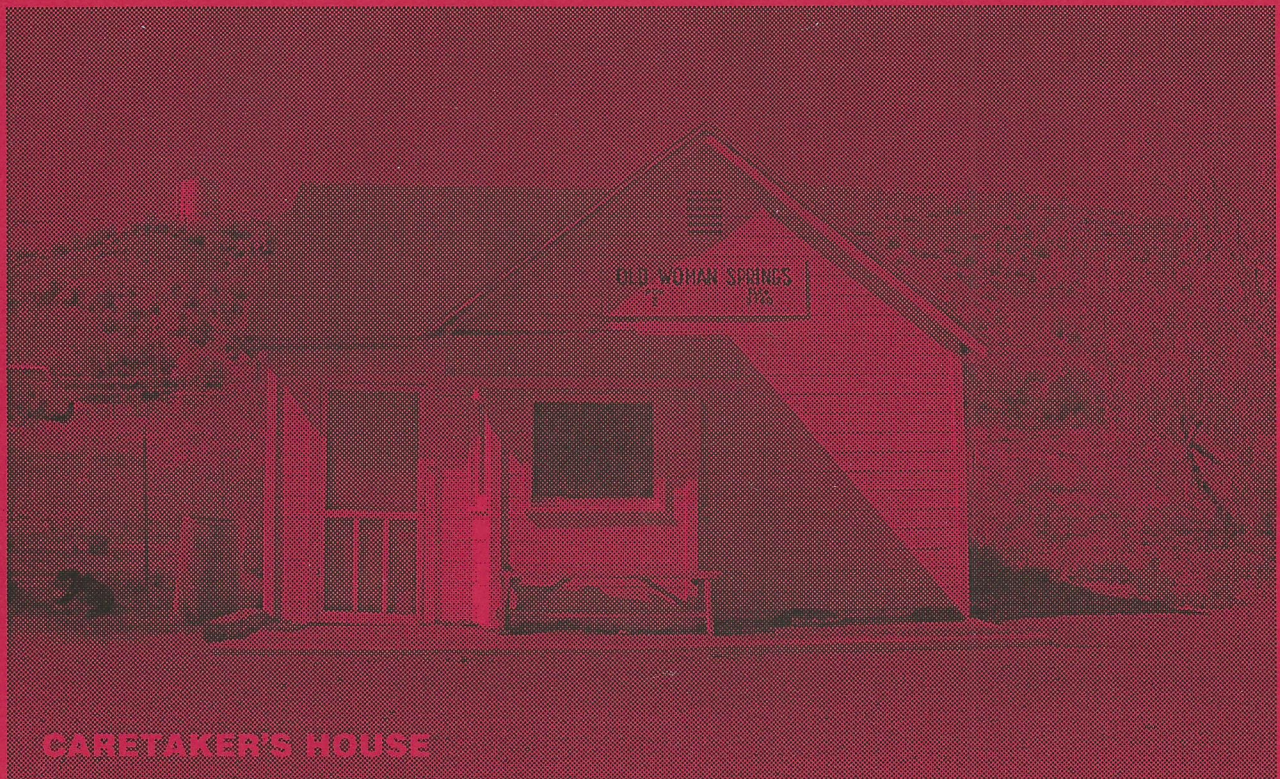


THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS
BILLY HOLCOMB CHAPTER 1069

P R E S E N T S T H E I R

THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CLAMPOUT

OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH



CARETAKER'S HOUSE

ECV 1069 Photo by: Tom Granger, XPBC

OCTOBER 8, 9, 10, 6009

WRITTEN BY
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ECV

OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH

A History
by
Gary L. Bancroft
XNGH '03, DA#3, & XPBC
Billy Holcomb Chapter
of
The Ancient and Honorable Order
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E Clampus Vitus

OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH

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The Old Woman Springs Ranch took its name from the two springs that provide this area of Johnson Valley with plentiful water. The springs became known as the Old Woman Springs after the United States Government survey under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Washington encountered some old Native American women living in the area during 1856. Alternately, the name may have been Washington's translation from the Chemehuevi language name for the area of either Mo-mopwits or non-opeoits, both meaning "Old Woman." The eastern spring is now known as the Old Woman Springs while the western spring is now known as Cottonwood Springs.

The Old Woman Springs Ranch history was intertwined with the life of Albert Riley Swarthout, the son and nephew of a prominent pioneering Mormon family in the San Bernardino and Cajon Pass areas. The Old Woman Springs Ranch history was also intertwined with the history of the Heart Bar Ranch in the Big Bear Lake area.

The Swarthout saga began when Philip and Charity Bates Swarthout married in Utica, New York, about 1820. They had seven children: George, Nathan, Harley, Charles, Truman, Hamilton, and Lucinda. The family emigrated west: first to Ohio; then to Kansas; and finally to Salt Lake City, Utah, where Grandpa Philip worked on the Mormon Temple.

Albert's uncle, Nathan Swarthout, joined the Army and served with General Kearney and the Army of the West during the Mexican War of 1847. He participated in the march from Leavenworth to Los Angeles and was later part of a detachment sent to San Bernardino to quell an Indian uprising. Uncle Nathan's letters to Utah extolling the beauties of the San Bernardino Valley led to the Swarthout clan becoming part of the 1851 Mormon colonization of San Bernardino by joining the wagon train captained by Andrew Lytle.

George, Nathan, and Harley Swarthout established adjacent ranches in San Bernardino that stretched from Little Mountain to Baseline. At age 45 George Swarthout returned to Utah and married Elizabeth, age 19, who had been born in Bath, England. George and Elizabeth had 5 children; the youngest was Albert Riley, born February 11, 1872. Two months later his father died at age 55.

Albert Swarthout first homesteaded the Box S Ranch near Rabbit Springs in Lucerne Valley during 1893. He built a log cabin and drilled a well and became friend with Peter Davidson, his nearest neighbor, who had been the first homesteader in the area in 1877. Davidson was a cantankerous old Scotsman who ran a way station for teamsters freighting to and from the numerous mines in the area.

The fact that "Swarty" was able to forge a lasting relationship with the prickly Davidson gave us a clue about his personality and character. Julian "Junie" Gobar, the noted well-digger, described Swarthout as shrewd, with a good sense of humor, a "tease" who was able to get along with everybody. Swarthout himself declared he was a "cattleman, first, last, and always."

Swarthout met Lillie Furstenfeld in Hesperia and married her at the Alhambra home of her parents on February 10, 1895. Their daughter, Helene, was born in 1896 and died before her second birthday of appendicitis. Their son Donald was born in 1899.

"Swarty" held a number of jobs before he found enough good grazing land to start his cattle operation. He supervised firewood cutting for the railroad before they began burning oil in their steam locomotives. He became the first United States Forest Service Ranger in charge of the area from Cajon Pass to Lake Arrowhead, serving from 1899 to 1905. He worked for Pacific Power and Light for a year. The next year he spent in Otis, now Yermo, managing a store, hotel, and post office for a brother.

Squatter James "Dad" Goulding took up residence at the Box S Ranch in 1897. Swarthout relinquished the homestead to Goulding, who brought in a new fangled rotary drill that allowed him to drill a well that provided steady water, making a successful cattle operation possible. Goulding would later become a pillar of Lucerne Valley society.

1907 was a pivotal year for Albert Swarthout. First he homesteaded the Old Woman Springs Ranch. Also, on November 18, 1907, he purchased one-half of the Heart Bar Ranch in Big Meadows south of Big Bear Lake from Riverside County cattleman Robert F. Garner. For \$915 he obtained 37 head of Heart Bar branded stock cattle, a bay Arizona horse, and two old wagons. The sale included range privileges in the forest reserve at Big Meadows, South Fork, and other Santa Ana Canyon ranges. The property also included desert side range and water privileges northeast of Big Meadows known as Rock Corral, One Hole Springs, Two Hole Springs, Clear Springs, and Quail Springs. The ranch also included two cabins connected by a breezeway, a cabin with a fireplace, and a blacksmith shop. Swarty moved another one-room cabin from South Fork for his family's first home at Heart Bar.

The Heart Bar Ranch came with another "asset": a partner, Charlie Martin, who owned the other half of the ranch. Charlie Martin was an interesting and hard case. He and his partner, Willie Button, had first recorded the Heart Bar brand on January 14, 1884, as signed by County Recorder, W. F. Holcomb. Charlie Martin was at various times a miner, cattle rancher, killer, robber, arsonist, perjurer, game poacher, convicted felon (1877 -- 5 years at San Quentin for assault and theft), and cattle rustler. Junie Gobar characterized Charlie as a cold, hard, tough 200-pounder to be treated with care. Charlie's motto was "if anyone does you dirt, do him ten times worse." The record is unclear on exactly where Martin and Button pastured their herd or, for that matter, what became of Willie Button.

During the 1880s Charlie homesteaded Glen Martin, later Camp Angelus and now Angelus Oaks. The area also became known as Mountain Home due to Charlie's hospitality and largesse. He became Donald Swarthout's second father during his partnership with Albert Swarthout. He sold his share of Heart Bar Ranch to Dr. E. Scott Blair of San Bernardino in 1914. In 1917 the one-time member of the Mc Haney gang of cattle rustlers became the Chief of Police in San Bernardino. The tough old coot died after a long bout with cancer on March 7, 1927, at least age 70 years.

The Big Meadows passed through numerous hands. Mormon settlers were the first known white persons to live in the area in the 1850s, followed by Bert Coombs, who in turn was followed by William and James Mc Haney in 1890. Dudley and Dewar became the owners of record in 1893 when they sold to Charlie Martin and Connie Mack. Mack in turn sold to R. F. Garner who ultimately sold the ranch to Albert Swarthout.

The practice of running cattle in the Big Bear Lake area during the summer and on the Mojave Desert during the winter had begun as early as 1884 when Augustus "Gus" Knight teamed up with Peter Davidson with their cattle spending the summer at pasturage in the eastern half of Bear Valley before descending to winter pasturage at Rabbit Springs in Lucerne Valley. Another pioneer cattleman was James Smart, whose IS Ranch was located in what is now known as Moonridge. His JS brand became the IS brand when the tip of his new branding iron broke. The biggest operation in the area was that of the Talmadge brothers – Will, Frank, and John – purchased the IS Ranch and brand in 1892. They eventually controlled 1,640 acres south and east of Big Bear Lake. Their winter pasturage had originally been at Old Woman Springs but was later at Pipes Canyon and Whitewater Ranch. Their holdings eventually included the Las Flores Ranch in Summit Valley. John Metcalf and partner Robert Garner began an operation in 1891 in Bear Valley with winter pasturage as far away as the Colorado River. Will Hitchcock and his descendants ran cattle at their Hitchcock Ranch in Holcomb Valley with ranges that included Big Pine Flat, Coxey Meadow, and Heaps Ranch with winter pasturage in Apple Valley. Ramon and Felipe Quiroz ran a herd of 600 Mexican longhorns in Coxey Meadow, Big Pine Flat, and Holcomb Valley, often in conflict with the Hitchcock Ranch. Relative late comer Will Shay purchased the Rathbun acreage southeast of Big Bear Lake in 1906. In 1914 Shay and partner Charles Barker, a successful Banning businessman, purchased 3500 acres and 600 head of cattle adjacent to Baldwin Lake for \$30,000 from the estate of Lucky Baldwin. Their winter pasturage included Quail, Queen, Stubby, Horse, and Barker Tanks, now located in Joshua Tree National Park.

The twice yearly cattle drives were not the month long ordeals of the Great Plain ranchers. The Shay – Barker, Talmadge brothers, and Metcalf-Knight herds were driven on a mostly east-west axis. The cattle were rounded up on first of May on the high desert from Old Woman Springs around the northeastern flank of the San Bernardinios to the Whitewater River. The cattle were driven up the historic Morongo Trail, through the rock gap of the "Needle's Eye," and up the steep Golden Staircase to holding pens near the Rose Mine. The principle problem during the week long drive was keeping the herds from stampeding or rounding them up when they did stampede. In early September meat

buyers from as far away as Los Angeles would select the cattle for slaughter. These cattle were driven to the railroad at Victorville, the rest of the herd was herded back to the high desert via the Morongo Trail when the weather turned cold around the middle of October.

The Swarthout – Martin operation was mostly along a north-south axis with the winter pasturage at the Old Woman Springs Ranch and summer ranges at the Heart Bar Ranch south of Big Bear Lake. Their twice annual cattle drives generally took about three days compared to the month or longer cattle drives of the Great Plains but were exacerbated by cattle-crowding narrow canyons, rocks on the trails that cause the cattle to slip and their hooves to wear down, bad weather, stampedes, and long days. The cattle were moved through Rattlesnake Canyon to Big Meadows generally during May, where a handful of summer thunderstorms kept the pastures growing. Two or three hundred cattle were rounded up into Big Meadow for selection of meat buyers during early fall. The fall cattle drive was up Cienega Seca Creek, over the divide, down Arrastra Creek, through Broom Flats, and on to the corral at Round Valley on the first day, where there was shack with a stove, provisions, supplies, and tools. The second day's journey was down Rattlesnake Canyon to Mound Springs, where Charlie Martin's portable shack was waiting. The third day's drive was to the desert floor, where the cattle had free range and roamed wherever they wanted.

The Heart Bar cowboys were also responsible for maintaining desert grazing and water stations at Ames Well, Mound Springs, Rock Corral, and Rabbit Springs. These stations usually consisted of a water source, a corral, and a shack that contained a stove, provisions, supplies, and tools required to care for the herd. Wells required regular cleaning to keep them functional. Windmills necessary to lift the water from the well to watering troughs also required frequent maintenance.

Water is the critical, limiting factor for desert cattle ranching. Albert Swarthout was instrumental in developing two major desert water sources. The first of these was the Old Woman Springs where he and Charlie Reche were credited with thinking up, figuring out, and digging the hole that resulted in the siphoning of 150 miner's inches of irrigation water. A miner's inch of water equals 9 gallons per minute, which converts to an astonishing 1350 gallons per minute and a mind-boggling 81,000 gallons per hour. They developed a siphon system that could be turned off and on at will that allowed for the irrigation of 50 (another sources says 12) acres of alfalfa at the Old Woman Springs Ranch. Heart Bar cowboys harvested the alfalfa monthly during the summer. Charlie Reche later drilled a similar well 12 to 15 mile southeast of Old Woman Springs on the same fault that opened an additional 50 square mile of desert grazing for Reche and the Talmadge brothers. (Charlie Reche was shot and wounded by Willie Boy during the chase in 1909. Willie Boy had fled to Old Woman Springs before going on to his doom at the Rock Corral. Swarty always felt that he might have talked Willie Boy into surrendering if he had been at Old Woman Springs Ranch.)

The other significant water development was at Ames Well. Swarthout hired Julian "Junie" Gobar and Paul Hoak to dig a four-foot-square shaft. They averaged eleven feet

per day and on the sixth day puddles began collecting on the bottom of the shaft. They set a curb and began tunneling, which caused a quicksand cave-in and led to their development of a more complicated and effective method of timbering and shoring. Swarty said he would be happy if the well produced for 20 years. The well was still producing satisfactorily in 1956, 40 years later without unduly agitating the quicksand.

The Heart Bar cowboys also had to herd the cattle sold to the meat buyers down the Santa Ana Canyon during the fall. The cattle were driven to a field west of Glass in Section 17 on the first day, then through very rough and narrow defile to a natural corral by Camp Weeha on the second day, and finally to San Bernardino on the third day. Later, the herd would be driven to Riverside when the buyer was John Garner. In 1914 loading pens were built between Mentone and East Highlands, a control road was built between Camp Angelus and Seven Oaks, and twelve acres of fenced corral at Harvey's Pack Station, all of which made these drives to market easier. An alternate cattle drive began with the cattle being rounded up to Bill Shay's corral just north of Baldwin Lake on the first day and then moved down the Cushenberry Grade to the Box S Ranch on the second day, where the cattle were held in a field until nightfall. The cattle were then driven on a cool, moonlit night to the railroad at Victorville. This drive was discontinued because it was too hard on the men and the cattle. The last and most successful drives were down Mission Creek and across the Indian reservation to the railroad at Whitewater. This route required only one overnight stop at a camp that was stocked with hay and oats.

As mentioned previously, Charlie Martin sold his half of Heart Bar Ranch to Dr. E. Scott Blair of San Bernardino during 1914. Dr. Blair was an obstreperous individual who disagreed with Swarthout about cattle ranching, causing Swarthout to sell his share to Bob Bryant in 1918. Bryant couldn't get along with Blair either, selling out to Blair in 1920. Blair, his wife, and son were killed while crossing railroad tracks in Hesperia during 1921. Albert Swarthout and his new partner, J. Dale Gentry, a San Bernardino hotelier and businessman, purchased the Heart Bar Ranch from the Blair estate for \$35,000. The purchase included 600 head of stock cattle and 179 bull calves and heifers. Another 250 feed steers were bought for an additional \$7,171. The operation broke even during 1922, the first year of operation: 1,069 cattle grazing, expenses of just over \$12,000, and cattle sales of almost \$13,000.

The partnership between the cattleman Swarthout and the business savvy Gentry worked well for many years. Gentry built a two-story ranch house and lodge at Heart Bar and often entertained as many as one hundred guests for the weekend. Cowboys including Warren and Walter Reche, D. H. Richardson, Tom Pierce and Buck Haddan earned \$40 and board per month. The profits rose to \$2,000 in 1924 and \$6,000 in 1925. The profits rose to \$10,000 during 1926 and the cowboys' pay was raised to \$50 per month.

The Crash of 1929 ended profitable cattle ranching for the Heart Bar brand. Things got so bad that Swarthout was forced to borrow a total of \$3500 from his mother-in-law, Mrs. Furstenfeld, in 1931, 1932, and 1933. The mountain cattle operations were doomed for a number of reasons. Overgrazing led to Forest Service allotments, limitations, and regulations to prevent the attendant soil erosion. Grazing fees of 35 cents per cow and 40

cents per horse were instituted as early as 1910. Mountain pasturage was dwindling as Big Bear Lake and Lake Arrowhead covered prime grazing land. Residents and tourists competed with cattle ranches for land. Finally, a warm rain fell on four feet of snow at Heart Bar during the winter of 1938-39, creating a sheet of water in the meadows. The creek washed out causing a tremendous and permanent drop in the water table. The meadows at Heart Bar were never again as lush and green as they had been.

The partnership between Albert Swarthout and Dale Gentry ended in 1938 and in 1940 the division of the property landed in the courts. The Heart Bar was leased to Joe Denny and H. B. Ward during litigation. Swarty ran the operation for Denny and Ward even though he was in his seventies.

Finally, on March 18, 1947, the court referees allocated the Big Meadows acreage to Dale Gentry and the desert land to Albert Swarthout. Gentry protested that the division was unfair, that Swarthout was getting the best of the deal, and that the referees were biased and prejudiced. Swarthout contended that the division was fair and offered to take the Heart Bar Ranch as his share of the division. Thus, the forty year tenure of Albert Swarthout at Old Woman Springs Ranch came to an end with the stipulated ceding of Old Woman Springs Ranch to Dale Gentry.

Dale Gentry took sole possession of Old Woman Springs Ranch and installed a narrow-gauge Hawaiian pineapple plantation train consisting of a steam engine, tender, two flatcars, one boxcar, and a caboose. He bought 10 miles of narrow-gauge rail and built a round house. He operated his Cottonwood Springs Railroad between his two springs, using it to survey his alfalfa fields and cattle herds until his death in the 1950s.

Albert and Lillie Swarthout ceded some Heart Bar land to Donald Swarthout and his family after the division. They continued to live at Heart Bar Ranch until 1952 when the land was sold to the Blackwell Corporation. The Blackwell's lost the Heart Bar Ranch to their lawyer, Harold Slain, in 1956. In 1965 the California Department of Parks and Recreation gained control of Heart Bar Ranch and created a state park, which was converted to a United States Forest Service campground in 1976. Albert and Lillie retired to San Bernardino, where she died at age 84. Albert remarried and died at age 91 on November 10, 1963.

Old Woman Springs Ranch has passed through a number of hands since the death of J. Dale Gentry. The current owners, as this was written, were Bert and Donna Barber, who plan to renovate the Ranch and its buildings. The current caretaker is Bob Humphries, a man seemingly from the mold of Albert Swarthout. The Ranch, consisting of 400 acres of deeded land with water and grazing rights to another 1600 acres, was also listed for sale at \$1,490,000. The Billy Holcomb Chapter of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus and the Morongo Basin Historical Society hope that the Old Woman Springs Ranch remains accessible to the public so that it can serve as a vivid memorial to the desert cattle ranching days of Albert Swarthout, Charlie Martin, and J. Dale Gentry.

OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH

THIS AREA OF LUCERNE VALLEY BECAME KNOWN AS OLD WOMAN SPRINGS WHEN A GOVERNMENT SURVEY PARTY DISCOVERED A NUMBER OF INDIAN WOMEN CAMPING HERE IN 1856. THE ORIGINAL WATER SOURCE, NOW CALLED COTTONWOOD SPRINGS, IS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YOU. IN 1907 CATTLEMAN ALBERT "SWARTY" SWARTHOUT HOMESTEADED OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH FOR USE AS WINTER PASTURE. HE AND PARTNER CHARLIE MARTIN, CATTLE RUSTLER AND LATER POLICE CHIEF IN SAN BERNARDINO, PURCHASED HEART BAR RANCH, SOUTH OF BIG BEAR, FOR SUMMER RANGE. BY 1918 BOTH HAD SOLD OUT. IN 1921 SWARTHOUT AGAIN BOUGHT THE HEART BAR, THIS TIME WITH SAN BERNARDINO BUSINESSMAN J. DALE GENTRY. THEIR CATTLE WERE DRIVEN TO HEART BAR RANCH VIA RATTLESNAKE CANYON IN THE SPRING, RETURNING TO OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH IN THE FALL. IN 1938 THEY HAD A FALLING OUT. THE CASE WAS LITIGATED UNTIL 1947, WHEN "SWARTY" WAS AWARDED HEART BAR RANCH AND GENTRY RECEIVED OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH. "SWARTY" SPENT THE REST OF HIS LIFE AT HEART BAR, DYING IN 1963 AT AGE 91. HISTORIC OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH REMAINS PRIVATE PROPERTY TO THIS DAY. THE RANCH CONSISTS OF OVER 400 ACRES OF DEEDED LAND WITH WATER AND GRAZING RIGHTS TO ANOTHER 1600 ACRES.

PLAQUE DEDICATED OCTOBER 10, 2004, BY THE BILLY HOLCOMB CHAPTER OF THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS, IN COOPERATION WITH THE OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH AND THE MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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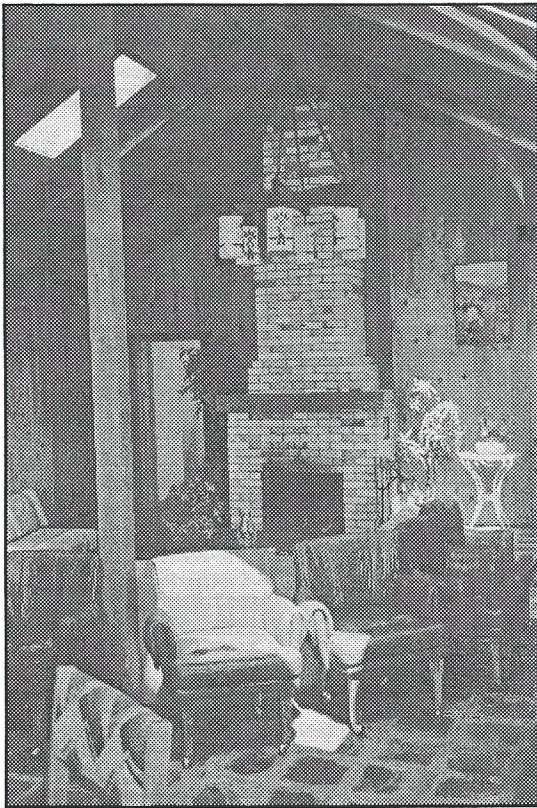
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What sayeth the Brethren?

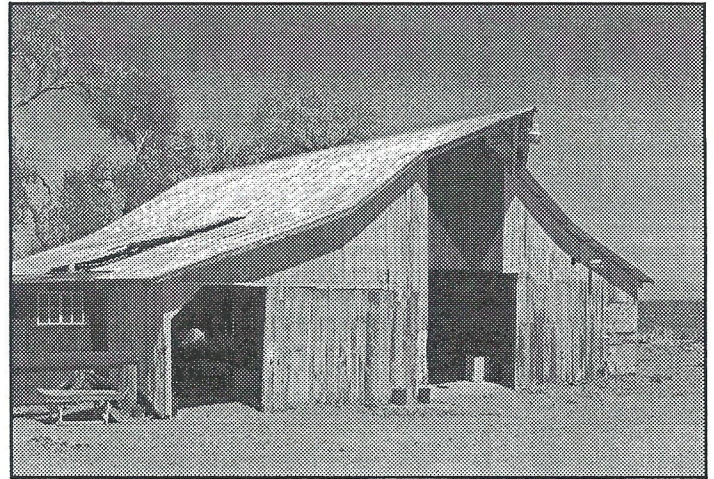
SATISFACTORY!!!

OLD WOMAN SPRINGS RANCH



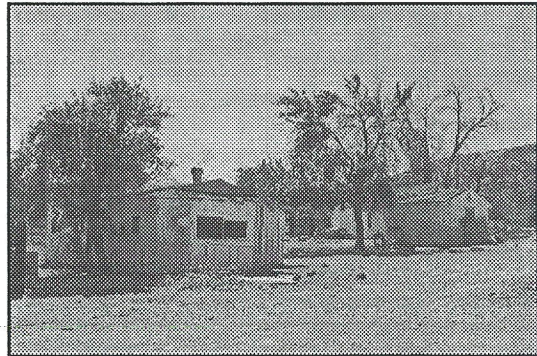
ECV 1069 Photo By: Gary Bancroft, XNGH

Ranch House Interior



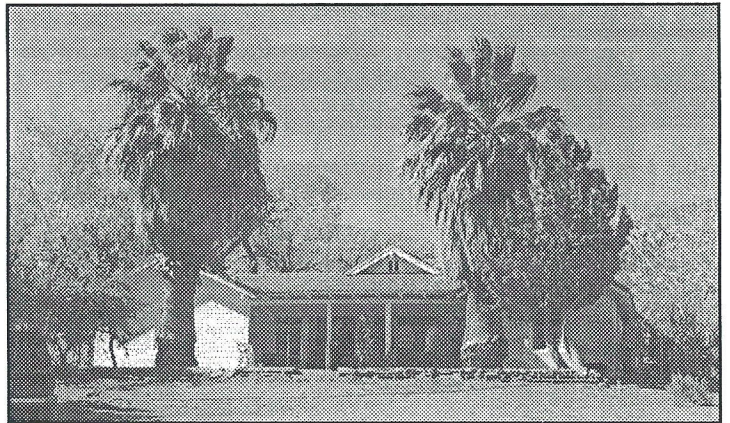
ECV 1069 Photo By: Tom Granger, XPBC

Barn



ECV 1069 Photo By: Tom Granger, XPBC

Out Buildings



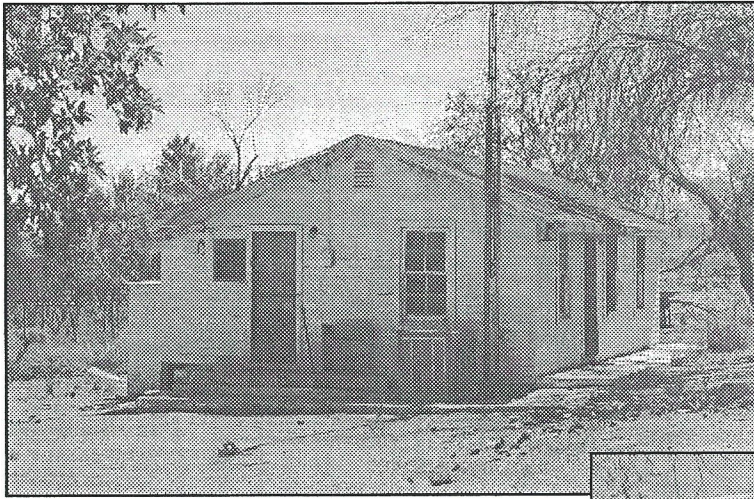
ECV 1069 Photo By: Tom Granger, XPBC

Main Ranch House



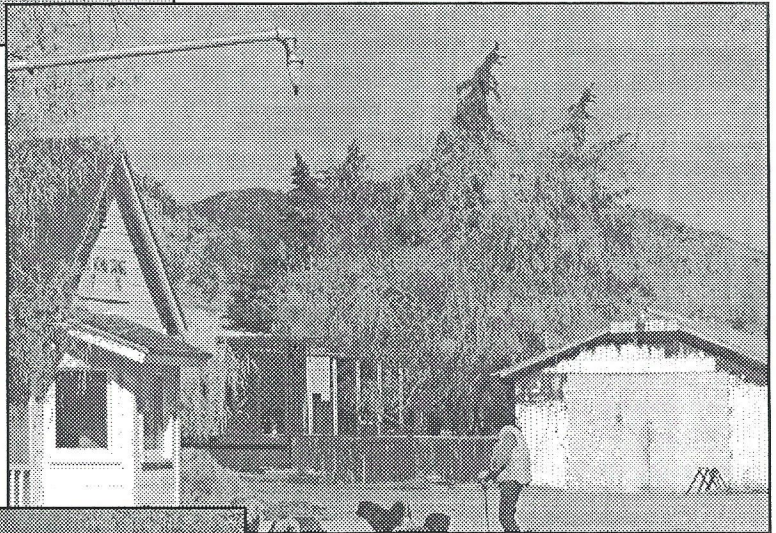
ECV 1069 Photo By: Gary Bancroft, XNGH

Pond and Trees

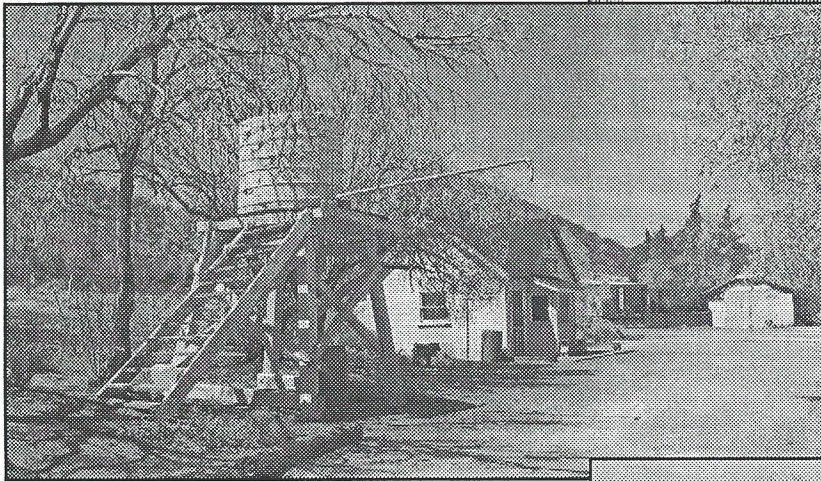


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Caretaker's House and Outbuildings



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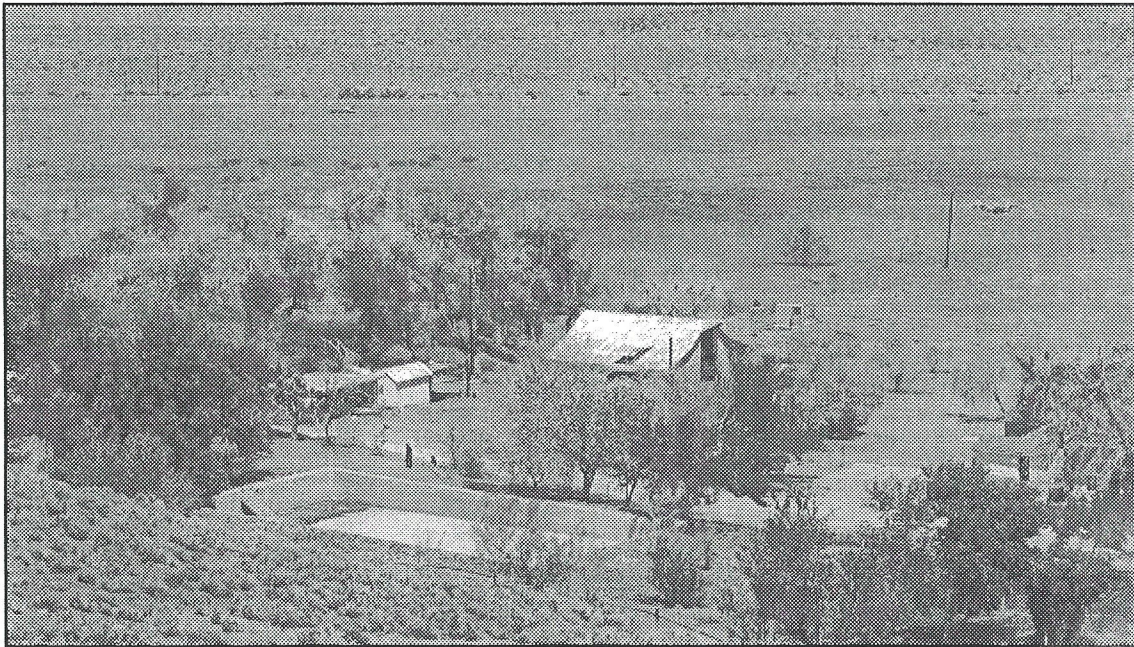


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ECV 1069 Photo By: Tom Granger, XPBC

Pond and Barn



ECV 1069 Photo By: Tom Granger, XPBC

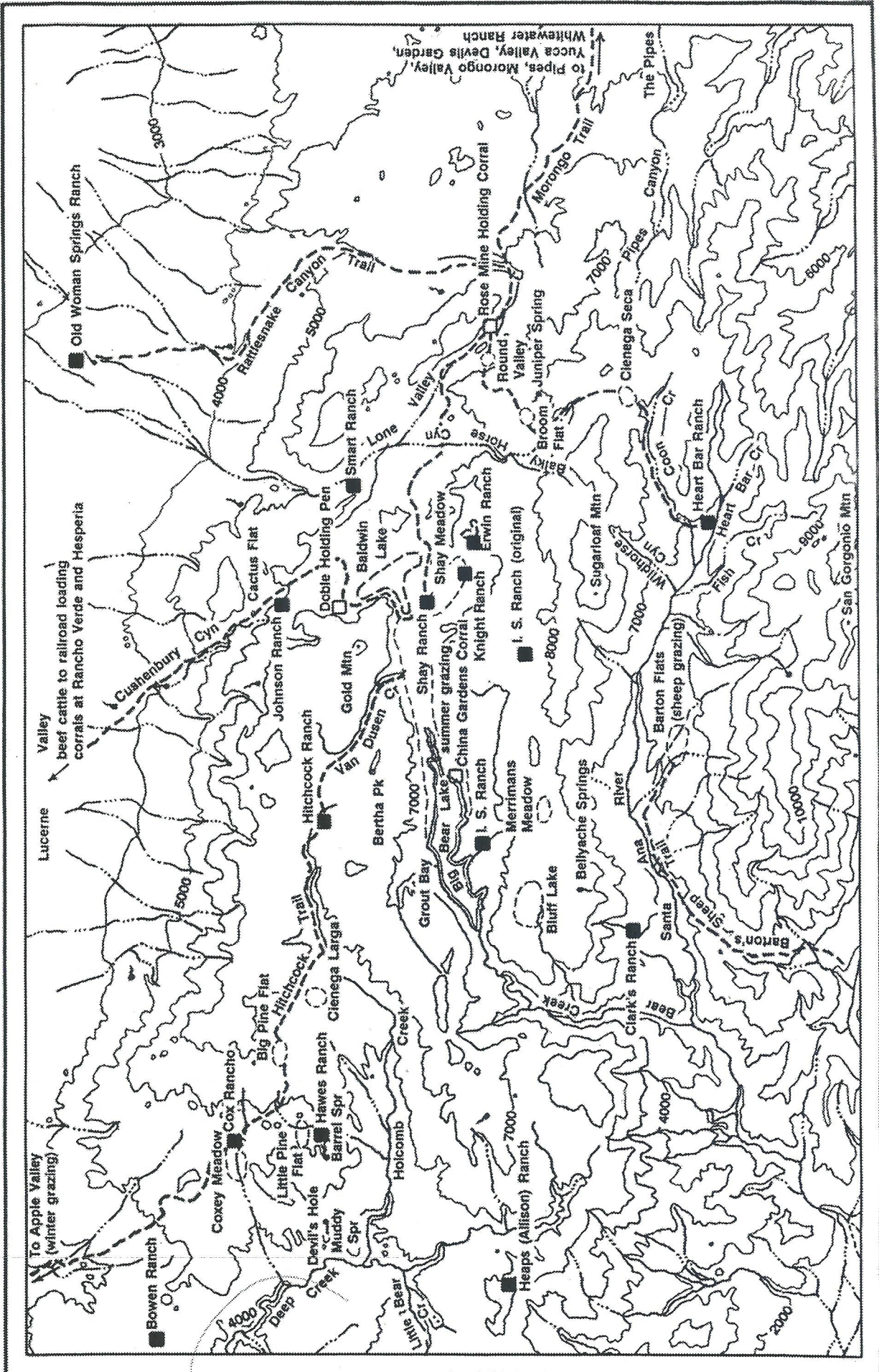
Overview of Old Woman Springs Ranch looking north

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|--------------------|
| IS | Talmadge | ♥ | Heartbar |
| 4H | Hitchcock -
Y-Double-H | ♣ | Swarthout - Gentry |
| CO | Barker (Shay) | ○ | Shay - Barker |
| | | | Hip O - Stocker |



From Tom Core, Big Bear: The First 100 Years: Bearty Remembered

Big Bear area cattle ranchers at Moonridge during 1937 (L to R) Cliff Shay, Dale Gentry, Harry Allison, Albert Swarthout, Jim Cram (partially obscured), John Talmadge, Will Talmadge, Will Shay, and San Bernardino County Sheriff Emmett Shay.



From : John W. Robinson, THE SAN BERNARDINOS