

Beatty



Museum

and Historical Society

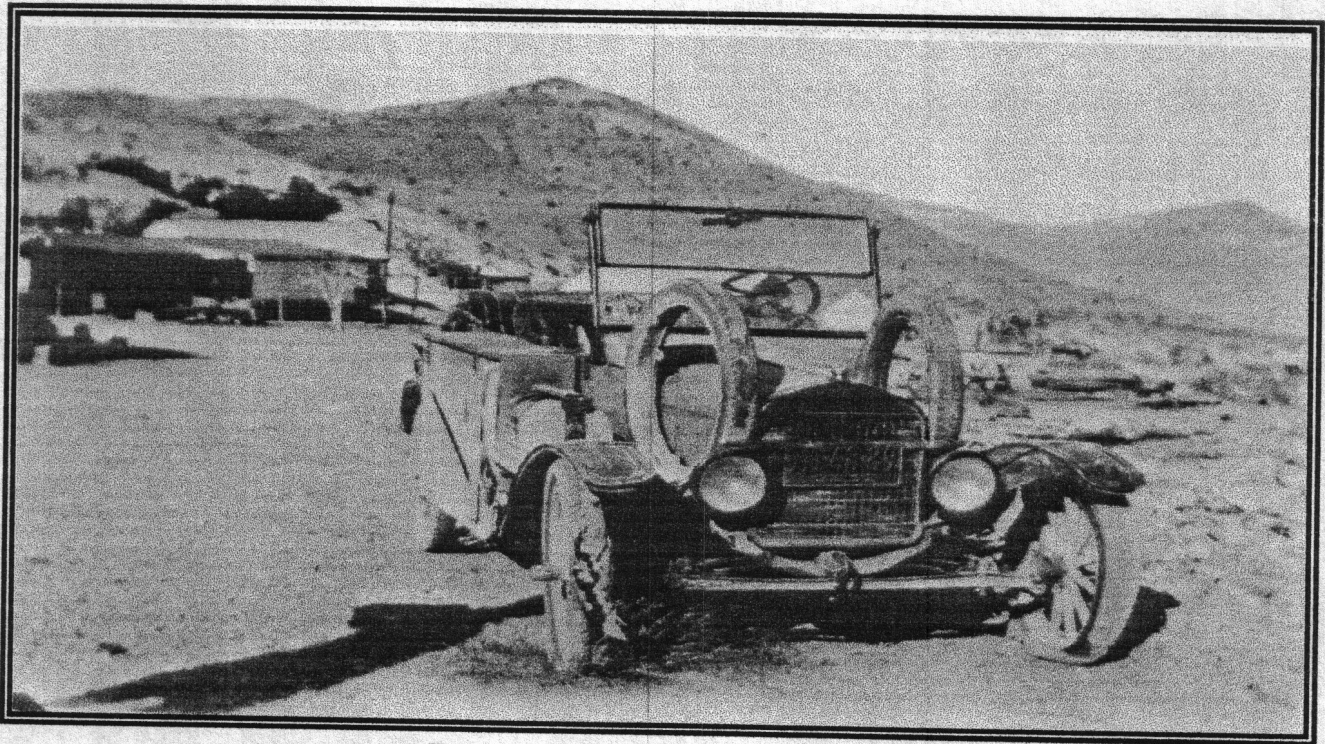
VOL.6 NO.1

NEWSLETTER

JAN - FEB 2000

Happy New Year!

Take a trip through yesteryear with Chas. L. Heald and his buddies in BMHS History section.



Denning Springs, CA Dec 1, 1930
Photo by Chas. L. Heald

A Message from the President Claudia Reidhead

Hi Folks: It's just me again. I think you all know what time it is, time for a new President and Officers with the election coming up very soon. I think I should tell you all about how our organization really got started. A lot of you know this but there are a few who don't, so here goes. One early spring day about 5 years ago, there were three of us sitting at the Exchange Club having coffee and we got to deploring the lack of interest in our town and thought a museum would spark an interest in the town for the local people and for interested tourists. It took almost three months to get us even a little bit organized. Mary Revert, Vonnie Gray and I poured our hearts into getting this going and we had some really good and interesting local people who were founding members: Janie Cottonwood, Gloria Shearer, Ralph and Chloe Lisle. Bill and Zettia Miller of Long Beach, CA became our editor and publisher of our newsletter. Life members Roger and Barbara Piatt of Ohio and Lynn and Ellis Vance of Sparks, whose family were here during the early years, coming into Rhyolite and Beatty with the Gold Rush and Clint and Ellen Boehringer who come from Oregon every winter to stay in Rhyolite. We started out in my little cabin and as our needs grew we expanded into the building we were to be in for the next four years, the old water office and now we are expanding again into the old Catholic Church which we were able to purchase with part of the grant money from the county. We need to do a lot of renovation and while we have a few volunteers to help with the labor, we need more and we need volunteers to man it once we get it open. Our most active members for the last five years have been Mary Revert, Vonnie Gray, Lorayne White, Peggy Johnson, Kanna Lindgard, Larry Hamilton, Norma Hamilton, Bill and Zettia Miller and Andy Gudas who travels from Amargosa every month for our meetings and helps us when needed with our fund-raises. This year we lost Bev Coffee as a board member as she left and went back to Kansas, resigning her directorship to Les Parsons. Les has another year to serve on Bev's two year director position. Kanna Lindgard has another year on his two year directorship to serve. A lot of things have changed for us over the years. Gloria moved to Caliente, Janie resigned due to lack of time, Ralph and Chloe are still advising us when we ask for their help. Andy still drives from Amargosa,

Bill & Zettia still do the newsletter for us. Our local membership dropped with the closing of Barrick Mine, so we have fewer people to help us with our projects and it takes longer to get things done. I hope that soon we will be able to have a larger local membership again. I want to thank everyone for the wonderful experience of the last five years. I know that we will continue to grow and expand. Our little museum is unique as I have been told for its diversity and the wonderful living content of what we show. Our aim is to show how people lived and what they did, a special personal quality has always been apparent in the little museum. Last week I had two gentlemen come in who said that this was how a museum should be presented. I pointed out to them that we were small and could be presented in this way. They remarked at least here they learned the history of what they were looking at as opposed to the large dioramas displayed in the larger institutes. I also told them that our displays change as the people who allowed us to show their treasures, rotate items from time to time as most of you know, there are very few items in our museum that belong to the museum, most of the displays are on loan from family collections. I would like to thank Mr. Ert Moore for his generous gift of \$200.00 in memory of the wonderful women in his life. Also a gift of \$200.00 was received from the Las Vegas Garden Miniature Railroad Club. This wonderful organization comes every year for Railroad Days and sets up their amazing miniature trains in the community center. Thanks to Neil McClean and Steve Tomanelli of Banning, CA for donating a computer CPU and thanks to Mark Showein of Pahrump for donating Fuel cans and canteens from mines in the Amargosa, Pahrump and Beatty areas. God Bless and Happy New Year.

"RIBITS" from the editor....

Bullfrog Billy

Happy New Year and welcome to the first newsletter of the new century. One of the many benefits of being involved with history preservation, is the opportunity to make contact with many people who share the same interest. I recently became acquainted with a very interesting gentleman, Chuck Heald, who is 87 years young, by using email contacts. I first read about Chuck in the Amargosa News which published his story about a trip to Death Valley in 1930. I found out that the published story was the abbreviated version and after

talking on the phone and a few emails back and forth, Chuck agreed to give me the WHOLE STORY and said I could use the story in our History Section. Chuck has been very kind in not only sharing the story but sharing some photos taken on that particular trip as well as some other trips he has taken over the years. I have divided the story into two parts with the conclusion set for the March-April issue. A big thanks to Chuck for his kindness and his sharing of his most interesting travels. As Claudia mentioned in her column it is nearing time for election of new officers. It is very important that you vote when you receive your ballot. A lot of members do not live in or near Beatty, but you should still make your voice heard, not only by voting, but by offering any suggestions you may have in helping the future of BMHS. Recruiting new members is very important and something that locals and out of town members both can participate in. Hope you all have a healthy and happy year 2000. Until the next time.....**RIBIT!**

NOTES FROM VONNIE GRAY

November 4, 1999

We discussed placing the unsold pews at the Lyle's property. The Lions Club is donating their labor in electrical and plumbing. It was agreed to give two pews for the Lions Club Center. Bobby agreed to attend the Park and Recreation Board to request money for fencing and advertising. We will need to have regular hours at the museum. It was suggested asking some of the senior citizens of Beatty to fill this need.

December 1999

No meeting.

End of the Year:

Treasure Report: \$7517.34

Museum Visitors - 424

Museum Volunteers: Larry Hamilton, Kanna Lindgard, Claudia Reidhead, Mary Revert, Vonnie Gray and many during Railroad Days.

Thank you to the Las Vegas Railroad Garden Club for their gift of two hundred dollars.

Happy New Year!

It has been a long time since I wrote to you all. I am so thankful for your part in making the Beatty Museum a reality. Yet it seems that the old bones are getting over worked and busier. We really have a need to have the museum open daily. So, if you know of anyone who is not working or willing to donate some time, please let one of us know. The church building is bought and now comes the getting it ready stage. I am thankful for the assistance of the Lions Club members. It is interesting how the same people volunteer their time and energy. We look forward to seeing the Museum finally reopened in 2000. This past year has had a lot of stresses. But I guess that is how we know that we are still alive. The museum's goal in the twenty-first century is to be up and open for visitors and friends to see where we have been and how the past affects the future. The citizens of Beatty survive even when the mines are gone. We have a rich heritage to share and explore. We are also looking for someone or group to organize the Railroad Days festivities. It has become a difficult task for just the two or three of us to plan or keep up with. I hope you will find a time to reflect and regroup for this new year of growth and change.....Vonnie Gray

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Aruel Henrichsen

BMHS MEETING DATES

7 PM

Beatty Community Center

January 31, 2000

February 28, 2000

Bullfrog Mining District History

DEATH VALLEY TRIP IN 1930 IN A 1921 MODEL T FORD

BY

CHAS. L. HEALD

It all started in the Fall of 1928 after receiving my driver's license. While driving along East Washington Street in Pasadena, California, I saw a 1921 Model T Ford roadster on a vacant lot with a \$25 for sale sign on the windshield. When I got home, I talked with my parents about it and they agreed I could buy it if I had the money. It so happened that I did, so off we went, and I bought my first car, a thrilling experience!

One day while driving through Glendale with two of my friends, we saw a Model T Ford touring car body for sale for \$2.50 in the front yard of a house. We stopped and after looking it over decided to buy it. Fortunately, I always carried a tool box in the car so right then we unbolted and removed the roadster body and installed the touring car body on the chassis, and drove off leaving the roadster body with the man at the house.

We were bitten by the travel bug, so we frequently took the opportunity for Saturday or Sunday outings. One of the people at the Auto Club of Southern California office in Pasadena, Jack Kemp, was friendly, so every time I went in for maps, he would tell me of many interesting places we could visit for one day, or longer trips. We struck up an acquaintance, and after a time, he suggested that I join the Auto Club, which I did, and have been a member ever since.

In those days, we enjoyed Touring Topics magazine, the forerunner of Westways, published by the Auto Club of Southern California, and especially the series of articles by Philip Johnston on the ghost mining towns. We started to make plans to visit some of them during Thanksgiving vacation. Bodie and Rhyolite were two that intrigued us and we also chose two not-quite-ghost-towns, Tonopah and Goldfield, Nevada. Also, we wanted to see Death Valley. Three friends and I decided to make the trip. We studied the Auto Club maps and worked out a

schedule and mileage for each day of the vacation and where we would camp each night. I might add that my touring car had no top, so we had to take our chances on the weather. We decided on an early start, planning to leave at 5 o'clock Thanksgiving morning, so each of us set our alarm for 4:00 A.M.

Thanksgiving morning turned out to be one of those drizzly mornings that frequently happen in Southern California. The question was, would it clear up or would it develop into a rainy day? After several hurried phone calls back and forth between my friends, we decided to take a chance on the weather, since we would be driving across the desert, and it probably would not be raining there. So it was that the four of us left Pasadena before daylight on a great adventure of over 900 miles that Thanksgiving morning in 1930. We had chipped in \$5.00 apiece, making a total of \$20.00, to cover the cost of gas and oil for the trip. We brought canned food from home, and whatever else we could find in the pantry.

I had constructed a food cabinet that was fastened to the running board to carry the canned goods, and other food, and next to it was a set of canteens that I had made when I took sheet metal shop in the 8th grade several years earlier. The set included a red two gallon canteen for gasoline, a two gallon gray canteen for water, and a one gallon blue canteen for oil. All three of them were fitted into a holder that was bolted to the food cabinet and the front fender on the right side of the car. On the rear were two spare tires.

I might digress a minute and add that this was no ordinary Model T Ford. In those days, hardly any one our age would consider driving a stock car. It had to be "souped up" a bit by varying amounts. Since the Model T depended on differential temperature of the water for circulation through the motor and back to the radiator, the first thing to add to the motor was a

water pump to provide better circulation of the cooling water. Next in line, to improve the power of the motor was to install a Rajo overhead valve head. I am not sure this added much extra power, but it did make an impressive looking motor. After this came a Ruckstall rear end to provide a gear shift and two speeds in addition to the two speed planetary Ford transmission. As I recall, the emergency brake operated on the inside of the brake drums on the rear wheels. Sears Roebuck sold a kit of brake shoes to work on the outside of these drums, with rods to connect to the foot brake pedal on the transmission housing. So this made up my version of the modified 1921 Mode T Ford which we named "Gilmore." I'll tell how the name "Gilmore" originate later in this report.

Daylight dawned as we drove through Mint Canyon toward Palmdale. The weather was still damp, but not as bad as when we left Pasadena. Despite the drizzle, we managed to keep reasonably dry, crouching down behind the windshield, while the two in the back seat survived under a blanket. The trip across the desert, through Mojave, and into Red Rock Canyon was uneventful. We stopped briefly in Red Rock Canyon to take several pictures, and then continued on north past Owens Lake and on to Bishop. We made camp that first night about twelve miles northwest of Bishop along Rock Creek near the foot of Sherwin Grade. At that time, in 1930, it was a beautiful campsite by the rushing stream.

In the morning we cooked breakfast over a small campfire, packed the car and started off again for Mono Lake and Bodie. We were immediately confronted by a sign in the middle of the road informing us that the road was closed ahead because of snow, and recommended going back and taking the Laws road. Since this was not according to our trip plans to go to Bodie, we drove back to Bishop to see if we could get any updated information about road conditions where we wanted to go. At a local gas station, the attendant made a phone call for us and found out that the road was passable, and we could probably get through.

There were several cars on the road up Sherwin grade, so we felt re-assured. As we neared the summit of Sherwin Grade, we began to get into the snow. When we reached Tom's Place, the road was covered with snow. I do not

recall if we had chains, though it was likely we did not. In any event, at one place we slid off the road and with the help of some people who had a similar experience, we pushed the car back onto the road. Near Deadman Pass, we stopped for a picture of the pine trees and snow. This was an exciting adventure for sunny Southern California youths.

We passed the Mono Craters and Mono Lake and turned east north of the lake on a two track dirt road that led over the hills to Bodie, about 17 miles away. The road was little improved from the days of wagon travel. However, there was little snow in this area, and we reached Bodie before long. It was almost a real ghost town, although there were a few people living there at the time. We explored the town, including a short tour of "Boot Hill." By then, it was getting late in the afternoon, so we bid goodbye to Bodie and started off for Nevada, down a narrow road where we were nearly forced off by a drunken driver careening toward us. The road entered a narrow canyon for a while and then we emerged into a broad valley as it was getting dark. We headed for Lucky Boy Pass, up a long winding grade. When we finally reached the summit, we looked down on the friendly lights of the tiny town of Hawthorne, Nevada far below. We reached Hawthorne about 8 o'clock, and found the Western Union office that was in a private home, where we sent a collect telegram home to let our folks know we were OK, and having a great time. After locating a service station and filling up with gas, we left town on the road to Tonopah to look for a suitable place to camp a few miles out of town. It was a clear, starlit night, and cold, cold, cold! I might comment here, there were not many cars traveling Nevada roads in 1930, especially in the remote areas where we were. During the day time, we traveled many miles without passing a single car, and at night the roads were completely deserted.

Finally we pulled off the road a short distance to make camp. We remembered seeing the remains of an old sign board beside the road a few miles back, so while two of the fellows started to make camp, Jim and I drove back to recover some wood for the camp fire. Returning with the wood, we got a welcome camp fire going, but it was so cold, it did not seem to do much good. After some dinner, we slid into our

bed rolls, boots and all, without trying to undress.

After a hurried breakfast, we took off for Tonopah and Goldfield on a wide graded dirt road. However, it had seen enough use to become a typical washboard road, which was devastating for Ford springs. I will give more details on this later.

We arrived at Tonopah, and "Oh Joy!" a paved road, the first pavement we had seen since leaving the highway at Mono Lake. Even the streets of Hawthorne, Nevada were dirt in 1930. Leaving Tonopah, we had great expectations, since we were still on pavement. However, we were soon disappointed as the pavement ended a few miles out of town, and we continued on to Goldfield over more washboard dirt road.

We did not bother to look around Goldfield much, but continue on the road to Beatty and Rhyolite. We arrived at Beatty about dusk on Saturday night, November 29, 1930. We filled the car with gas at the one service station in town, and asked the attendant if there was any place nearby where we could camp for the night. There was a small stream running through a cow pasture next to the station, and he said if we wanted to camp there it would be OK. It was getting dark, so we decided to take him up on the offer. Lights from the station helped pierce the darkness a little bit. We chose the most favorable spot we could find for our bed rolls, and after fixing dinner over a small campfire, went to bed with the tune of clanging cow bells in our ears all night long.

DEATH VALLEY AND VICINITY

We were up early Sunday morning, and after a quick breakfast started for Rhyolite, about 5 miles away. The road from Beatty to Rhyolite, was not bad since it was the old railroad bed, the rails having been removed years before. We spent considerable time exploring Rhyolite, which was completely deserted except for a couple of prospectors living in the Railroad Station, and another in the Bottle House, acting as caretakers. Otherwise, Rhyolite as a "Real Ghost Town." We took pictures of the Railroad Station, Bottle House, and other buildings. The Bottle House was in excellent condition without all the junk that was later moved in around it, the way it was when we again visited Rhyolite several years later, and may still be there today.

In the basement of the old bank building were piles of paper trash exposed to the weather, since the roof and floor were gone. However, little damage had been done to the old papers slightly below the surface, so we collected a few interesting souvenirs, including unused and canceled checks, receipts, etc.

After exploring some of the other building of Rhyolite, we headed for Death Valley via Daylight Pass. To better understand our predicament a little later, I need to explain a little bit more about the old Model T Ford springs. In contrast to most other cars, which used four sets of springs that ran parallel to the length of the chassis, Ford used just two springs, one front and one rear, which ran cross ways on the frame above each axle. The front spring was always a problem. It was made up of a number of leaves, each one of which had a hole in the center through which a single bolt held all the leaves together. The longest leaf was on the bottom, and was fastened to the axle near the ends. Each successive upper leaf was shorter with the top leaf being the shortest and least flexible. The center hold through the spring leaves created a weakness at the point where more strength was needed. There were no shock absorbers in those days, and the constant vibrations from the travel on many miles of washboard dirt road took its toll, causing the metal of the shorter spring leaves to "crystallize." As a result, the top leaf of the front spring had broken somewhere along the way.

By the time we reached Death Valley, each half of the broken top leaf had worked its way out, allowing the car to settle a bit lower and putting more strain on the remaining leaves. Also, roads in Death Valley were not graded then, were high center, and by today's standards would be considered 4 wheel drive roads. Therefore, we frequently felt the crankcase dragging on the high center even though we tried to stay up out of the ruts as much as possible.

Near the top of Daylight Pass, we "discovered" "Old Dinah," a steam tractor built in 1894 as an experiment to replace the 20 mule teams hauling borax minerals from Borate to the town of Daggett on the railroad east of Barstow. Later, it was sold to the Keane-Wonder Mine to haul wagons of ore between the mine and the railroad at Rhyolite, but proved unsatisfactory, and was abandoned in Daylight Pass where we

found it in 1930. It is now at Furnace Creek Ranch where today's visitors can enjoy it.

The high center roads continued, and although driving carefully, we continued to scrape bottom much of the time. Also, because the car, being lower, the front fenders would scrape the front tires from time to time. We arrived at Furnace Creek Inn by mid-afternoon, having passed only one or two cars since leaving Rhyolite. We bought five gallons of gas at 35 cents a gallon, a high price in 1930, when gas was only 11 cents a gallon at home in Pasadena, and then headed southward for the Devil's Golf Course and Salt Pools. The Devil's Golf Course is an interesting area of hard, sharp pinnacles a foot or two high of muddy rock salt. The road across this area was little more than two ruts worn into the rock salt and very rough, and soon another leaf of the front spring broke, and worked its way out, lowering the car another notch. The unevenness of the road would cause first one fender, and the other to rub on the front tires. Actually, it was the bracket on each fender that attached the fender to a round iron bar connected to the chassis, that dragged on each tire, acting like a chisel to gouge rubber off the tires.

We stopped briefly in the "Golf Course" to examine the hard, dried, muddy rock salt and salt pools of which there were several, and then proceeded toward Bennett's Well. After crossing the Devil's Golf Course, the road became two deep ruts through fine white alkali dust. Travel was slow, and we began to have concerns about having enough gas to get to Barstow. We had not passed a car or seen a person since leaving Furnace Creek Inn.

Near the ruins of the old Ashford Mill, we saw a road grader parked near the road, and got the idea that we might be able to "borrow" some gas from it. Unfortunately, someone before us had the same idea as the tank was empty, so we continued on our way with the fender brackets gouging rubber off the front tires with every unevenness of the road. It was not long before one front tire and then the other blew out. Ford rims were "clincher" type, so the tires, or the remains of them, stayed on the rims. Naturally,

with both front tires blown, together with the weakened front spring because of several missing leaves, the car rode much lower, so the crankcase was continuously scraping the high center road, making progress very slow.

As dusk was approaching, we saw a sign beside the road that offered a bit of encouragement. "Shortest and Best Route to Barstow via Denning Springs - Gas, Oil, Water - 10 Miles." As we continued, we passed several more such signs, which raised our spirits somewhat. Time dragged by nearly as slow as our progress, but we finally arrived at Denning Springs about 8:00 P.M.

A man came out of the house to greet us and when we asked if there was a telephone or telegraph there, laughed and said, "No, nothing like that here." We knew our folks were concerned, since we were supposed to be home that night and the last they had heard from us was when we arrived in Beatty the night before.

We asked the price of gasoline and about the road to Barstow. Gas was 50 cents a gallon, and when asked if there was any chance of getting a special rate, he said, "No, I have to haul it myself from Barstow, 75 miles over a dirt road!" So, reluctantly, we bought 5 gallons with our last \$2.50, and started crawling our way back down the canyon about a quarter of a mile to the Barstow road that took off up a hill. We had gone only a short distance with gravel and rocks continuously grinding against the crankcase when suddenly, there was a thud and the car stopped. An unmovable rock had bashed the crankcase against the flywheel. With much pushing and shoving, we managed to get the car turned around and with more pushing got it back down the hill to Denning Springs Junction we had just left. Here, we just spread out our bed rolls on the smoothest spot we could find for the rest of the night.

(Story to be concluded in March-April issue)