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E CLAMPUS VITUS®
AND THE
SOCIETY OF VITUSCAN MISSIONARIES®
PRESENTS ITS
SUMMER HIGH COUNTRY EVENT

Clark Mountain

A FOUR WHEEL DRIVE EXPLORATION OF
CLARK MOUNTAIN & THE COLLOSEUM MINE



AUGUST 9,10 AND 11 6018

BRIAN NASH, XNGH – P
HEAD ABBOTT

**The Society of Vituscan
Missionaries®**

of

**The Ancient and Honorable Order of
E Clampus Vitus®**

Presents its Semi-annual
Historical 4-Wheel Drive Trek
(number 50 in a continuing series)

**An Historical Tour of Clark Mountain
&
Colloseum Mining Region**

August 9 - 11, 2013

Held under the Spiritual Aegis of our Patron
Saint Vitus

And the tactical and temporal control of Head Abbott
Brian Nash, XNGH – Proctor

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Paul Renner, XPBC, XNGH, XCP,
DEAD ABBOT VII, T.R.A.S.H. Board

Ivanpah

Probably the first mining camp in the East Mojave Desert was Ivanpah. In 1869, the Piute Company of California and Nevada (Piute Company) sent an expedition into the desert to locate copper deposits in the vicinity of the Old Spanish Trail. What they found was silver. Samples from Clark Mountain were rich enough to indicate that the silver could be mined at a profit, despite the difficulties associated with most desert mining operations (most notably, the lack of both transportation and adequate supplies of water). The Clarke Mining District, named for William H. Clarke of Visalia, was thus established (the “e” in Clarke’s name was later dropped).

Most of the Piute Company’s claims were located on the north side of Clark Mountain at Mineral Hill. However, the company originally planned to establish three town sites around Clark Mountain: one at Mineral Hill, one at Pachocha Spring (now called Pachalka Spring) on the west side of Clark Mountain, and one at Ivanpah in a little draw on the east side of the mountain. Only Ivanpah was actually developed. The seep in the little draw at which Ivanpah was located proved adequate to provide for the town; in fact, “Ivanpah” is said to mean “clear water.” (Casebier 1987)

As with many a desert mining camp, excitement grew quickly. It wasn’t long before news of a rich silver strike in the remote East Mojave spread through San Bernardino. By the summer of 1870, over 300 miners had braved the desert heat and were working claims in the Clark District. Ore assayed at anywhere from \$170.00 to \$2500.00 per ton. The biggest mines were at Mineral Hill, about 8 miles northwest of Ivanpah. These included the Lizzie Bullock, Monitor, and Beatrice Mines, all of which were owned by four brothers: Tom, Andrew, John, and William McFarlane. But Ivanpah was the hub of

the activity. By the summer of 1871, the little town boasted 15 buildings—these included a hotel, two stores, and the offices of the Piute Mining Company. The hotel was the largest of the buildings at 40' x 60', but the other buildings were also quite sizeable, at least by mining camp standards.

For the first few years, ore was shipped out of the Clark District for processing. Then, in 1875, the McFarlanes constructed a five-stamp mill in Ivanpah to process ore locally. A year later, J.A. Bidwell installed a ten-stamp mill. The sites of these mills can be seen today. Ivanpah continued to produce even during the depression of the late 1870's. The County of San Bernardino improved the roads, and a post office was established in June of 1878, with J. Atkinson as the first postmaster. Visitors to Ivanpah found two saloons, two stores, two blacksmith shops, two hay yards, a butcher shop, and a notary, justice of the peace, and a constable. (Casebier 1987)

However, decline is inevitable in every mining camp. By mid-1880, there were only 65 residents living in Ivanpah. Gold and silver strikes at Oro Grande, Calico, and Providence lured many of Ivanpah's miners away. The relatively close proximity of Oro Grande and Calico to San Bernardino made these camps especially attractive. In 1890 there were only 11 holdouts in Ivanpah, and the depression of the '90's made matters even worse. Silver dropped to 58 cents per ounce. Activity at Ivanpah came to an end, and the post office was closed in 1899, when it was moved to Rosalie.

Sometimes the name "Ivanpah" can be confusing to the desert explorer, as there was not one, but three Ivanpahs. The first, which we have discussed above, was located on the east side of Clark Mountain. It was dead by 1899. The second Ivanpah was at the northern end of the California Eastern Railroad in Ivanpah Valley and was established in about 1903. When that railroad was abandoned, Ivanpah #3 became a

point on the Union Pacific mainline as it skirts the eastern side of Ivanpah Valley. That name is still used today.

Colosseum Mine

Mining in the Colosseum Gorge area of Clark Mountain was sporadic in the late nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century. The Ivanpah Consolidated Mining Company patented the Colosseum One and Two Claims in 1882. C.W. Gowman acquired these claims in 1923, and about 615 ounces of gold and silver were produced prior to World War II (Hewett 1956). After the war, there was little activity until 1970 when Draco Mines, Placer Amex, and Amselco Exploration began a series of exploratory tests that included the drilling of 29 core samples. By 1984 the mine was leased to Amselco, and then purchased by Dallhold Resources of Australia in 1986. Dallhold created Colosseum Gold Incorporated to operate the mine.(Jessey 2010)

Colosseum Gold began excavation of the open pit mine in 1986, and initiated construction of a 3600-ton mill in February of 1987. The first ore was stockpiled in May. In October, the mill was completed, and processing of the ore began. Ore was first fed to a jaw crusher, which reduced it to less than 6". A SAG mill then crushed the cobbles to less than a half an inch. Finally, a ball mill pulverized the ore to 120 mesh. Leaching of the gold from this powder took place in eight 135,000-gallon tanks. The average yield was .064 ounces of gold per ton of ore, with a 90% recovery rate. (Casebier 1987)

The first gold bullion was poured in the fall of 1987. The mine operated continuously from 1987 until 1993, with an average monthly production of 7000 ounces of gold. In 1990 Lac Minerals of Canada bought the Colosseum Mine. Although reserves of ore

were estimated at ten years or more, Lac Minerals stopped production in 1993. The costs of reclamation have been in excess of \$30,000,000. (Jessey 2010)

Kelly Field, the Wilhelms, and Air Mail

During the 1920's the U.S. Post Office began airmail service as a means of encouraging commercial aviation. Routes were established all over the country, including a route that connected Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. Western Air Express held the contract for this route. Although primitive by today's standards, the equipment was cutting edge for its time. However, planes could be balky and weather prediction unreliable, so a series of lighted beacons and emergency landing strips were established along each route. In this way, a pilot who lost his bearings could regain his route, or land if weather or mechanical difficulties forced him out of the air.

One such emergency landing field was located on Excelsior Mine Road in Shadow Valley, about ten miles north of present Interstate 15. Named Kelly Field in honor of early Western Air Express pilot Fred Kelly, this strip was opened by the Department of Commerce in 1930. It was state-of-the-art for 1930, and included a lighted dirt landing strip, a 50-60 foot rotating beacon, and a house for the caretaker. The first caretakers were Mabel and Ken Wilhelm.

In 1926 the Wilhelms had constructed a restaurant and service station at Manix along the newly graded road from Barstow to Las Vegas. Business along the new route was fair until the fall of the stock market in 1929. By 1930, although the route was newly paved, business slowed to a trickle. The Great Depression was taking its toll. It was at this time that Ken Wilhelm was offered the caretaker's job at Kelly Field, which was just being completed. Mr. Wilhelm accepted, and took over in June. The perks of

the job included a monthly wage, a government truck, and a house. This was very enticing considering the state of the economy and the fact that the Wilhelms had a little daughter to care for.

The Wilhelm's duties included care and upkeep of the lights on the field and the rotating beacon. The landing strip lights came on automatically at dark, and the beacon operated all night, every night. If a plane were forced to land at Kelly Field, Mr. Wilhelm would take the mail in the government truck and drive it through to Las Vegas.

Kelly Field was not as isolated as it now appears. The Yates Ranch headquarters was just a few miles to the south at Valley Wells, and there was activity at a variety of mines at Shadow and Clark Mountains. As time went on, traffic along route 91 increased as well. Mabel Wilhelm could get some supplies at Cima and Nipton; each month a shopping trip was made to Las Vegas or Barstow to buy larger quantities of food and other items.

The Wilhelms left Kelly Field when the Commerce Department closed it in 1935. By that time there was sufficient traffic along the highway that their service station and restaurant at Mannix were economically viable again. The little house the Wilhelms lived in was later moved to Baker (Casebier 1987). All that remains at the site of Kelly Field is a small concrete patch and gravel circle.

Valley Wells and Rosalie

In the late 1860's, copper deposits were discovered on the south side of Clark Mountain. Known as the Copper World Mine, the deposits were quite rich; however, as is often the case with desert mines, transportation costs made development of the copper deposits impractical. It wasn't until thirty years later, when the California Eastern

Railroad reached Manvel (later called Barnwell), that interest was renewed in the Copper World deposits. In 1898 the Ivanpah Smelting Company, based in Los Angeles, drilled two wells about five miles west of the mine at a site, according to Casebier, "known variously as Valley Wells or Rosalie Wells (or simply Rosalie). (Casebier 1987) In April of the following year the post office from the old mining camp of Ivanpah (the Ivanpah located on the north east side of Clark Mountain, referred to above) was moved to Rosalie.

A furnace was constructed near the Copper World, and twenty-mule teams hauled 20 tons of copper bullion to the California Eastern Railroad at Manvel every four days. This form of transportation was expensive, however, and it wasn't long before the owners of the Ivanpah Smelting Company petitioned the board of the California Eastern for an extension of the line into Ivanpah Valley. Litigation closed the mine in 1900. It reopened shortly after the railroad reached its terminus in the middle of Ivanpah Valley (only 15 miles from the mine), but the high loss of copper in smelting operation forced its closure again.

In 1906, Dr. L.D. Godshall acquired the Copper World, and organized the Cocopah Mining Company. Godshall also owned and operated the smelter in Needles; he shipped his ore to Ivanpah II (the new town that sprang up at the end of the California Eastern's tracks) where it was loaded onto railcars bound for the Santa Fe railroad at Goffs and on to Needles. Godshall operated the Cocopah Mining Company until 1908.

In May 1916, the Cocopah Mining Company, now reorganized as the Ivanpah Mining Company, resumed operations. A 100 ton-capacity blast furnace was erected in November 1917, and a tractor hauled ore to the furnace at the rate of about 100 tons per day. Slag from the earlier, less efficient furnace was also re-processed. The

copper produced by the 100-ton furnace was then shipped to Cima (the California Eastern having abandoned its line to Ivanpah) where it was loaded onto trains bound for Garfield, Utah, for further smelting. In 1918, with the end of World War I, the price of copper fell and operations at the Copper World ceased once again.

Yates Ranch

1894 saw some pretty dry conditions for ranchers in the Walker Basin region of Kern County. Reports of good grazing 90 miles to the east in the Clark Mountain area prompted several families to attempt to drive their cattle east in the spring of '94. Unfortunately the going was much rougher than expected, and by the time the Clark Mountain area was reached, only one young man and 27 head of cattle remained. That young man was Sidney E. Yates. Yates was born in Kern County, California in 1876. He acquired his nickname, "Boots," because as a lad he often wore hand-me-down cowboy boots. He was only 17 years old when he made the drive from Walker Basin to the East Mojave; he arrived in Shadow Valley just as he turned 18.

Yates worked hard and slowly his herd grew. He worked as foreman for the Rock Springs Land and Cattle Company, and used his income to invest in his own outfit. He developed any and all potential water sites he could; even the smallest seep was dug out if it could sustain just one cow. He lived with his cattle, tending to them as a shepherd does his sheep. In 1909, at the age of 33, he married Bessie Parker. The two had met at Mescal Spring.

Bessie Parker was the daughter of Martin and Annie Parker of Chinle, Arizona Territory. Bessie moved to Cima after her father, a deputy sheriff, was killed in the line of duty in Sanders, Arizona. (Casebier 1987) Boots and Bessie devoted their lives to

their ranch; Bessie was “cowboy, cook, seamstress, bookkeeper, nurse, veterinarian, mechanic, and all-around helpmate for her husband.” (Casebier 1987). Bessie and Boots had two daughters—Bessie Leona (born April 11, 1911) and Sarah Ellen (born September 2, 1918). Both were born in Los Angeles, as Boots insisted that Bessie give birth in a proper hospital.

In 1918, Boots started his nephew, L.E. “Boy” Williams, in the cattle business by giving him a small herd of 150 heifers, free range, and a fifty-dollar per month salary in exchange for a promise to remain on the range for three years. The Yates Ranch continued to prosper despite a debilitating injury Boots Yates suffered in about 1908. While roping a steer at Valley Wells, his horse fell on him, causing a severe injury to Boots’ heart. He was treated a number of times in Los Angeles, but finally succumbed to his injury on October 31, 1923. He was buried at the cemetery on the ranch, which is one of the stops on our Vituscan Trip.

Bessie Yates continued to operate the ranch after Boots’ passing. A severe drought struck the region in the late 1920’s, and was particularly bad in 1928. The ranches of the East Mojave lost hundreds of head of cattle to the lack of forage and water. Those cattle that survived were noticeably stunted. The drought brought an end to the Rock Springs Land and Cattle Company. Bessie Yates and Boy Williams bought the northern portion of that company’s range as far south as the ridge of the mountains south of Cima.

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 required that ranchers fence their range and pay the federal government for forage consumed by each animal grazing on public lands. In order to simplify their operations, the Yates and Williams Company was dissolved in 1937. This resulted in the Kessler Springs Ranch for Williams and the Valley View

Ranch for Yates. (Mojave National Preserve 2004) Bessie operated the Valley View until she sold it to Fred Twisselman in 1940.

Mountain Pass

The Mountain Pass deposit was discovered by a uranium prospector in 1949, who noticed the anomalously high radioactivity. The Molybdenum Corporation of America bought the mining claims, and small-scale production began in 1952. Production expanded greatly in the 1960s to supply demand for europium used in color television screens. The deposit was mined on a larger scale between 1965 and 1995. During this time the mine supplied most of the world's rare earth metals needs. The Molybdenum Corporation of America changed its name to Molycorp Inc. in 1974. The corporation was acquired by Union Oil in 1977, which in turn became part of Chevron Corporation in 2005. The mine closed in 2002, in response to both environmental restrictions and lower prices for rare earth elements. The mine largely inactive beginning in 2002, though processing of previously mined ore continued at the site. In 2008, Chevron sold the mine to privately held Molycorp Minerals LLC, a company formed to revive the Mountain Pass mine (Molycorps 2013).

The mine, once the world's dominant producer of rare earth elements, was closed in large part due to competition from rare earth elements (REEs) imported from China, which in 2009 supplied more than 96% of the world's REEs. Since 2007 China has restricted exports of REEs and imposed export tariffs, both to conserve resources and to give preference to Chinese manufacturers. Some outside China became concerned that because rare earths are essential to some high-tech, renewable-energy, and defense-related technologies, the world should not be reliant on a single source. On

September 22, 2010 China quietly enacted a ban on exports of rare earths to Japan, a move suspected to be in retaliation for the Japanese arrest of a Chinese trawler captain in a territorial dispute. Because Japan and China are the only current sources for rare earth magnetic material used in the United States, a permanent disruption of Chinese rare earth supply to Japan would leave China as the sole source. Jeff Green, a rare earth lobbyist, said, "We are going to be 100 percent reliant on the Chinese to make the components for the defense supply chain." (Molycorps 2013) On September 23, 2010, the House Committee on Science and Technology scheduled a review of a detailed bill to subsidize the revival of the American rare earths industry, including the reopening of the Mountain Pass mine. Molycorp initially planned to invest \$500 million to reopen and expand the mine. The money was raised through an initial public offering of stock in Molycorp Inc. Mining began again in December of 2010. Construction of the first phase of the mine's upgrade and expansion, called Project Phoenix, began in January of 2011. Molycorps boasts that the new facility will supply high-volume, environmentally superior rare earth elements well into the future.

Mescal and Nantan

Just to the south of Mountain Pass and across Interstate 15 is the site of Mescal and Nantan. The Cambria Mine, discovered in 1879, led to the growth of this camp. By 1880 the Cambria was in production, and, although the site of the mine and camp was somewhat forbidding, it began to attract attention. In 1882, William McFarlane of Ivanpah bought the Cambria, and production soon began to increase significantly. By early 1885, McFarlane and his partner, Simes Barrett, had a crew working full time at the mine. Others, including miners and lumbermen, were drawn to the camp—many came from the Providence Mine, where work had recently been suspended. McFarlane and Barrett freighted the ore from the Cambria Mine to McFarlane's mill at Ivanpah. The first shipment yielded \$100.00 per ton in gold and silver. By June 1885, the mill poured its first two bars of bullion, worth \$2000.00. (Casebier 1987)

In early 1886, McFarlane sold the Cambria to a Los Angeles firm, but he and Barrett stayed on as supervisors. The Los Angeles firm had more capital to invest in the mine than McFarlane did, and as a result production soared. McFarlane and Barrett had ten men working full time at the Cambria, drove a second tunnel, and installed a 5-stamp mill at Mescal Spring. This greatly increased the efficiency of the operation, as it was no longer necessary to freight the ore all the way to Ivanpah, several miles to the northeast. By December, 1886, the mill poured four bars of bullion weighing in at 5000 ounces. (Casebier 1987)

The Calico Print reported very positively of the Cambria, declaring the mill “a thoroughly substantial one in all its parts.” (Casebier 1987). The Print also commented that the mine owners looked to the comfort of their men. Wages were good at \$3.50 per

day; room and board cost \$8.00 per week. Several of the men had their families in the camp in well built adobe cabins.

It was in 1887 that production at the Cambria reached its peak. By January of that year, the mill was producing 15,000 ounces of bullion. It became necessary to add a second 5-stamp mill. A post office with the name "Nantan" was established in March, and a stage ran once a week to the Santa Fe Railroad stop at Fenner. However, as is usually the case with desert mines, the good times were not to last. By 1888 the price of silver was falling. In 1889 it had dropped to only 94 cents per ounce. Coupled with the fall in silver prices was the decline in the quality of the ore being mined from the Cambria. Worth \$100 per ton in 1887, by 1889 Cambria ore was worth only \$20 per ton. By 1890 only twelve people were left at Mescal; the post office closed in December.

J. Riley Bembry

In addition to its stark geography, sweeping vistas, and rich history, the Mojave Desert has a long list of personalities to its credit. Folks like Seldom Seen Slim, Ma Preston, Charles Brown, and Shorty Harris typify the independent spirit of the desert dweller who gave up the rush of the urbanite to enjoy a simpler life. Somewhere near the top of the list the name J. Riley Bembry is sure to be found. An Army medic during World War I, Bembry, who went by Riley rather than his first name (John) because he found it more distinctive, owned a meat market in Los Angeles before coming to the desert. In the late 1920's a friend told him about the East Mojave, and that there might be prospecting opportunities out around Marl Springs. Bembry and some of his friends headed to the desert, where Bembry caught the bug. He fell in love with the desert and

returned whenever he could. During the 1930's and 40's Riley came often to the East Mojave, and eventually became a permanent resident.

In 1934, Bembry and other World War I veterans, many of whom had settled near his camp, erected a white cross at Sunrise Rock near Kessler Springs. The cross, made of white-painted iron pipe, bore a plaque that read "The cross, Erected in Memory of the Dead of All Wars. Erected 1934 by Members of Veterans of Foreign Wars, Death Valley Post 2884." Bembry was the caretaker of the cross until 1983, when failing health forced him to hand the task over to his friend, Henry Sandoz, whom he met in 1964. In 1994, with the establishment of the East Mojave National Preserve, the cross became the focus of national attention when the ACLU sued to have the cross removed, arguing that it violated the Establishment Clause. The ACLU claimed the first victory in the fight, but not the last. In 2012 a U.S. District Judge signed an agreement by which Sandoz would swap five acres of desert land he owned for the one acre on which the cross stood. Then, that acre would be turned over to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In 1947 Riley took a job as a welder for the Titanium Metals Company of Henderson, Nevada. In that year, he also married. Thirteen years later he divorced his wife, and upon his retirement moved to his camp on the west side of the Ivanpah Mountains permanently. (Casebier 1987) Bembry's cabin featured a propane powered refrigerator, a complete assay office, a beautiful view of Shadow Valley, and a "picture window" from a 1920's Studebaker. (Steinberk 2012) His skills as a butcher made him very popular during deer season, and training in explosives he received in the army became very important in his prospecting work. He became somewhat of an institution in this part of the desert.

There was, however, a fly in the ointment. Although Bemby had proved up on many claims in the desert, the site of his camp did not belong to him. It was, in fact, part of the public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Bemby was forced into an agreement with the BLM that allowed him to stay at his camp for the remainder of his life, but upon his death the property would revert to the BLM. In 1984, Riley, feeling ill, asked a neighbor to drive him to his daughter's house in Norwalk, where he passed away. His daughter brought his ashes to the camp, where over 100 people said their last goodbyes to a desert legend.

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