

# Beatty



# Museum

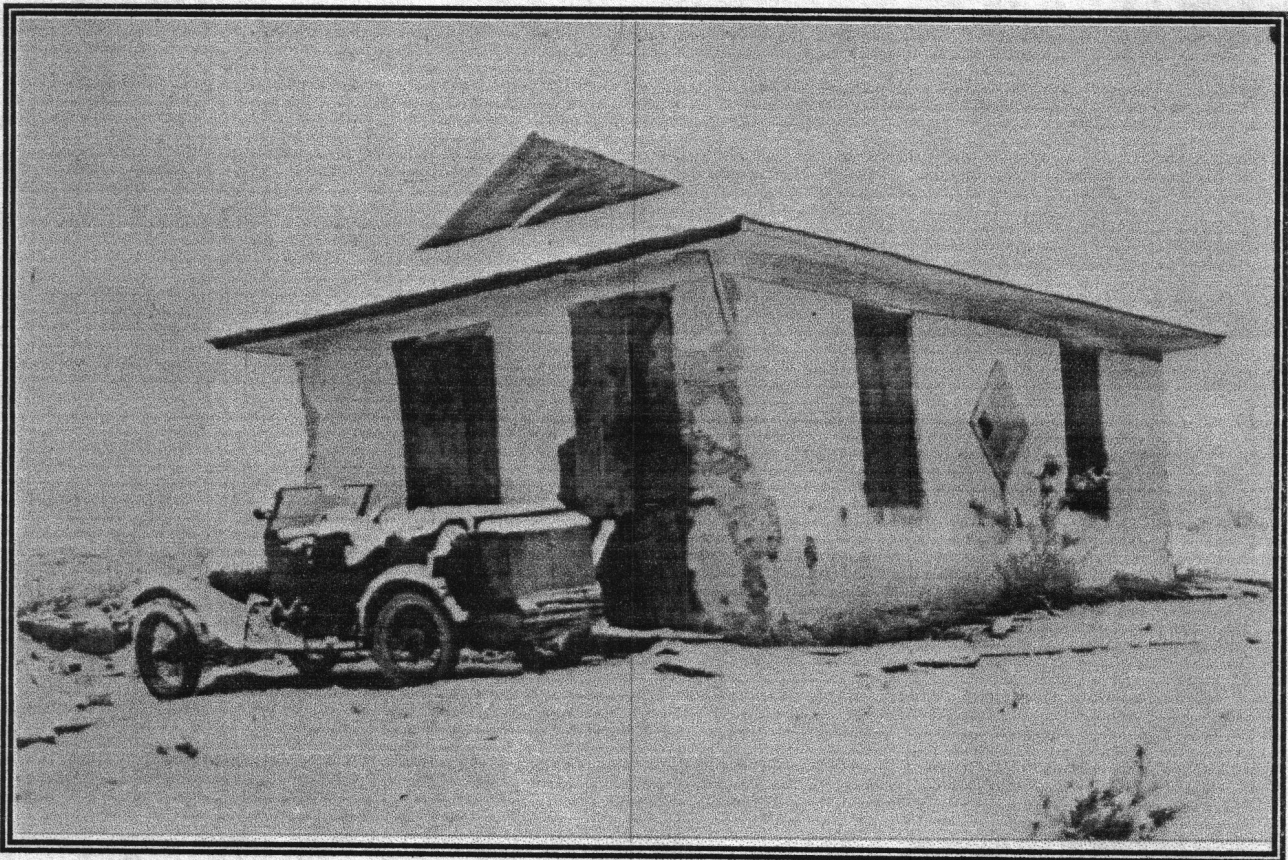
## and Historical Society

Vol.6 No.2

NEWSLETTER

MAR - APR 2000

Conclusion of the trip with Chas. L. Heald and his buddies in BMHS History Section.



"Our" house in Rhyolite, Nevada Nov 27 1931  
Photo by Chas L. Heald

# A Message from the President Claudia Reidhead

Hi Folks:

Well, this is my last column as your President, however, you aren't rid of me yet. Mary has asked me to continue writing a column in the newsletter to help keep you updated on what is going on here with the museum and of course, when Bill and Zettia give me an assignment, I'll be working on the history of the area, so this ain't goodbye.

I know this is previous, as we haven't gotten all the ballots in yet, but I want to congratulate all the board members who will be taking over the working of the museum and the officers who will be at the helm. I know that the museum will go on to bigger and better things, and I am so very proud to have been a part of it and as it grows and becomes a more firmly established part of our community, I will be able to smile and say "I'm a member in long standing."

There are a lot of plans in the works for this organization, and I am looking forward to seeing them come to fruition. We hope to have the new museum open in a couple of months, and we hope to have a few more local volunteers to man it.

A big Thank You to Romy and Jack Hoyer for donating a beautiful money order from Bullfrog.

Dues are due again, and I haven't sent reminders out so you will have to remember to send them in so you can continue to receive our newsletters.

So folks, I will be talking to you again soon on paper and if person if you come to see us. Thank you all for the last five years.

**"RIBITS" from the editor....**

## **Bullfrog Billy**

Let me begin with a salute to the outgoing President of BMHS, Claudia Reidhead. Most of you know the

history of this organization by now. The one thing that stands out about our history is the fact that Claudia was the innovator, the driving force from moving things from the talking stage to the starting gate. From there she has led us to five years of progress and now as she prepares to step down as President after serving us so well, we are delighted that she will still play a very active role with the museum and the newsletter. New Officers and some new Board Members will be in office by the time you receive this newsletter which is being completed just ahead of the ballot counting. Whenever there is a change in leadership, there usually comes a few changes in the way things operate. Whatever changes may occur in the coming months, I have every confidence in the new Officers and Board Members ability to move BMHS to even bigger heights. Until we hear otherwise, the newsletter will continue with the same basic format. As always, anyone is invited to contribute an article or photo for publication with the assurance that your material(s) will be returned.

This issue we offer the conclusion to the great story by Charles L. Heald, telling us all about his Death Valley trip in 1930. We thank Chuck for sharing this great story with us and the photos for use on the front cover of this issue and the last issue. There is a possibility that I will have an exciting announcement next issue about a video production that Chuck Heald is working on. Stay tuned

Two exciting events will be taking place that should be of interest to everyone. First, the Annual Rhyolite Festival returns March 31-April 2 and a Symposium on Nevada and Eastern California Railroad History takes place April 8<sup>th</sup>. Details on both events are listed in the newsletter. We hope you will be able to attend both of these events.

If you enjoy reading, I recently found a 1999 book titled "Shorty Harris, or, The Price of Gold" by William Bevis. This is an entertaining fictionalized account of Shorty's life that you might enjoy on those cold winter nights. I found my copy on the internet ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) but you might be able to locate a copy at your nearest bookstore.

Zettia and I look forward to "Ribitizing" the locals in Beatty during the month of February and again in June.

Until the next time, stay well and of course...."RIBIT"

# RHYOLITE FESTIVAL

MARCH 31 - APRIL 2, 2000

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**FRIDAY:** Setup in Rhyolite

**SATURDAY:** 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM Photograph and Artifact display at the Goldwell Museum (across the road from the Bottle House)

### **BOTTLE HOUSE TOURS ALL DAY**

10:00 AM Kickoff at Bottle House

10:30 AM Tour of town-starts at Bottle House

11:00 AM Railroad Tour-starts at LV&T Railroad Depot

12:00 PM Tour of town-starts at Bottle House

1:00 PM Tour of LV&T Railroad Depot-starts at Depot

2:00 PM Tour of town with emphasis on mining

3:00 PM Car pool down to Rhyolite Cemetery for tour

6:00 PM Descendant / member dinner at Beatty Senior Center

**SUNDAY:** 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM Photograph and Artifact display at the Goldwell Museum (across the road from the Bottle House)

### **BOTTLE HOUSE TOURS ALL DAY**

10:00 AM Tour of town-starts at Bottle House

12:00 PM Tour of town-starts at Bottle House

For further information, please contact the Friends of Rhyolite, Beatty Chamber of Commerce or Andy Gudas

## **ANNOUNCING A SYMPOSIUM ON NEVADA AND EASTERN CALIFORNIA RAILROAD HISTORY**

Featuring the

**Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad**

**Death Valley Railroad**

**Bullfrog Goldfield Railroad**

and

**Other Shortline Railroads of the Region**

To be held the weekend of April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at the Longstreets's Hotel and Casino located north of Death Valley Junction at the Nevada and California state-line. The schedule, subject to change includes:

A four wheel drive trip along the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad

A presentation entitled "A Day in the Life of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad"

The exchange of historical railroad materials and articles

A tour of a regional mining area

This is an informal meeting of friends, to be held without charge for the purpose of preserving the railroad history of the area. No liability is assumed by the organizers and those attending to agree to hold the organizers harmless.

**Pre-registration is Required!**

For registration information please contact:

Gary Elias

7100 Raincloud Dr.

Las Vegas, NV

89145

(702) 256-4788

eli@wizard.com

## **BMHS MEETING DATES**

**MARCH 27**

**APRIL 24**

**7 pm**

**BEATTY COMMUNITY CENTER**

# Bullfrog Mining District History

## DEATH VALLEY TRIP IN 1930 IN A 1921 MODEL T FORD

BY

CHAS. L. HEALD

In the morning, we hiked the short distance to Denning Springs where the man again greeted us. After telling him our problem, he got in his truck and we all went down to our car and towed it back up the hill to his place. He said his name was George Washington Rose. He was 76 years old and he and his wife had lived at Denning Springs for the past 20 years. In his younger days, he had been a Pony Express Rider, but later he took us prospecting, locating some claims near Denning Springs, which he still worked. He took us on a tour of his mine, after which we spent some time amusing ourselves shooting at tin cans that we set up across a ravine where he dumped all his trash. We were a bit happy-go-lucky and unrealistic then, not giving much thought to getting home. We did wake up about noon, though, and asked Mr. Rose if there was any chance he could drive us to Barstow. Seventy-five miles would have been quite a hike! He said it cost him \$20 to go to Barstow and back, since he had to spend the night there. We had no money left, but assured him we would come back in about two weeks during Christmas Vacation, and repair the Ford and pay him the \$20 then.

Mrs. Rose had been baking bread that morning, and the aroma filled the desert air around their house. We had lunch with them including some of the luscious warm bread. After lunch, we started to get our things together that we planned to take with us. Both Jims insisted they were not going to leave their rifles there, even though we were coming back in two weeks.

George Washington Rose had a Model A Ford Coupe with rumble seat, so the four of us loaded in with our 22 rifles and cameras, two in the rumble seat and two of us in the front with Mr. Rose, and set off for Barstow. We stopped briefly at Cave Springs where Mr. Rose chatted with another prospector who lived there, and then

continued on our way to Barstow. It seemed like an endless journey. The road would climb a long alluvial plain and up through a ridge of hills, only to look across another wide valley with more hills beyond. Each valley was ten or more miles wide. Each time we climbed out of a valley, there would be another to cross. I do not believe we passed a single car until we reached the Barstow-Las Vegas pavement (Highway 66) a few miles east of Yermo, the first paved road we had seen since leaving Mono Lake several days before, except for two of three miles at Tonopah.

To us at the time, George Washington Rose at 76 seemed like an "old man," but he really impressed us when we reached the highway. He opened up that Model A Ford to 65 miles an hour, as fast as it would go. He slowed down a bit at the Inspection Station near Yermo, but breezed by without stopping, waving to the officers. Apparently, he passed through there often enough that they knew him.

Arriving at Barstow, we unloaded at the railroad station with our rifles and cameras and bid goodbye to Mr. Rose. Ray M. and Jim F. thought we could catch a ride on a freight train into San Bernardino, a bit naive, I thought. However, we sent a collect telegram home to let our folks know we were in Barstow and OK, and expected to be along in due time. We inquired of the station agent about a train that would be going to San Bernardino, and he told us the name of the engineer who would be signing the register before the train left. Each time someone signed the book, we would look to see if it was our man. Finally, he signed in, so we followed him outside and asked if there was any chance we could ride in the cab with him to San Bernardino. Naturally, he said he was not allowed to let us do that, but said there were some "empty cans" (high sided metal cars) near the back of the train, leaving the rest to us.

We went back into the station and talked

to the agent again. He took us outside and pointed out the train we wanted, which was due to leave in about an hour. About this time, Jim F. produced a \$5 bill that his father had given him "in case of emergency." The emergency was something to eat, so we sat down at the Harvey House lunch counter for a bit of food. After eating our fill and wrapping the left over bread in napkins and filling our pockets with it for a snack later, on the train, we headed for the rail yard. We found our train with the empty cars and climbed aboard one of them to wait for our trip to San Bernardino to get started. By now it was nearly 8:00 P.M.

We were scarcely settled in one end of the car, when we heard someone climbing up outside the far end of the car. Shortly, a man appeared with flashlight and gun, and ordered us to get out. He gathered up our rifles and we followed him across the tracks to an office in a nearby building. At his request, we removed everything from our pockets, which included crushed pieces of bread wrapped in napkins, a bit messy. Naturally, he had to know our whole story, where we had been, how we got to Barstow, etc., etc. We had to repeat the whole story several times, which he accepted, and decided we were harmless. We received a lecture about how dangerous it was to try to ride a freight train, "might get shot on sight in San Bernardino." By now, it was after 11:00 P.M. Monday night, and he asked us how we intended to get home. There seemed to be only one answer, phone home and see if my dad could drive out to get us. He left home in Altadena about 12 and arrived in Barstow about 3:00 A.M.

While we waited, we used some more of Jim's \$5 emergency money for coffee and snacks. When my dad arrived, we gathered up our belongings from the RR man's office and headed for home, arriving there about 6:00 A.M. Tuesday morning. The attendance office at school was unimpressed with our adventure story about why we were not back for school on Monday.

#### RETURN TO DENNING SPRINGS

We immediately started planning for our return to Denning Springs during Christmas vacation, to repair my car and pay George Washington Rose the \$20 we owed him. One of

our friends, Clark S. had an old Essex touring car, so we persuaded him to go along and provide the transportation, while we all shared the cost of the gas, oil and food.

We visited an auto wrecking yard in search of a good used Ford crankcase and front spring for the 1921 Model T Ford, plus another crank to replace the one that was bent under the front axle from dragging on the high center rocky roads. Also, I had to buy two new tires and inner tubes to replace the worn out ones, and miscellaneous items such as gaskets, gasket cement, oil and a five gallon can of gas.

In planning for our return trip to Denning Springs, we decided to go via Baker and Silver Lake, since we thought the roads might be better than the 75 mile trek across the desert we had made two weeks earlier with George Washington Rose, although the mileage would be somewhat longer.

When vacation arrived, we started early and headed for Barstow, Baker and Denning Springs, arriving there without incident, and paid Mr. Rose the \$20 we owed him. We made camp and then arranged to start work on the car. We constructed a tripod over the Ford with three lengths of old pipe that Mr. Rose had around, to which we fastened my chain hoist and proceeded to pull the motor and make the necessary repairs. Unfortunately, we did not notice that one of the gaskets had slipped slightly out of place during the installation of the crankcase. When we were finished and started the motor, we discovered a small oil leak. However, we decided we could add some oil now and then as necessary on the way home. Ray and I took off in the Ford, and the others followed in the Essex to be sure we got along OK.

About half way between Baker and Barstow, the exhaust pipe became disconnected from the manifold. What a noise! In the Model T Fords, the exhaust pipe connected to the manifold with a large ring nut. From a cold start to a high temperature, when the car was traveling at 45 or 50 miles an hour, a strain is created on this nut each time the car is used. As a result, the nuts sometimes break, and must be replaced. Since it was getting late at night, and though we had a replacement nut with us, we decided to keep going with the roar at our feet and a red glow of exhaust from the manifold visible through cracks in the floor boards.

After we went through Glendora, and were on the way to Azusa, the fellows in the Essex decided that we were going to make it home OK, so they passed us and headed for Pasadena. Hardly had they disappeared into the darkness ahead when it happened. With all the noise from the exhaust below our feet, we could not hear a knock in the motor if there was one. Suddenly, there was a heavy thud, and then all was quiet. We coasted to a stop and raised the hood with flashlight in hand to see what might have happened. The answer was right there in front of us. A hole in the side of the block with a broken and bent connecting rod hanging out. Ray and I pushed the car a short distance and off to the side of the road. We rolled our sleeping bags out between the rows of orange trees about 3 o'clock in the morning and slept there the rest of the night.

In the morning, immediately after the sun was up, Ray walked down the road in search of a telephone while I stayed with the car. Clark was a bit unhappy when he was rudely awakened with our SOS, but being of good nature, he drove out to tow us home. So ended our first great adventure, but not the end of my 1921 Model T Ford. I found a used block at the wrecking yard to replace the one broken by the thrown connecting rod, and soon the car was as good as ever. We made another trip back to Rhyolite several months later in the Spring of 1931. We enjoyed many more trips in the old Ford over the next two or three years, until I upgraded to a Model A Ford to continue our adventures.

#### TECHNICAL DETAILS

In the 20's and 30's many cars had a trunk on the back to carry tools, extra gas, oil, or whatever other items a person would like to have handy. So, to update my car, I decided to build a trunk to carry these and various other items whenever we went on a trip. Also, I decided that it would be good to have an extra gas tank, to let us cover more miles without having to fill up in the remote areas where the cost of gas was much higher than at home in the Pasadena area. I visited the auto wrecking yards and found a suitable gas tank that held about ten gallons. I made an extension to the chassis with some angle iron brackets to hold the gas tank and mounted the trunk on top. I also picked up a

used vacuum tank to draw gas from the rear tank to the motor, and connected it to the carburetor gas line with a shut-off valve to switch from one tank to the other.

In those days, many cars including the Model T Ford had the gas tank under the front seat, from which gas flowed to the carburetor by gravity. This system worked fine if travel was on a generally level ground. However, in mountain travel, sometimes steep grades would be encountered, in which case gas would no longer flow to the carburetor, making it necessary to turn the car around and back up the hill in order to allow gas to run to the carburetor.

In cars where the gas tank was mounted in the rear, and in the days before fuel pumps, various methods were used to get gas to the motor. One method that was common was to use a "vacuum tank." This was a small vertical cylindrical tank about four inches in diameter and about twelve inches high with a capacity of about two quarts. This was mounted on the back wall of the motor compartment. A copper tube was connected from the intake manifold of the motor to the top of the tank. When the motor was running, the suction created a vacuum in the tank to draw gasoline from the rear tank to the vacuum tank, from which gravity fed gas to the carburetor. A float valve was supplied to prevent overfilling of the tank and drawing raw gas into the motor. This system worked fine most of the time, but on an extended mountain grade when the throttle was down to the floor, not enough vacuum was created to draw gas from the back tank. If the driver was sufficiently alert, at the first sign of any hesitation, he could stop and let the motor idle awhile to let the vacuum tank refill. Sometimes, however, this did not work, and it was necessary to refill the vacuum tank manually from a gas can.

Another method was the use of a hand pump and pressure gauge on the dash board in front of the driver. The driver would pump up air pressure in the gas tank before starting the car, and periodically pump up the pressure to keep going. Another system sometimes used was to provide pressure to the gas tank from the exhaust manifold after first pumping the pressure manually to get the motor started.

The windshield on the Model T Ford and on some other cars was made in two sections, the upper section being hinged near the top on each

side bracket so it could be swung out allowing automatic air conditioning while driving.

As mentioned before, it was desirable to keep updating our cards. The windshield was quite high on the Model T, so the "in" thing to do was to lower it. This was done by cutting the side brackets and taking out about three or four inches and welding the brackets together again, and cutting a corresponding amount off the glass sections. Two of the fellows who usually rode in the back seat on our trips thought they should have a windshield too, so we modified the car again by installing a windshield for the back seat.

#### HOW MY MODEL T FORD CAME TO BE NAMED "GILMORE"

In the 20's, gas stations sold gasoline from a hand cranked, rack-and-pinion pump. Turning the crank would raise the rack and pump rod dispensing several gallons of gas through the hose to the gas tank. The crank would then be turned backward to lower the rack and the process repeated until the desired number of gallons had been dispensed. The attendant would then raise the hose to drain all the remaining gasoline from the hose into the customer's tank.

Next, came a better method of dispensing gasoline, a round circular glass container holding ten gallons was mounted high on a stand, allowing for gravity flow of gas to the car's tank. A hand lever on the stand would be operated by the attendant to pump gas from the underground storage up into the glass container above before filling the customer's tank. Later, a pump operated by compressed air was used to fill the glass container, saving much hand labor. This type of pump is still in use today in some remote areas.

With the coming of this visual system, the oil companies began to color their gasoline different colors, as a means of identifying their various brands. On the radio and on bill boards, the Gilmore Oil Company advertised their "Gilmore blue-green gas." Since the station where I traded sold this brand, I always bought Gilmore blue-green gas, and that was how we came to name my car Gilmore. Also, I might add, we had painted my car a light green to match.

#### RETURN TO RHYOLITE IN 1931

We made a brief return visit to Rhyolite a year later during Thanksgiving vacation, 1931. When we arrived, it looked a little bit as though it might rain that night, so we drove around town and found a deserted house that looked like it might shed some of the rain. We made "camp" in the house, spreading our bed rolls out on the floor. In the night, we were awakened by a little mist drifting in the window, but it was minor and not enough to really make things wet, so we went back to sleep for the rest of the night.

In the morning when we looked out the window, a white blanket covered everything. The mist we felt in the night was really a bit of snow drifting in the window. After breakfast, we amused ourselves building a snow man, and then explored the ruins some more, before leaving for other parts of the country.

We made another brief visit to Rhyolite in the Spring of 1933 on our way to the Hidden Forest of Nevada. On this trip, I had a Model A Ford Phaeton, and we pulled a trailer with a 50 gallon drum of extra gasoline.

Since then, I have visited Rhyolite several more times with my family, most recently in 1985.