest Museum and the Eastern California Museum Association and the artifacts were divided between the two institutions. A Mr. Baldwin of the Southwest Museum was a leader of this party. I haven't seen the report or the artifacts for many years.

An example of the need to preserve the archaeological sites in Eastern California is the story of what happened to the petroglyphs at Swansee. On a dolomite promontory near the old Swansee smelter. Ancient people had carved some very interesting petroglyphs. One of these carvings was particularly intriguing, as it was without doubt a map. This map showed a series of lakes connected by a stream and was almost identical with a map drawn by scientists of the USGS in recent years, depicting the ancient lake system and the Owens River out of Owens Lake in the Cerros and around to Panamint and Death Valley. Their ancient mapmaker must have lived in a time when the Owens River flowed out of Owens Lake, down through the Cerros and around to Panamint and Death Valley, and he left a record of it.

In the 1930s, a company was quarrying dolomite marble in the vicinity of Swansee and when they reached the place where the petroglyphs were, they stopped their operations and went to the County Supervisors and offered to sell the promontory to the County so that the petroglyphs could be preserved. The company said that the area there, the marble in it, was worth about $500, and if the County or anyone else would put up the $500, they would not quarry that area and leave it intact so that people could see the petroglyphs in the future.

The people who started the Museum 46 years ago would be particularly pleased if they could see it today with its well-displayed and cataloged exhibits and its friendly and knowledgeable receptionists. It is particularly pleasing to see the Museum being used as a historical research center. There is a professionalism expressed at the Museum which would do credit to some larger institutions. I hope the information I have given you will prove helpful, and please feel free to call upon me for any other assistance I may be able to offer. [End of Parcher's note (OH 20)]-----

The Museum continued to grow with increasing support from the Inyo County Board of Supervisors. In the 1960s, with substantial financial support from Walter and Maude Dow, the building that currently houses the Museum was built and opened in 1968. The Board of Supervisors accepted the building as a gift and established a County mechanism to oversee Museum operations. The Museum will soon celebrate its 100th Anniversary, and we hope to see many of you at the celebration.

Maude Dow

Eastern California Museum ca. 1968

Walter Dow

The Friends of the Eastern California Museum incorporated in 1985 as the Museum's nonprofit support group. It continues today promoting the Museum's mission to preserve and interpret the natural and cultural history of Inyo County.

EVENTS/FIELD TRIPS

PAST EVENTS

Keeler . . .Then and Now
03/09/2024

We want to extend a big THANK YOU again to everyone who attended this event and made time to come out and share their amazing Keeler-related stories. As well, we appreciate the hard work and dedication supplied by the members of KEEPS - Keeler Early Era Preservation Society. Last, but definitely not least, a big THANK YOU to the Schlinger Family Foundation for its ongoing support of FECM and its educational events and programs. Keeler . . .Then & Now was fully funded by the Schlinger Family Foundation.

55th Manzanar Pilgrimage Reception
04/26/2024

The 55th Annual Manzanar Pilgrimage weekend kicked off on Friday, April 26, with a public reception with light refreshments hosted by the Friends of Eastern California Museum from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Always good to see so many people happy to see each other on the eve of Pilgrimage weekend. Big thanks to Museum Administrator Shawn Lum and her associate, Kelly Bahr for being so helpful and welcoming. FECM Board members Jennifer Duncan, Rosanne Lampariello and stalwart Board alumni Bill Michael, Sharon Avey, and bartender par excellence Rich White were there for support and help. A wonderful evening for all.

PAST EVENTS [Cont.]

Celebrating the 100th Year Anniversary: Legacy of Alice
June 1, 2024

Congratulations to our partners, the AkaMya Cultural Group of Big Pine for a great turnout on Saturday, June 1,2024, at Big Pine High School, when the organization hosted "Celebrating the 100th Year Anniversary: Legacy of Alice", a public celebration of the Alice Piper Vs. Big Pine School case which made it legal for Native American children to attend public schools.

The honoring ceremony was held at the Big Pine School with a reception that followed at the AkaMya Culture Group, Margaret L. Romero Cultural Studio. The agenda offered a variety of guest speakers, educators, community leaders and dancers, including Sage Romero, the Women Singing Club, David Rambeau, Tim Steele, Meryl Piccard, Joseph Quintana, Marisela Martinez-Cola, and our own ECM Museum Administrator, Shawn Lum and FECM Board Member and historian Jennifer Duncan.

ALABAMA GATES 2024

Alabama Gates 2024 is a weekend of free community events in Lone Pine, California, November 15 – 17, 2024, commemorating the centennial of the Alabama Gates Occupation. This significant historical event occurred when the people of Owens Valley non-violently seized the Los Angeles Aqueduct's control gates just north of Lone Pine on November 16, 1924, diverting the entire flow of the aqueduct into the historic Owens River channel in protest of the City of Los Angeles' aggressive land acquisition and water harvesting activities within the valley that began with the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913. The 1924 Alabama Gates occupation evolved into a multi-day community picnic as 700 Owens Valley residents gathered in solidarity with the occupiers over four days.

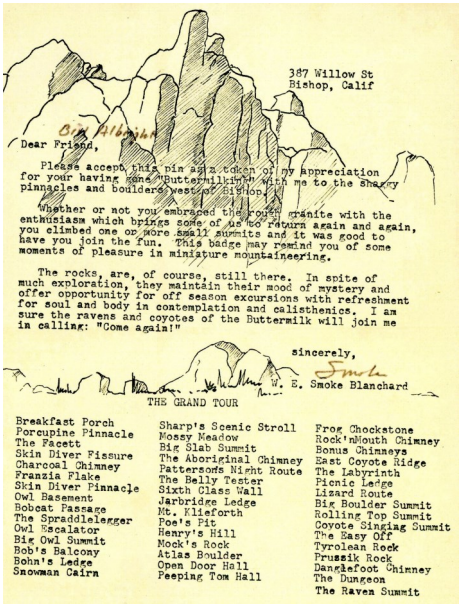
November 15 – 17, 2024, program includes roundtable discussions at Lone Pine's Statham Hall, a no-host community picnic at Lone Pine's Spainhower Park featuring local food truck concessionaires, film screenings at the Museum of Western Film History, and an interpretive walking tour with a local naturalist at Patsiata (Owens Lake). Full program schedule is available at ***alabamagates2024.org***. Pre-registration is required for all events.

This event is produced by *There It Is—Take It!* in partnership with Sierra Forever (formerly ESIA). Our program is supported by a 2024 *Humanities for All Quick Grant*

CURATOR'S CORNER

BY HEATHER TODD

It has been a busy spring and summer here at the Curator's Corner. A big thank you to all of our generous donors. As always, we are grateful for the wonderful and interesting artifacts you have given throughout the year.



387 Willow St
Bishop, Calif

Dear Friend,

Please accept this pin as a token of my appreciation for your having gone "Buttermilking" with me to the Sharky pinnacles and boulders west of Bishop.

Whether or not you embraced the rough granite with the enthusiasm which brings some of us to return again and again, you climbed one or more small summits and it was good to have you join the fun. This badge may remind you of some moments of pleasure in miniature mountaineering.

The rocks, are, of course, still there. In spite of much exploration, they maintain their mood of mystery and offer opportunity for off season excursions with refreshment for soul and body in contemplation and calisthenics. I am sure the ravens and coyotes of the Buttermilk will join me in calling: "Come again!"

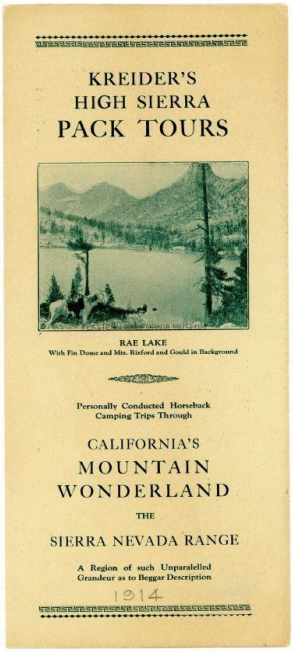
sincerely,

W. E. Smoke Blanchard

THE GRAND TOUR

Breakfast Porch	Sharp's Scenic Stroll	Frog Chockstone
Porcupine Pinnacle	Mossy Meadow	Rock'nMouth Chimney
The Facett	Big Slab Summit	Bonus Chimneys
Skin Diver Fissure	The Aboriginal Chimney	East Coyote Ridge
Charcoal Chimney	Patterson's Night Route	The Labyrinth
Franzia Flake	The Belly Tester	Picnic Ledge
Skin Diver Pinnacle	Sixth Class Wall	Lizard Route
Owl Basement	Jarbridge Ledge	Big Boulder Summit
Bobcat Passage	Mt. Ilieforth	Rolling Top Summit
The Spraddlelegger	Poe's Pit	Coyote Singing Summit
Owl Escalator	Henry's Hill	The Easy Off
Big Owl Summit	Mock's Rock	Tyrolean Rock
Bob's Balcony	Atlas Boulder	Prussik Rock
Bohn's Ledge	Open Door Hall	Danglefoot Chimney
Snowman Cairn	Peeping Tom Hall	The Dungeon
		The Raven Summit

After the success of the Smoke Blanchard exhibition in 2022-2023, several of the artifacts on loan were donated to the museum. This includes two letters written by Smoke, from Bill Albright, a collection of Smoke's passports and photos, from James Blanchard, and books from Smoke's personal library, from Andy Selters.



KREIDER'S
HIGH SIERRA
PACK TOURS

RAE LAKE
With Fin Dome and Mts. Risford and Gould in Background

Personally Conducted Horseback
Camping Trips Through

CALIFORNIA'S
MOUNTAIN
WONDERLAND

THE
SIERRA NEVADA RANGE

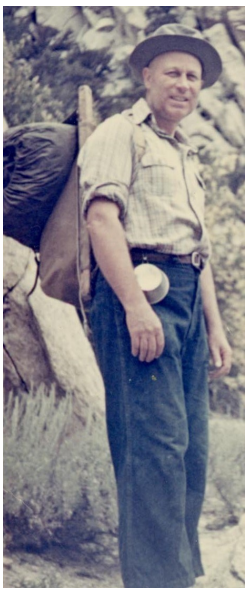
A Region of such Unparalelled
Grandeur as to Beggar Description

1914

Andrew Boyd, a descendent of Claude and Isobel Kreider, has kindly donated several photo albums of the family's extensive pack trips in the Sierras as well as everyday life on their Manzanar ranch. Mr. Boyd also had one of Claude's handmade bamboo fly fishing rods professionally framed, which he has presented to the Museum.

A donation came in from Jane Homen who generously gave the museum a collection of 17 letters written by John Livingston Porter, the Superintendent of Mines at Cerro Gordo, to the donor's great-grandmother, Nancy Smith. These letters were written between 1865-1871 and offer us a glimpse into the earliest days of Inyo County and life in Cerro Gordo. Along with the letters is a tintype of a man that may be Mr. Porter himself.

Denny Kruska thoughtfully donated a collection of documents from famed mountaineer Chester Versteeg. They include items written by and about Mr. Versteeg, correspondence with notable Sierra Club and National Park Service leaders, extensive research on Tulainyo Lake, and—of course—notes on place names in the Sierra.



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

I would like the paving stone to be engraved with the following inscription:
THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM RESERVES THE RIGHT OF APPROVAL FOR ALL PROPOSED INSCRIPTIONS.
DATE: _____

DONOR NAME: _____

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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.
Or scan our FECM **QR Code** to the right and select **Order Your Paver Block Today.**

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 _____

Do you prefer to receive the newsletter and announcements by email or mail? Please check one: Email □ or Mail □

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS: *Membership year begins on the date of your check or receipt of electronic payment.*

□ 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 or try out our new FECM QR Code on the previous page.

FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM
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