

Beatty



Museum

and Historical Society

Vol.6 No.3

NEWSLETTER

May -Jun 2000

All Aboard

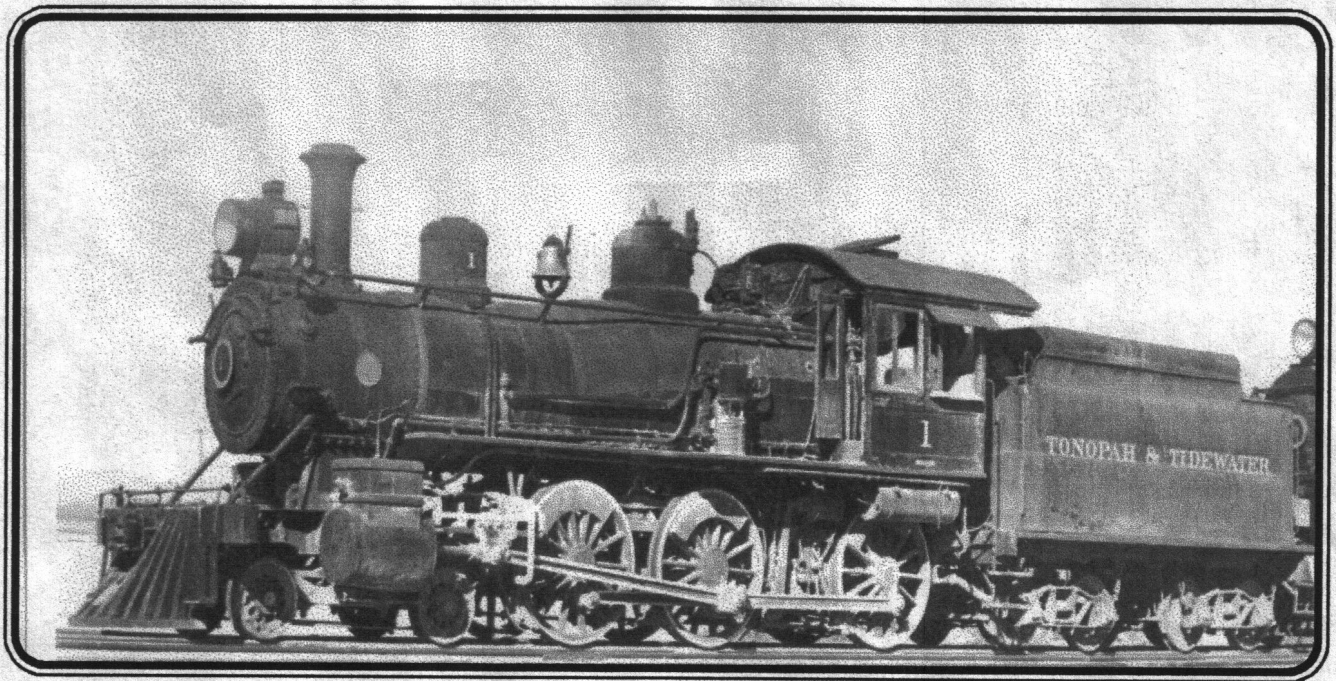


Photo Courtesy of Claudia Reidhead

Railroad Days
June 2, 3 & 4

A Message from the President Mary Revert

Dear Members:

Hello, I'm Mary Revert. I have just assumed the office of President of The Beatty Museum and Historical Society. I have lived in Beatty most of my life and dearly love the town, its history and its people. I am proud to be a part of this organization. I hope that we can continue to grow as we have for the last five years, and with your help we can.

It is with great enthusiasm that we, myself and your Board of Directors, look forward to the next two years.

It is my hope that we will be in the new building by Railroad Days, but we need a lot of help with the construction and to man it when we get it open, so please, can more of our local members volunteer some hours. We will have expanded exhibits inside and a fenced area for outdoor exhibits also. The building itself is part of our heritage, having been built in 1957 by the volunteer labor of a group of young marines that were stationed at Indian Springs Air Force Base.

With patience and hard work, our museum will continue to be the wonderful experience for visitors to our area that is has become, with the history of Beatty, Rhyolite and all of the other camps highlighted. Looking forward to seeing you one day soon in our museum.

Mary Revert

"RIBITS" from the editor....

Bullfrog Billy

I'll begin my "Ribits" this issue with a salute to all the winners in the election of Officers and Board of Directors. Standing ovations should be limited to five minutes or less. (RIBIT) I believe time will prove this to be a great team. Here is the entire team dedicated to insuring a great future for the Beatty Museum and Historical Society.

President - Mary Revert

Vice President - Vonnie Gray

Secretary - Treasurer - Norma Hamilton

Board of Directors:

Lorayne White
Kanna Lindgarde
Larry Hamilton
Peggy Johnson
Andy Gudas

Newsletter Staff:

Editor - William Miller
Publisher - Zettia Miller
Graphics-Designer - Mike Feuerstein
Historian-Correspondent - Claudia Reidhead

This issue features a great story put together by Claudia Reidhead for the history section titled "The Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad" to help us get in the spirit of Railroad Days. A big thanks to Claudia for the story as well as the great photo for the front page. We look forward to many more stories for the history section as well as Claudia returning next issue with a column keeping us updated on all the BMHS news. In the past two issues, we have enjoyed the story by Charles Heald about his trip to Death Valley, Rhyolite and other areas of interest. I mentioned last time that Charles was working on a video project and it is now completed. I have a copy of this video in my collection and it is in one word, magnificent. I'll give you the description of the tape and the web address where you can read all about Charles, see some photos and get ordering information. ****"Death Valley 1958-1985" by Charles L. Heald**** Although the title on the film and video is just "Death Valley," it is more of an exploration of many areas of scenic and historical interest in this large National Park, and vicinity. The video starts with "Cathedral Town," the name given to the Pinnacles of Searles Lake by the Freighters and 20 Mule Team Drivers of the late 1800's. The ten beehive charcoal kilns in Wildrose Canyon are related to early day mining activities in the Argus range across Panamint Valley. The pictures of a number of Ghost Mining Towns are of historical interest, since these scenes were taken in 1958, and Skidoo and

Chloride City, as well as Wildrose Station are gone now. One can still enjoy visiting the ruins of Ballarat, California and Rhyolite, Nevada. Many scenes of geological interest are also included in the video, such as Zabriskie Point, Twenty Mule Canyon, Golden Canyon, Artists Palette, Natural Bridge, Badwater, Devil's Golf Course and the Salt Pools. Mustard Canyon, the borax "Haystacks" and Harmony Borax Works are also included, as well as Titus Canyon, Ubehebe Crater, and the Race Track. Other items of interest include the Sand Dunes, Devil's Cornfield, Salt Creek and the antics of the Pupfish, and Scotty's Castle in Grapevine Canyon. All the information you need concerning this great 58 minute video is located at: www.sbmediacast.com/DeathValley/index.htm or you can call DAC Video Productions at (805) 569-1337. Not only is this a great video for your library, but it just might be that perfect Birthday or Christmas gift for someone. The nice folks of "Friends of Hart Park & Museum" have given us a nice mention in their latest quarterly newsletter about Railroad Days, for which we thank them. Ah yes, Railroad Days, June 2-3-4, 2000. A parade, classic car show, talent show, vendors, great food, fun and lots of camaraderie. Sounds like the best place on the planet to locate yourself is Beatty, Nevada for all the fun and excitement of this annual event. Zettia and I look forward to seeing you there and for those of you who have never attended, won't you join us this time around. As Railroad Days get closer, you can obtain updated information from the Beatty Chamber of Commerce or from any member of the BMHS staff. No excuses now, you will be there and I will "ribitize" you. Got it! Until the next time, stay healthy and of course.....**RIBIT!**

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jan Cobb - Riverside, California

Judy Palmer - Palo Alto, California

Ask a friend to join BMHS

DONATIONS

Jack & Romy Hoyer - Las Vegas, Nevada
Time card slots and envelope, E.E. Palmer, Beatty, Nevada. Photo of bottle house-Rhyolite, NV and photo of Miners Union Parade-Rhyolite, NV. Postal money order with Bullfrog, NV cancel.

Judy Palmer - Palo Alto, California
\$50.00 donation.

BMHS MEETING DATES

May 29

June 26

7 PM

BEATTY COMMUNITY CENTER

BULLFROG MINING DISTRICT HISTORY

THE TONOPAH & TIDEWATER RAILROAD

by

Claudia Reidhead

This small treatise has been researched mostly through the local newspapers and books.

In early 1905, Marion "Borax" Smith began looking for a better way to transport his borax from Death Valley and the Amargosa. Feeling that a railroad would be the best way to go, he contacted Senator Clark who was working on the Salt Lake City branch of the San Pedro Line, which was still under construction. Senator Clark agreed and encouraged San Pedro to allow him access rights at Las Vegas Meadows. Smith began construction

of the T & T out of Las Vegas in September of 1905 with materials being hauled in on the San Pedro Line and dropped at Las Vegas. The grade had been surveyed and equipment began working, building grade and laying track. They had gotten about 10 miles of grade and five miles of track laid when Senator Clark had a difference of opinion with Mr. Smith and San Pedro suddenly denied the access rights to the T & T.

Mr. Smith thus left with no access and no way to move the steel that was already on the ground, started to look for another tie in for his railroad. Finding access rights available at Ludlow, California, through the Santa Fe Line, he again began construction of his railroad, heading out across the desert. He was laying rail at the phenomenal rate of a mile of grade and track a day. Crossing the Silver Lake it became difficult, water was scarce, and hands to work were getting difficult to keep. Winds and weather were taking their toll also. By the time they reached Amargosa Canyon near Tecopa, the road kept suffering setbacks due to slides from the mud walls of the canyon. Each slide would cause a slow down of four to ten days. Building grade from 3 foot to 30 feet and large cuts also slowed down the construction. Late in 1906, they finally arrived at Death Valley Junction, where he started the track for his Lila C. Mine at Ryan in Death Valley. Realizing that he wouldn't be able to reach Beatty and the gold mines at Rhyolite before Senator Clark's LV & T, he decided to keep on building for Tonopah anyway.

Arriving in Gold Center 6 months after the LV & T, The Tonopah & Tidewater began to live up to it's name by taking over the management of the Bullfrog and Goldfield Railroad. It now had connections from Tonopah in the North, with the tie in from Goldfield to Tonopah on the Tonopah and Goldfield, through Goldfield to Beatty and Rhyolite. The spur ran from Gold Center to Rhyolite, to Ludlow, and the tie in with the Santa Fe, all the way to the rail yards in Los Angeles.

Despite being the last Rail Line to arrive in Beatty, the T & T continued until the tracks were removed in June of 1941, offering twice a week service from the North to the South, and becoming the only North South rail line that operated in the state of Nevada. It still holds that distinction, even though it hasn't run for nearly sixty years. Also it should be noted that the B & G,

although being managed by the T & T was a separate line and the T & T did not build past Gold Center. The Track of the B & G was used by the T & T until the tracks were pulled.

The T & T was standard gauge and ran mostly Baldwin engines. The engines were a 4&6 design, weighing 183,800 pounds oil fired and steam driven. The Mud Hen was one of the engines that provided the service to this area, and did so from the beginning of service here. One of the more interesting cars that ran on these rails was number 99, a gas electric car designed to lower the cost of carrying passengers as rider ship dropped. Number 99 was an EMC (electric motive car) built by the St. Louis Car Company, 70' long, weighing 54 tons with a passenger capacity of 45 people. It should be noted that although the train service lasted longer than any of the others the last few years were run at a financial loss, but a mail and passenger contract with the government prohibited abandonment of the line. This small line was the lifeblood of many small towns throughout the southern Nevada and Eastern California area, including Death Valley, Beatty, Springdale and the mines of Ryan and the Amargosa.

During the years of 1918 until 1935, at various times the T & T provided a temporary school set up in a train car on a side track for the students at Tecopa, Shoshone and Death Valley Junction.

Even after the line was established and running, hands were hard to keep. They kept getting killed or lured away by the quest for gold. Breakdowns were common, as were accidents on the tracks. Trains would be derailed, causing delays of hours to days to get tracks cleared. Schedules would be erratic at worst to slow at best, even at this, trains were still the fastest and best way to travel through the state. Train travel was considered to be the true tamer of the desert, for with the arrival of trains, supplies arrived faster, families were reunited, and products shipped out faster, allowing the economy to flourish and to remain strong even during economic depression. This disaster came late to the desert and lasted a shorter period of time. Even though it never recovered completely, the people who remained were never wealthy but were not as bad off as the big cities of America, thanks in part to the tenacity of the T & T Railroad.