

Beatty



Museum

and Historical Society

Vol.4 No.2

NEWSLETTER

MAR. - APR. 98

The Saga Continues

**Of
Desert
in
of**



**A
Rat
Search
his**

GOLD!

Part Two of "The Shory Harris Story" in The Beatty Museum and Historical Society History Section



A Message from the President Claudia Reidhead

Hi Folks: It's just me again and I'm proud to be here. At the time of this writing, election results have not been finalized. We are still waiting to receive some ballots by the time we have our February 23rd meeting. Election results will be posted in the next newsletter. Bill and Zettia Miller came up and celebrated New Year's Eve with us, so we did the town, all five places. It's always wonderful to be with special people during the holidays. Special thanks go to Richard Ahearn for the photos from 1912 to 1916 of the Yellow Jacket Mine, showing the ore projections and the ledges. The Yellow Jacket is in Pioneer and these photos are some of the very few I have seen of Pioneer. You would be surprised at how many people find them fascinating. Also thanks to Gene Johnson for the map of the mining claims of the Bullfrog District of 1905. We were able to date it for that period because the proposed water lines showed one from the town of Beatty that never came into being. We understand now why there was a need for so many lawyers and surveyors in the early days. Leon Abrams came down in middle January bringing a great collection of bottles and a PA can that was in excellent condition. While he was here, a group from the Museum, including Clint, Leon, Kanna and myself hiked up to an abandoned mine in Amargosa Valley. Kanna has been a welcome addition to our group, being kind enough to open the museum for bus tours for me on several occasions, and making some much needed repairs at the museum. The Play for Railroad Days may not come off as response has not been good to the casting call. At this writing we still hope to have it, but if we don't get a cast there will be no Play. The people who have read it like it, as does our Director, Jon Gateman. Confirmation of the Miniature Railroad Display by the Las Vegas Railroad Miniature Club is welcome. This display is awesome. Drawing a following of the young and young at heart, don't miss it if you come here for Railroad Days. Midge Ondes has agreed to come from San Francisco to be the Grand Marshall for our Parade. Midge is a special lady and we are honored to have her come down. She is a former resident of Rhyolite during the Boom Years. I want to thank you all for the support you have given for the museum and for the hard work you have done helping

us make this dream a reality. Talk to you next time.



"RIBITS" from the editor.... Bullfrog Billy

Greetings once again. Again, for the fourth straight year, Zettia and I started the New Year out the right way, in Beatty with great friends. By now it is old news about our fondness for Claudia, Clint, Ellen, Jeff and so many others. Each visit to Beatty usually results in meeting and getting acquainted with someone new and this last trip was no exception. Kanna Lindgarde, it was a pleasure to meet you and witness first hand your dedication to the museum with your many helpful projects. Our history section brings you part two of the Shorty Harris story and the 3rd and final installment will be in the July-August issue. Like everyone else, our efforts are now concentrated on Railroad Days. Our next issue will be our 2nd annual Railroad Days newsletter with another great history section by Claudia and, hopefully, a story on our Grand Marshall, Midge Ondes. For those of you who have never had the pleasure of meeting Midge, you now have another great reason to be in Beatty June 5th, 6th and 7th. We anticipate bringing you some news about the Rhyolite Festival during the same week-end and will include any information we receive in the next issue. Later in the year we will once again do a feature on the schools and we hope to do a history section feature on Transvaal in our year-end issue. For those of you that enjoy looking at the past, I came across a movie filmed in 1932, "Ride Him Cowboy" starring John Wayne. It is available on video for purchase or perhaps you will see it listed in your tv log. There is a great scene, though brief, of Golden Street in Rhyolite and some interior scenes from the LV & T depot at Rhyolite. Recently I have acquired some documentary footage of Rhyolite as well as other Nevada ghost towns and footage of Death Valley and Bodie, California all shot in the late 20's and early 30's. When you see what was once a town or part of a town and now see virtually nothing left of the same place, it really makes you think how important it is to do everything you can to preserve our history. By being a member of BMHS, you not only help preserve our history you also make the simple but profound statement, "I Care." Until the next time.....**RIBIT!**

Bullfrog Mining District History

The Life of Frank (Shorty) Harris

by

Frank (Shorty) Harris

Part Two

During the next seven or eight years I went from one good mining center to another, working long enough to get a stake, and then going out to prospect. For a while I was in Virginia City; then I went to Bodie while she was still going strong. The Silver Peak country, in Nevada was mighty good in those days. I blew into town one day completely broke, and hungry as a coyote. The first job that I struck was peeling potatoes in a restaurant for three dollars a day; but it was a fine job at that, because I got plenty to eat. And while I was saving up enough money from my pay to start out prospecting again, I put on enough flesh to carry me over some of the hungry days that were sure to come. Finally I got an outfit together, and went out to find a claim. Luck was with me in those days, for I struck it rich before long. I located ground that showed some of the best values ever seen in that country, and got \$7000 for it. That was the most money that I had ever owned, and it meant plenty of good times for Shorty. After I had blown most of it, I was ready to start out to find another claim.

All this time I was hearing more stories of lost mines, especially about the Lost Breyfogle. The old timers told me that it was somewhere east of Death Valley, and that the man who found it would get enough gold to pay the national debt. Then there were

other stories of the Panamints, west of Death Valley, where a gang of road agents had found some wonderful bodies of silver-lead, and sold them to Senator Stewart. It's a funny thing, and something that I can't explain--but the country that is far away always looks best to a prospector. Somehow he feels that over the big range of mountains are better formations than those around him; and a hundred miles away is a rich outcropping that is just waiting to be staked out. Well, that's the way I felt as I listened to those tales of Death Valley, and I decided to look it over.

Since I first started prospecting in Colorado fifteen years before this, I had seen plenty of wild country, and had learned plenty about long trips with a burro. But when I got into Inyo County, I had to learn a lot more. Right from my front door, I can see where I first camped in Panamint Valley, under the mesquite at Postoffice Spring long before Ballarat or Randsburg was on the map. I saw this town grow to a good size, with over a thousand people, and big shipments of bullion going out on the stages every day. And now I'm still living here, watching the 'dobe ruins crumble around me. But you can see that I have a pretty good place to live. When the town was going strong, this was the schoolhouse, and when all the people went away, and there was no school, I just moved in.

But when I first came to Panamint Valley, about the only inhabitants of those mountains were the mountain sheep, and the Short Man followed their trails through the canyons and over the peaks looking for gold. And there is some wonderful ore up there--some of the prettiest that I ever saw. Most of the formations are broken up, and there are no large bodies that you can count on. I have found pockets that held as much as \$1600 in gold, and some small veins have been almost pure stuff.

John Lambert came into this country in '92 after I had been here quite a while, and we worked as partners. One day--it was St. Patrick's Day--we were climbing over the ledges of Pleasant Canyon, trying to find the place where some rich float had come from. Well, we located it, and believe me, it was the kind that, as the miners say "has the eagle stamped right on it." With our picks we broke about fifteen pounds of that rock loose, and carried it down to camp. There we ground it up, and panned it out in a wash tub. Talk about your coarse gold--it was there, all right! Out would come a five-dollar chunk, and then one that would run two or three dollars; and the dollar pieces kept pouring out of the pan almost in a yellow stream. The small batch of ore had \$360 in it, and that was only a start of what we found in the St. Patrick mine; for we panned out

a fair-sized stake for each of us, and then sold the mine while the showing was still good. The buyer took out just about what he paid us, which meant that we got all there was in the St. Patrick without having to do all the work!

After this, I found more claims in the Panamints. Some of them were good enough to wash out free gold, and others were only good to sell. In those days I was called "Shorty the Peddler" because I had so many claims and prospects that I wanted to dispose of; and I sure know how to do it. Once I had a fine showing up in Pleasant Canyon, and R. W. Harrison of the Radcliffe Mining Company looked it over. When he asked my price, I said:

"Well, it has all the earmarks of a good mine, and I think that I'd be making you a present of it for fifteen thousand."

Harrison said that he would see other officers of the company, and find out what they would do. Two weeks went by, and I didn't hear a word from them; so I said to myself, "They must be getting cold feet; I'll have to give them the rush act!" One day I found them all together at dinner, and I went in with a long face and a letter in my hand.

"I've just got bad news from the east," I told them, "And I've got to get away quick. My father is dying, and my aunt is in the hospital. There is some money to be divided up among their relatives, and I must be on the spot when this thing is pulled off. I'll take eleven hundred for that claim right now."

"That's quite a fall from fifteen thousand," Harrison said.

"Well, I mean business, but you'll have to act quick if you want it."

When he had threshed out all the details, I had signed up for a price of \$1000, which was just what I had intended to get in the first place; but

a man always has to start with a higher figure.

I could usually find some way to put a deal over, but sometimes it took some real work. There was another time that a man got interested in a property I had for sale, and went out with me to look it over. He thought the showing was pretty good, and asked me how much I'd take. I told him that the price on the this one was \$2000. I could see that I'd started too high, because he began to move away like he didn't want to talk about it any more. I needed money pretty badly, and wanted the deal to go through.

"How much money have you got on you now?" I asked him.

"About a hundred and seventy-five or eight dollars," he said.

"Well, that's my money, and you've got a mine!"

But he kept walking off, so I said again:

"If that price won't hold you, I'll put a bell and a pair of hobbles on you and see if they won't keep you from getting away!"

But I couldn't make it stick, and my buyer escaped from me after all.

I never was much of a hand to grubstake. Most men would expect a prospector to find a mine worth a hundred thousand with his first \$50 or \$100 stake, and not one in a million will stay with you. When I got down to bedrock, I'd sell a claim, or, if I couldn't sell one, I'd work a while for wages or do tunneling by contract. I always found it a damn sight better to go on my own.

All my traveling in this country was done on a hurricane deck of a jackass, and believe me, that's the way all the big strikes have been made. A jack can go almost anywhere that a mountain sheep can, and carry all that man needs for

several weeks. You've heard it said that "gold is where you find it." I can tell you that it's usually found in places that are hard to get to, and a burro can get there when a horse or a mule would be stalled for good.

I believe that a jackass is the wisest animal in the world. He can work for a long time on slim pickings, and get by where a horse would starve; but he likes to dodge hard work as much as possible, and he sure knows how to do it. When I made a camp where I planned to stay for a week or two, the jacks would wander around close, and part of the time they'd almost be in the way. But as soon as I'd start to get the outfit together like I was thinking of moving on, they'd sneak off and I sometimes had fifteen or twenty miles to hike before I found them. When I did locate them they were in an out-of-the-way place, well hidden. A prospector once told me that his burros hid out on him, and he couldn't find them for several days. He was about to give up the search, when he saw one of them carrying something in his mouth. It was a five-gallon oil can with a wire bail in it, that the burro had filled with water which he was carrying to his pals. By following him and keeping out of sight, the prospector found the rest of them in a small valley.

Some burros are great thieves, and you have to watch 'em close if you don't want to lose your grub. I knew a couple of men--Doctor Trotter and Frank McAlister--who went on a long prospecting trip with five burros, one black and four grays. The black one was named Honest John, because he was such an expert camp robber. When the men found a place where they wanted to stay for a few days and look around, they unpacked their outfit and got ready to go back into

the canyons afoot.

"Frank," said Doc, "we had better fix up our camp so Honest John can't rob us; he'll clean us out if he gets a chance!"

So they spread a tarp over their grub and weighted it down with big stones. That afternoon, when they came back, McAlister let out a yell: "Gee Whiz, Doc, they're all white burros; what in hell has happened?"

They ran to camp, wondering what could be the matter, and found that Honest John had rolled those stones off the tarp, and the five burros had helped themselves to two sacks of flour, eaten what they could, and scattered the rest over the ground where they had rolled in it. Those men had a hard time to gather up enough to make one mess of flapjacks.

I know a miner by the name of Dusty Rhodes over in the Hidden Spring country, who told me a good story of this kind. He had a burro that he called Rustler Billy, and he had to keep things out of reach or he'd lose them. One morning, he put a loaf of bread in the Dutch oven, figuring that it'd be perfectly safe there; but Rustler Billy cleaned him of that loaf by lifting the lid and grabbing the bread. These jackasses are educated devils!

Sometimes when I sold a claim and wanted to put on a real celebration, I'd go to Tonopah, which was the biggest camp in this part of the country, and the livest. There were always plenty of games going on, and if a fellow asked the dealer what the limit was, he'd point to the ceiling. The most exciting times came on the Fourth of July, when the whole town turned out to have a good time. There were drilling matches, where one man swung a double jack, and another handled the drill, and the first prize was usually a thousand

dollars. It was about this time that the pneumatic drill began to be used, and the miners called them "wiggie tails." But it didn't take as much skill and teamwork to handle them as it did the double jack, and they were not used in contests then.

I prospected most of the country east of Death Valley, around the Johnny Mine and Goodsprings, and located some pretty good claims in that district. One day, when I stopped at Resting Springs, Fi Lee, a squaw man who lived there, told me that he had heard of some good showings over at Greenwater, and I decided to see what I could find. That was one of the hardest trips I ever made. It was in the middle of the summer, and many of the springs were dry. When I got into the Funeral Mountains at Greenwater, I found an old shaft that must have been dug by the "forty-niners." There were old powder cans in it that had rusted to pieces. It looked as if an accident had happened to the outfit that made the discovery, for there was some rich ore in that shaft. I put up my monuments and started back to Ballarat, but ran out of water before I had gone far. I knew the burros could find some--a burro can smell water several miles away--so I turned 'em loose, and sure enough they led me to a hole in the rocks that held a little water. But it was the worst I ever saw, full of dead rats and birds, and the burros wouldn't touch it. When a jackass won't drink water, a man had better let it alone if he values his life and health. But I was so damn dry that I was ready to take a chance at anything wet, so I strained it through a gunny sack and filled my canteens.

When I got to Furnace Creek it was one of the hottest days anyone had seen in Death Valley. I found

three men lying on the porch of the ranch house with cottonwood leaves over their faces. One of them raised up and said to me:

"God, partner, ain't it hot?"

"Hell no," I said, "I've got my overcoat tied on my packsaddle!"

I went from the ranch across Death Valley, through Townsend Pass, and on to Ballarat. When I got there I was all in and about ready to quit. I sent Jud Decker, a partner of mine, to Independence with the notice. But before he put it on record he went on a big spree, and forgot what he had made the trip for. The next year, some miners discovered that my Greenwater claim had not been recorded, and the filed on it. Later on, it turned out to be one of the richest in that part of the country, and I figured that I was the loser to the tune of \$1,000,000--for that's what was taken from that mine!

But Inyo is a big county, and I knew there was plenty more gold for the man who found it, so I didn't worry. As long as a fellow has plenty of bacon and beans and a few good claims to sell, he is not so badly off. I had some pretty good ground around Ballarat--and the town was going strong then. Stages were running to the inside every day, and they carried plenty of bullion from the mines. There was plenty of money in the camp, too, and she was a hummer. But there wasn't much powder burned in Ballarat. The boys managed to have their good times without getting too rough. They were a mighty fine bunch for the most part, and free spenders, too. When a man walked into a saloon with coin, the others didn't need an invitation. Somebody would yell:

"Hey, what's the matter with you fellows sitting back there? Money

on the bar!"

And they'd all march up to get theirs. But if a gent came in the front door with jack, and didn't come clean with the fellows, he'd go out the back door "light," without stopping long inside. And we fired all the "sleepers" down the cellar in those days.

I knew a girl in Ballarat by the name of Bessie Hart. She was a mighty fine woman and a good cook. No one in camp dared to pull any rough stuff around her--she was six feet tall, weighed 210 pounds, and could lick a husky man. I don't know why a little hammered-down fellow like me should fall in love with a woman like that--but I did just the same.

One day I was up by the Stone Corral sharpening picks in the blacksmith shop, and Bessie was blowing the bellows for me. Two of her best friends, Dean Harrison and Tom Walker, had gone to Tonopah, and she was missing them a lot, and I thought this would be a good chance for me.

"Miss Bessie," I said, "I guess you're kind of lonesome now since Dean and Tom are gone?"

"Oh, a little," she said.

"Well now, we've been kind of friendly for several years, and since they aren't likely to come back, what's the matter with me and you getting married?"

She didn't say anything for a minute or two--just looked me over from head to foot--just gave me the top and bottom stuff, and I wondered if she was going to speak.

"Shorty," she said finally, "I like you, you're a good friend and a handy little fellow to play with. But you're too little for hard work!"

That was all I needed to show me that I was out of luck when it came to getting a wife, and

I've never tried since. Plenty of my friends have got married, and from their experiences I've learned quite a lot about the business of matrimony. Flattery costs nothing, and one way to keep your wife from spending too much time and money at the beauty parlor is to tell her now and then how young and pretty she looks. When a man can't offer a woman dollars and cents he'll often be surprised to see how far a little flattery and incense will go.

But even if I've never been lucky at the game of love, I've had some good breaks when I was looking for gold. The best strike I ever made was in 1904 when I discovered the Rhyolite and Bullfrog district. I went into Boundary Canyon with five burros and plenty of grub, figuring to look over the country northeast of there. When I stopped at Keene Wonder Mine, Ed Cross was there waiting for his partner, Frank Howard, to bring some supplies from the inside. For some reason Howard had been delayed, and Cross was low on grub.

"Shorty," he said, "I'm up against it, and the Lord knows when Howard will come back. How are chances of going with you?"

"Sure, come right along," I told him. "I've got enough to keep us eating for a couple of months." So we left the Keene Wonder, went through Boundary Canyon, and made camp at Buck Springs, five miles from a ranch on the Amargosa where a squaw man by the name of Monte Beatty lived. The next morning while Ed was cooking, I went after the burros. They were feeding on the side of a mountain near our camp, and about half a mile from the spring. I carried my pick, as all prospectors do, even when they are looking for their jacks--a man never knows just when he is going to locate pay-ore.

When I reached the burros, they were right on the spot where the Bullfrog mine was afterwards located. Two hundred feet away was a ledge of rock with some copper stains on it. I walked over and broke off a piece with my pick--and gosh, I couldn't believe my own eyes. The chunks of gold were so big that I could see them at arm's length--regular jewelry stone! In fact, a lot of that ore was sent to jewelers in this country and England, and they set it in rings, it was that pretty! Right then, it seemed to me that the whole mountain was gold. I let out a yell, and Ed knew something had happened; so he came running up as fast as he could. When he got close enough to hear, I yelled again: "Ed, we've got the world by the tail, or else we're coppered!" We broke off several more pieces, and they were like the first--just lousy with gold. The rock was green, almost like turquoise, spotted with big chunks of yellow metal, and looked a lot like the back of a frog. This gave us an idea for naming our claim, so we called it the Bullfrog. The formation had a good dip, too. It looked like a real fissure vein; the kind that goes deep and has lots of real stuff in it. We hunted over that mountain for more outcroppings, but there were no others like that one the burros led me to. We had tumbled into the cream pitcher on the first one--so why waste time looking for skimmed milk? That night we built a hot fire with greasewood, and melted the gold out of the specimens. We wanted to see how much was copper, and how much was the real stuff. And when the pan got red hot, and that gold ran out and formed a button, we knew that our strike was a big one, and that we were rich. (Conclusion in July-August issue)

BEATTY MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINUTES

December 29, 1997 - Call to order 7:10 p.m.

Treasurer Report - \$7,489.30

Museum Report - December - Visitors - 94/Volunteer hours - 52

Discussion was made to set up a room for Midge Ondes (only living resident of Rhyolite's boom era) for Railroad Days Weekend. She will be the Grand Marshall for the Parade. We need to check with the Friends of Rhyolite to share in the expenses.

Designed a loose agenda for Railroad Days. Lorayne White will print raffle tickets. We discussed paying a part time person to have the museum open daily. We received a map for the National Archives from 1860-1930.

We talked about the national registry for buildings in Beatty. We need to talk to Parks and Rec. about areas for Dry Camping during Railroad Days.

Jeff will attend the Commissioner Meeting to ask for insurance protection.

We're excited to note that we had a total of 2578.5 volunteer hours at the museum in 1997 plus 300 volunteer hours from Bill and Zettia in the production of the BMHS Newsletter.

January 26, 1998 - Called to order 7:12 p.m.

Attendance - Claudia, Mary, Bev, Peggy, Vonnie, Jeff, Suzy, Riley, Andy and Kanna.

Treasurer Report - \$7758.93

Museum Report - Visitors - 115/Volunteer hours - 86

Railroad Days - Advertising: \$2000.00 expense account. Advertise with Tour Groups. Peggy Johnson is in charge. Will try to get highway banners. Flyer: Kanna and Jeff will design new warrants.

Discussion on framing for the donated map. Was motioned by Norma to pay for the cost of framing and repay Claudia for her costs of the framing. Midge Ondes has accepted our offer of Grand Marshall. The museum and Friends of Rhyolite will share the expenses. Owen's River Gang will return. They need six rooms. Trains will be here at the Community Center. We will have a donation jar at the door. Discussed the Vendors and Crafters: Food permits \$50 responsibility of vendor. \$75 fee for Vendor's booth. Parade line up: Andy. Discussed getting Port -A-Potties throughout area. The park will be remodeling the bathrooms. County Commissioners agreed to cover the Beatty Museum for liability insurance protection. Motion to adjourn by Mary Revert, second by group.

Submitted by Vonnie Gray

DONATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Leon Abrams-Berkeley, California - Various Antique Bottles.

Richard Ahearn-Tucson, Arizona - photos (1912-1915) of Yellow Jacket Mine of Pioneer, Nevada.

Anonymous-Two American Half Dimes found in the Desert.

BMHS Group Hiking Expedition-Beatty, Nevada - Can, various mine spikes and ores from Lee Mining District Amargosa Valley.

Gene Johnson-Beatty, Nevada - 1905 Platt Map for Mining Claims in Bullfrog Mining District.

Del Johnston-Detroit, Michigan - \$20.00 donation.

Bill & Zettia Miller-Long Beach, California - Video Tape "Death Valley" & "Over the Tioga Pass."

COMING EVENTS

March 30th - BMHS meeting - 7 p.m. Beatty Community Center

April 27th - BMHS meeting - 7 p.m. Beatty Community Center

May 2nd - Rally the Valley Poker Run

June 5th - 6th - 7th

TWO GREAT EVENTS - ONE GREAT WEEKEND

BMHS PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 2nd ANNUAL BEATTY RAILROAD DAYS

&

FRIENDS OF RHYOLITE PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 7th ANNUAL RHYOLITE FESTIVAL

"Please call the Beatty Chamber of Commerce for details on these and other events"

702-553-2424

ASK A FRIEND TO JOIN BMHS TODAY

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Thomas, Arrillaga
Beatty, NV

Kay Howell
Beatty, NV

Violet Shafer
Veneta, OR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO!

William Miller Mar 2nd

Larry Poag Mar 8th

David Scarborough Jr. Mar 10th

Barbara Piatt Mar 12th

Lorraine Eastman Mar 16th

John White Mar 16th

Clint Boehringer Mar 20th

Alan Baltzar Mar 23rd

Don Workman Mar 25th

Suzy McCoy Apr 1st

Jeff Taguchi Apr 15th

Romy Schnitzer Apr 16th

Timothy Moore Apr 17th

Vonnie Gray Apr 22nd

Raymond McDonnell Apr 23rd

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