



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

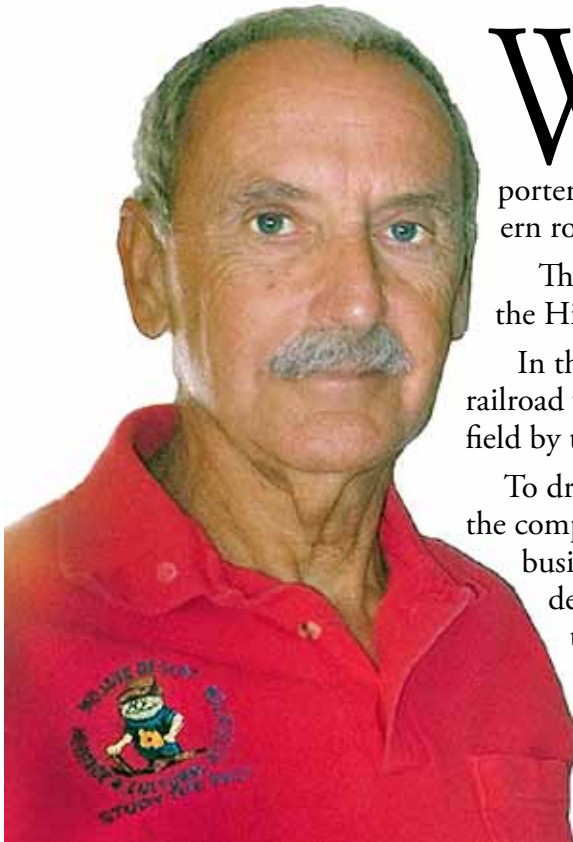
P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Vol. 26 No. 7

September 2011

To see our schedule of events, visit us on Facebook at [hsumd](#)

Learn About Early Traveler Along Transcontinental Railroad Route



John Marnell

We will resume our lecture series at our September meeting with a return engagement by John Marnell. John last spoke to us two years ago about Lou Westcott Beck and his dog Rufus, the good Samaritans of Death Valley. This month, he will tell us about reporter Alfred Calhoun and his travels with the surveying party for the southern route of the transcontinental railroad.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 20, starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.

In the post-Civil War period the need for more than one transcontinental railroad was recognized; the result was that an extensive survey was put into the field by the Union Pacific Railroad, Eastern Division.

To drum up support among the politicians as well as the general public, the company began its railroad survey began with a lavish excursion, inviting business giants, senators, and of course magazine and newspaper correspondents. Alfred R. Calhoun was among the latter group, and unlike any of the other reporters, he remained with the survey all the way to California, sending letters back to Philadelphia which were published in *The Press* of that city.

The book Marnell will present contains 14 of those nearly 70 letters and details Calhoun's journey across the western portion of Arizona Territory and through the desert area of Southern California. Those letters, turned to newspaper articles, are the foundation of the book.

Field Trip to Darwin Area

September 24 Field Trip — I'm planning a trip to the Darwin area, touring the mining areas and not the town itself.

We'll explore some old roads and mining areas that we've not visited before.

You'll need high clearance and good tires; 4-wheel drive not necessary for most of the roads. A couple of optional areas will need 4-wheel drive, but this will be at the end.

Bring the usual stuff and include layering clothing as the late September weather can be most anything. Bring lots of water and lunch and especially a camera. Meet at 7:45 a.m. at the History Center (Historic USO Building). We'll leave at 8 a.m. Please RSVP to Jim Kenney at 760-371-2458.

— Jim Kenney

As a very young man, not yet 24, Calhoun wrote articles that provided a vivid depth of information for his readers. For us they furnish a first-hand resource to the people and places he writes about.

Marnell's PowerPoint presentation will give visual support to Calhoun's story as well as providing an account of how his time with this survey almost came to an end before it began.

Our speaker is retired and pursu-

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President's Message —



Doug Lueck

We're in 'Full Swing' for Fall

Welcome back from your summer activities — we have a busy fall season ahead!

Be sure to mark Oct. 15 on your calendar. That night our own Historic USO Building will return to the era of when the Naval Ordnance Test Station was born. Community favorite Big Band XPress will play in our building — a great venue for a “Welcome Flyboys” ’40s Dance in honor of the Centennial of Naval Aviation, which will also be celebrated by other events that weekend.

Wear 1940s garb and come prepared to swing the night away! A dance lesson will be held at 7 p.m. followed by the dance at 8 p.m.

We have signed up for a booth at the Desert Empire Fair, Oct. 20-23, so be sure to come on out and support our own Mike Leming, a member of the HSUMD board, as he coordinates his first big community fair! See the article by Mike on p. 4 for more about what he is doing to bring our town's history alive for fairgoers.

We need your “stuff” for two different fund-raising events — first our own fund-raising yard sale on Sept. 30-Oct. 1 (see below). Then on Nov. 4 we will be part of the big Friends of the Fair community yard sale, so you have two different occasions for making more room in your house and/or garage and being glad you did!

Finally, we hope you will participate in our programs and field trips. Jim Kenney has lined up some great events in both categories! — *Doug Lueck*

Yard Sale Rescheduled — Please Bring Us Your Stuff!

We didn't get the response we hoped for when we first tried scheduling a fundraising yard sale, so with cooler weather, we're trying again.

The sale is designed to benefit all our activities, including the new Veterans Memorial Building now being renovated at our History Center. Please help us make the sale a big success by shopping for gently used treasures at the Historic USO Building 7:30 a.m.–2 p.m. Sept. 30–Oct. 1.

But first we need goodies from you! Please bring your donations — books, household items, works of art, appliances, etc. — to our building between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday–Saturday until Sept. 29.

Genealogical Committee News

After a summer off, the Genealogical Committee of HSUMD will meet on Tuesday evening, Sept. 13, starting at 7 p.m. In addition to the standing invitation to all regular members of the Committee, we will also reach out to invite the other citizens of the Indian Wells Valley.

The meeting will focus on a discussion regarding (a) the existence of possible interest in having a “beginning genealogy” class (or series of classes), (b) the breadth of any such interest, and (c) the “starting point” for such a class (i.e., really novice beginners with no computer background, or relatively new genealogists with some computer background).

As a reminder, many former members of the Genealogical Society of IWV have not come forth to pay their dues and become members of the HSUMD. Please do so as soon as you get a chance. And if you know of someone who is a friend and is becoming interested in such studies and issues, please let them know of our group.

We are always looking for new faces and experiences that will help enrich the rest of us, and perhaps help all of us in our genealogical endeavors. — *Tex Hoppus*

We hope you all had a wonderful summer, and look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, Sept. 13! If you missed the Tuesday, Sept. 13, meeting or are just now reading about the meeting, please call Carol Porter, 760-446-3400 if you have an interest in beginning or continuing your genealogy research.

— *Carol Porter*

Collections Activities and Needs

Summer rushed by and here it is September — time to jump into all our activities. Organizing our collection area is coming along quite nicely. Claudia Sound is a tireless worker and has all our newsletters organized and in binders. She has completed the same task for the minutes to all our board meetings.

The Woodmans are helping with the periodicals. Mary Kus continues to keep our research files in order — thank you, thank you, Mary.

I could really use someone interested in labeling our maps and sorting through duplicated triplicates etc. We have road maps, topo maps, parcel maps, subdivision maps, and much more. I like to have these in an order to be useable by researchers or historians.

The most recent help in the organizing came with the help of the chief selects and their 6 or 7 hours of volunteer efforts.

I still need any volunteers willing to help organize our photo albums. The photos are in protective pages but I would like to have the albums arranged by subject.

It has been a great summer for adding items to our collection. Folks are dropping in with boxes of photos, saved articles and other items of interest. We welcome your item of local significance.

We have started to collect for the displays in the Veterans Memorial Bldg. We would like these items to be personal to local veterans — souvenirs saved by a vet, a story or letter you might like to share, the uniform that is still hanging in the back of the closet from 50 years ago Speaking of uniforms we do have a class A Army jacket from the late '50s donated by local veteran Jerry D. Wilson.

One collection I would like added to is our Burroughs High School *El Burro* yearbooks. James Monroe and Murray yearbooks are also welcome. Perhaps you would part with a year or two other than your senior yearbook. Maybe this would be a good way to get your son's or daughter's yearbooks out of your house, since the books never seem to move out of your house not matter how long ago your offspring graduated.

As your collections director, I have a suggestion on determining what we might like to have in our collections and what you might think you should toss.

You may think the photo of your new car parked out in



Shown at our Veterans Memorial Building where they put some great work on Aug. 29 are AMC(SEL) Jason Harmon, EODC(SEL) Geoff Hurley, AOC(SEL) David Connolly, AOC(SEL) Amy Miller, AEC(SEL) Chad Sheltenberger, AMC Carl Stacy, ADC Brett Lewis, and AMEC Andrew Allaire. Also participating in the event, but not shown, were ACC(SEL) Allen Downing and ADC Royce Merquist. The chief-selects will be pinned as full chiefs on Sept. 16. Lewis, a chief at VX-9, coordinated public-service opportunities for the chief selects who chose to give back to the community as part of their training process. The group not only stripped the roof, removed nails from interior and exterior boards, cleaned out sheet-rock debris, and drilled support holes into the foundation for the building, as well as helping organize collections, as mentioned in Carol's article. To add to the goodwill the chief-selects spread around in Ridgecrest, they also helped out at the Maturango Museum and worked on cleaning Downs Street medians. *Photo by Bill Nevins*

front of your house in 1968 is of no interest — but there it was in a new neighborhood. Houses were still under construction across the street, and from a historical perspective, the picture is priceless. The hike you took with the Cub Scouts or visitors to our local sites — that is history to me. It is nice to have a photo of President Kennedy's visit in 1963, but almost everyone saves such famous moments, and we have many mementos of them, in fact, too many in some cases.

Keep in mind that we are building a history of our area for the future. We all marvel at the changes to Bentham Corners and the old Fox water tank, but in a few years folks are going to do the same thing when they look at

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Early Traveler

From p. 1

ing his interests in history, particularly in Arizona and Southern California in the era of western expansion and exploration.

Marnell is past president of the Mohave Historical Society of the Victor Valley and a 23-year member of the Mojave Desert Heritage & Cultural Association, publishers of *The Letters of Alfred R. Calhoun*,

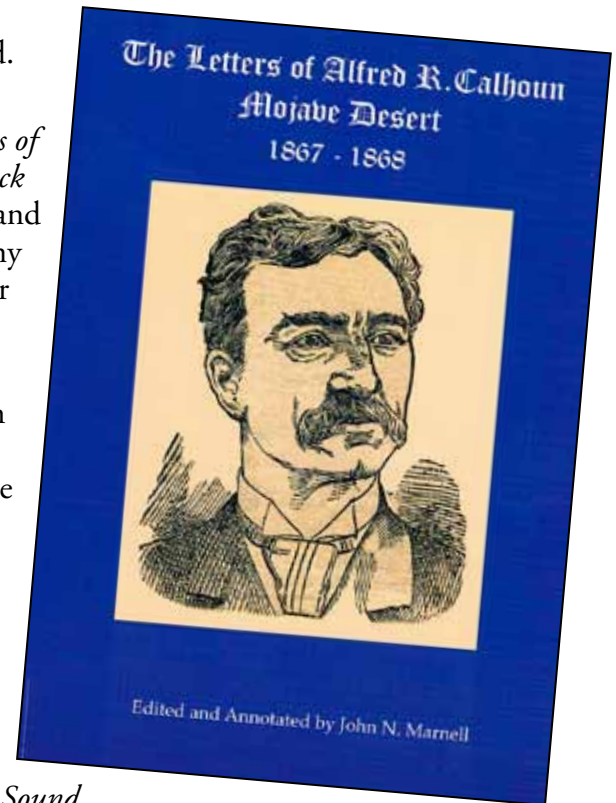
You may have noticed the unusual spelling of the “Mohahve” Historical Society of the Victor Valley. According to the society’s website, the group “chose the spelling ‘Mohahve’ from the journal of the noted military leader and explorer John C. Frémont who explored this area during 1843—1844.”

which he edited and annotated.

Marnell and his wife Barbara co-wrote *Good Samaritans of Death Valley* — Lou Wescott Beck and Rufus, published in 2005 and purchased and enjoyed by many of us during the couple’s earlier appearance here.

The Marnells make their home in Hesperia and through several trips each year enjoy discovering the history and lore of Baja California.

HSUMD normally meets on the third Tuesday of the month. Meetings are free and all are welcome to attend. For more information on this or future meetings, call us at 760-375-8456. — Andrew Sound



Collections

From p. 3

the pictures of vacant land on China Lake Boulevard and the business park with two big hotels and bare land all around.

The same goes for those old phone books you have saved for years, I would love to see some from NOTS/NWC when so many people lived on base.

It is great to have Alan Alpers adding and expanding the items from the past in our showcases and on the wall displays. Visitors are spending quite a bit of time reminiscing as they look over these memories from their past.

Several visitors have made return trips to bring friends and family members by for a second look. Great job, Alan.

— Carol Porter

Carnival Lights, Country Nights — and History

I got involved with the Historical Society because I love learning about and promoting local history — and now that I’m the CEO of the Desert Empire Fair, I’d like to share that love with as many fairgoers as possible.

The theme of our upcoming Desert Empire Fair, “Carnival Lights and Country Nights,” lends itself well to my goal of exposing a whole new group of people — especially young people — to the fascinating past of the Indian Wells Valley.

For that reason, I’m inviting local nonprofits involved with our history — the Maturango Museum, the China Lake Museum Foundation, the Rand Desert Museum, the Searles Valley Historical Society, and of course HSUMD — to display our history in free 10 x 10 booths at Sage Hall during the run of the fair, Oct. 20-23.

Each booth can be either a static display or staffed by someone. I do hope you visit this year’s fair — and in the meantime share your ideas about what should be in those displays. I envision a wide variety of photographs and other memorabilia, even old farm equipment.

Come to the fair!

— Mike Leming

WEDNESDAY-NIGHT MOVIES!

The final two movies in the Sci-Fi Summer Series are scheduled for Sept. 14, 1951's "The Thing from Another World," and finally Sept. 28, 1956's "Godzilla." You'll enjoy seeing these science fiction classics in the company of your friends and neighbors!

Based on the enthusiastic response and loyal following, we are announcing a five-movie run of Westerns, starting on Oct. 12 with 1960's "The Magnificent Seven." It's a great hump-day, campy diversion.

Our showings are on Wednesdays, with the doors to the Historic USO Building opening at 7 p.m. and cartoon and movie starting at 7:20 p.m. Movies are free, with donations gratefully accepted. Popcorn and other refreshments are available.

— Alan Alpers



"Magnificent Seven" poster in Japanese gives a hint of how popular this 1960 film has been worldwide.

— Alan Alpers

In Our Gift Shop

The HSUMD Gift Shop continues add new items to our gift inventory. Please stop by and see us any Monday through Saturday between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Among our new items this month are two new books available from Arcadia Publishing: *The Railroads of Death Valley* and *Edwards A.F.B. a History of Aviation*.

We now have a Robber's Roost T-shirt featuring Tiburcio Vasquez. For the hat collectors — how about a nostalgic Harvey Field NOTS Inyokern ball cap just in time for the Centennial of Naval Aviation?

We have also added more jewelry, more photos, and new food items to our gift stash.

Don't forget the can't-go-wrong gift everyone craves, See's Candies.

Our Business Members — *please patronize them!*

Welcome to our newest business members — Earth Landscaping, Red Rock Books, and S&M Coins & Collectibles. Special thanks to Earth, which does our landscaping gratis, and to Red Rock Books, which handles our tickets free of charge. That's the sort of community spirit that keeps Ridgecrest alive!

Allen County Public Library,
Genealogy Department
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor
Best Western China Lake Inn
BevLen Haus – Bed & Breakfast
Cal-Sun Pools
Carriage Inn
Comfort Inn
Cordell Construction
DeathValley.com
Earth Landscaping
Econo-Lodge

The Flower Shoppe
Heritage Inn
High Sierra Auto & Truck Repair
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney
Hockett's Building Supply
I WV Insurance
Jacobs Technology Inc. Naval
Systems Group
JRP Historical Consulting, LLC
Dick Lewis Domestic Water Systems
The Library Press
Jack & Dana Lyons, Realtors

Maturango Museum
Netzer-Russell Consulting, LLC
Nevins Tech. Consultants
The News Review (Farris)
Red Rock Books
Ridgecrest Moving & Storage
S&M Coins & Collectibles
Sierra Odyssey, LLC
Sierra Wave Tank Sales
Southern Sierra Medical Clinic
Gary P. Staab & Assoc., Inc.
The Swap Sheet

In Memory of Some HSUMD Favorites

Over this summer, several people have died who made their mark on our history and especially on HSUMD and its members. Please let your memories of them fill in the gaps I've had to leave in these brief descriptions of some very rich lives. — ed.



Eunice Coffee

Eunice, who died on June 1 at the age of 94, was a well-loved member of HSUMD ever since 1974.

Eunice had a colorful history that included living in Tunawee Canyon (near Coso Junction) starting in 1950 and working as a waitress at Coso, Little Lake, Dunmavin, and Olanca until 1963, when she bought and ran taverns in Inyokern

and Ridgecrest.

Eunice was always generous about sharing her knowledge and historical artifacts with us, and she was a dedicated attendee at our meetings. She also participated in our SEEP trips to Sand Canyon.

Her family suggested donations to HSUMD as one way we could honor this gentle friend and fellow supporter of local history. We will miss her smiling face!

Al Christman

Although Al Christman not an HSUMD member, no doubt he would have been if he had lived here at the time of we formed in 1985. He had moved away about a decade earlier to become the Historian of the Navy Laboratories.

Before he left, however, Al had a profound effect on historical endeavors in our valley. It was his idea to write the history of China Lake, and he was the author of *Sailors, Scientists, and Rockets*, Vol. 1 of the China Lake series, co-author of Vol. 2, and author of *Target Hiroshima*, a book about Adm. "Deke" Parsons, one of China Lake's most important supporters.

Al was a talented photographer, capturing sights all over the Upper Mojave Desert and making them into postcards that his mother sold all along the eastern side of the Sierra. When HSUMD had an exhibit about local post offices, Al loaned us a set of his cards to display.

Who can ever forget Al and his burro Chris appearing in numerous parades, Al as a grizzled prospector and Chris as his trusty beast of burden? If you'd like to memorialize Al, his family has suggested a donation to the Maturango Museum.



Joe Morris Sr.

When Joe Morris Sr., 85, died on July 17 in Riverside, America lost one of its last remaining WWII Navajo code talkers.

Joe didn't live in Ridgecrest, but he participated in many Four Winds Pow Wows where he and his wife sold handcrafted jewelry. He is also well-remembered here

for his excellent presentation that attracted an overflow crowd to our March 2001 meeting. Joe was an American hero — more than that he was a good example of the learning experiences HSUMD programs offer.



Jenny Miller

Just as this issue was nearly ready for printing, we learned of the Sept. 8 death of Jenny Miller, 98, a charter member of HSUMD. Jenny, who moved to Everett, Washington, in 2008, lived here for 62 accomplished, adventure-filled years before that.

Not only did she raise two daughters here but she also made her mark on many nonprofit organizations in our community, including the Literacy Council (which she has served for many years as a tutor), the Maturango Museum (to which she loaned and gave numerous items for historical displays and for which she served as an interview subject on the video, *Indian Wells Valley — Somewhere on the Edge of Nowhere*), and of course the Historical Society.

Jenny served several terms on our board as the world's greatest hospitality chair. She continued to donate to our collections, and she always, always contributed fresh ideas. Who can ever forget the games she made up for us to play at each Christmas party? My personal favorite was the guessing game of "What 13 tiny items do I have in this walnut shell?"

Jenny, we will always remember your generosity and your sparkling personality! If you'd like to remember Jenny with a contribution, a donation to HSUMD is suggested by her family.

Vignettes of Area History

The late Billie Hise, an early boardmember and dedicated member of the Historical Society, wrote the following vignettes, which were first published in our March 1998 newsletter.

Did you know . . .

that Hamp Williams and Jack Nosser were co-finders of one of the world's largest producing silver mine, the California Rand Silver and later known as the Kelly Mine at Red Mountain? It was discovered in 1919.



Kelly Mine and Mill, late 1920s

*Rand Desert Museum,
randdesertmuseum.com*

Ore was sacked into burlap bags and ran from \$1.00 a bag up. Some of the better ore was worth \$100.00 a bag. How would you like to sack up desert dirt and get \$100.00 a bag for it?

Did you know . . .

that Randsburg has a lot of interesting history? In the White House Saloon there is a bar that had been made in the East and transported around the Horn. The floor of the saloon, at least in 1921, had bullet holes in it showing the results of some shootouts.

The story is told that Randsburg had such a bad reputation for violence that in Prohibition Days the sheriff used to call ahead so they could take care of the evidence so there wouldn't be a problem when the law arrived.

Did you know . . .

that you should be aware of pack rats, especially if you are storing dynamite? Back in 1932, an old timer, George Sutherlen, worked in the Minnietta Mine and stored his dynamite in his cabin. One time George was gone for a

week and when he got back, all his dynamite was gone. he searched and searched and found it where the pack rat had stashed it, under the cabin right under George's bunk. He said, "If the rat had found a dynamite cap and chewed on it, the whole cabin could have been blown to bits."

Did you know . . .

That the town of Red Mountain used to be called Osdick? It was named by an old timer by the name of Pete Osdick during the silver boom.

During the flu epidemic in 1917-18, Pete officiated at 19 burials in 10 days. At that time, he wired the governor of California to send a doctor who could sign death certificates. By the way, those attending the services wore masks to protect themselves from the bug. The masks had three holes in them, two to see through and one for a cigar in the corner of the mouth.



Pete Osdick in front of his old mill in Red Mountain

*Photo by Al Christman
Desert Photo Services postcard*

Did you know . . .

that in 1912, a family by the name of Robertson homesteaded land where most of Ridgecrest now stands?

John McNeil and his wife bought the land after Robertson's death and started a dairy, but then the land was sold to a man by the name of Crum and a town grew and was known as "Crumville." We might still be part of Crumville had not the citizens decided that they didn't want to tell people they lived in Crumville. A Mrs. Ada Thompson suggested "Ridgecrest" and the Post Office Department accepted that.

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**Here's an easy
way to see this
newsletter in color!**

Just send an e-mail to our newsletter editor, Liz Babcock, lizbab@iwvisp.com, and ask her to put you on the list to get a PDF copy e-mailed to you each month.

We don't intend to stop sending paper copies, since we know most of you prefer that, but we thought you might also like to see the color version online.

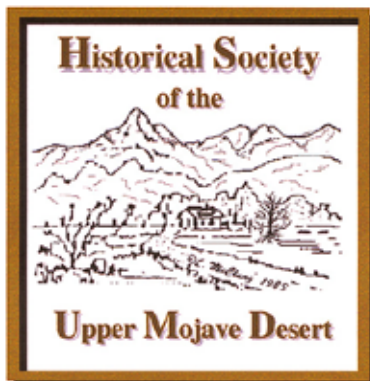
Important Reminders

- ★ Annual dues are \$20 per family for the calendar year.
- ★ Business Member dues are \$30 for the calendar year.
- ★ Please remember the Historical Society in your wills, trusts and other gift giving. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Historical Society of the
Upper Mojave Desert
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MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2011

Tuesday, September 20, 2011, 7:30 p.m., Historic USO Building