



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. • P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556 • 760-375-8456

Vol. 33, No. 9

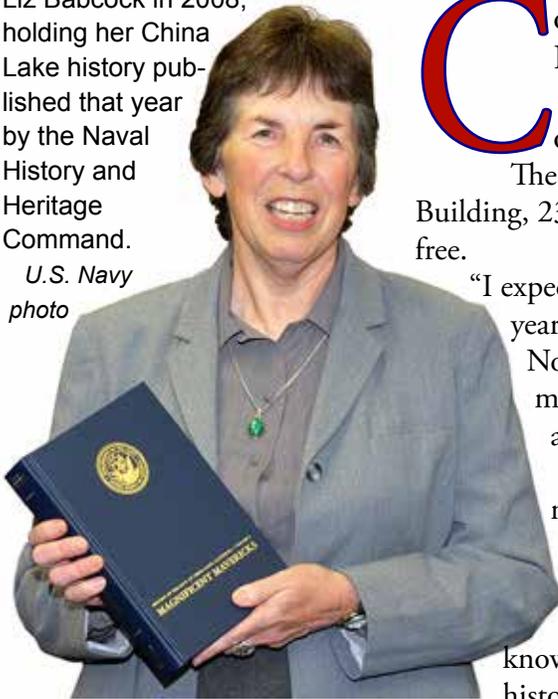
November 2018

To see our schedule of events, visit us at hsumd.org or on Facebook at [hsumd](https://www.facebook.com/hsumd)

Fond Memories of China Lake

Liz Babcock in 2008, holding her China Lake history published that year by the Naval History and Heritage Command.

U.S. Navy photo



Come to our November meeting to share “Fond Memories of Work and Play at Old China Lake,” an illustrated presentation by Liz Babcock in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Navy’s presence in our valley.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 20, at the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. As always, the public is invited, and admission is free.

“I expect that most of my audience will have already participated in many of this year’s anniversary events,” said Liz. “At the time I volunteered to give the November program, some commemorations had already taken place — months before the actual anniversary — and I wanted to make sure that the actual establishment date — Nov. 8, 1943 — would be celebrated.

“Happily, our valley will have a full schedule of events on the weekend nearest to Nov. 8, but I hope people will still have an appetite on Nov. 20 for reminiscences about some of the special, fun people and events of China Lake’s early days.”

Liz, who is known to most of you as our newsletter editor, is also well-known locally as the author of *Magnificent Mavericks*, Vol. 3 of China Lake’s history series; the editor and designer of *Tales of the Upper Mojave Desert and the Eastern Sierras* by John Di Pol; and author, editor and/or designer of numerous other books, most of them available in the HSUMD Gift Shop.

In the course of writing and researching China Lake’s history, she participated in nearly 100 oral-history interviews, and as she listened to her interview subjects, she developed an ever-increasing appreciation for the many fascinating people who have made China Lake so memorable.

She left civil service in 1996 after a 24-year career in technical communication. She then worked several places in Ridgecrest, retiring a couple of years ago from more than a decade as the history curator for the Maturango Museum. Today she devotes several hours a week to copy editing the *News Review*.

“My presentation is a light-hearted, nontechnical look at the China Lakers, focusing on tales that have taken root there during the past 75 years. I’m hoping that what I have to say will inspire others to recount fond memories of their own,” said Liz. “I also hope the pictures I’ll show will prompt members of the audience to share stories of their own.”

The Historical Society’s program meetings are on the third Tuesday of most months. For more information on this or future meetings, call 760-375-8456.

— Andrew Sound



Two versions of the “rocket riding rabbit,” an original 1944 patch and the patch interpreted in the 75th Anniversary logo.



President's Message —

Tex Hoppus

A Happy Heartwarming Season of Thanks!



H

ere's a quick message about a special event in November at our Historic US Building. On **Saturday, Nov. 10** — the day before Veterans Day — we will host a special Veterans Lunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is free to all veterans and their spouses, just as it is when we host the Veterans Breakfast on the third Thursday of every month.

The Ridgecrest Veterans Advisory Council is bringing this special lunch to our historic building, and the RidgeProject team is preparing the lunch. If you are a veteran, come join us!

Now please allow me to reflect on November's Thanksgiving sentiment. I am always profoundly thankful for my wife, my children and their families, my extensive collection of dear friends, my opportunities to serve my community and my country. But I have a deep and specific appreciation for what HSUMD has brought into my life.

Walking into our Historic USO Building and seeing our volunteers — all good friends now — laughing and talking and kidding each other, brings a smile to my face.

Walking over to our Historic Firehouse on a Tuesday afternoon and walking into a beehive of activity by (not drones, but volunteers!) friends working to preserve and organize our growing archives of materials makes me happy and proud.

Going in early in the morning to prepare for a Veterans Breakfast, and soon seeing a large "family" of veterans and their spouses come in and thoroughly enjoy the morning is truly inspiring and heartwarming.

Open Mic Nights? There is little that is as fun and laughter-filled as an evening with musically talented people of all kinds — and the wonderful people who come to enjoy the evening — and I always leave at the end of the night with a smile on my face.

Classic Movie Nights? Watching families come to a truly entertaining piece of Americana and enjoy a couple of old cartoons, a classic movie, fresh popcorn, special culinary surprises at the snack bar — it all warms my heart.

Watching our Gift Shop crew work at ways to best serve our guests with a wide variety of items and See's Candies, and finding new items too! I feel thankful for those volunteers because I know they're thinking of their guests and not just their own time. All of our many volunteers are truly generous with their time and talents.

And I am always profoundly thankful for the people who come to our historic buildings to be educated, entertained, served, or just greeted with a smile. HSUMD is at the heart of our community and in the hearts of its citizens and exists only through the interest and generosity of those dear friends.

We have accomplished so much in our community because of the support of its people, and I am personally thankful for all of those whom I see in our midst — visiting, smiling, volunteering, remembering.

Happy Thanksgiving, dear friends!

— Tex Hoppus

HSUMD'S Open Mic Night is the place to be for great music and ambiance every non-flex Friday. Admission is a mere \$2 per adult. Children younger than 12 are free. Beers and wines are available along with the usual candies, sodas, popcorn, and Jumbo Crumville hot dogs. The entertainment starts at 7 sharp.

Report on Collections & Accessions

As usual, your collection volunteers are busy doing our sorting, filing, scanning thing. I am so lucky to have these folks helping with these tasks.

A few others are keeping an eye out for items to add to our collections – Liz Babcock for one. Liz found a publication on eBay that features early Death Valley, notably the Mine, in words and pictures (see Page 5 for a glimpse). I might add this is not the first time Liz has done this. Thank you for keeping an eye out.

Dee Di Pol and Claudia Sound are going to sort through our hat collection donated by the Armstrong family, to choose those we



Carol Porter (left) and Pat Hildreth St. Clair show off one of the Burroughs High School Class of 1958 display boards created by Rita Peterson and donated to HSUMD. Pat said she felt strange about appearing in the photo, since she was not a member of that class. However, her name is a famous one around here, with both her dad and her husband well-known local automotive entrepreneurs. Members of the Class of '58 loved their get-together in our building so much that they bought a large brick and made an additional donation as well (as evidenced by the receipts our "poster girls" are holding).

Photo by Liz

will put on display in our ladies' dressing area. I think that will be a nice addition to the area.

Rita Allen Peterson donated the display boards she prepared for the 1958 class reunion. They will be a nice addition to our other BHS display boards. Liz of course was quick to come down to photograph the event for us.

A nice side event was meeting Pat Hildreth St Clair, daughter of the Hildreth Motor family. Lots of talk about her growing up in Ridgecrest. Pat was delivering the boards for Rita.

We are busy getting new additions ready to display in the Veterans Memorial Building for Veterans Day. Be sure to come by for a look and maybe have a bite to eat with our veterans.

I decided that each month I would give you all a look at our volunteers at work. This month, meet Greg Boske in our file room.

— Carol Porter



Greg Boske

Photo by Carol

November Films — a Bounty of Movie Musical Magic!

Having just defeated the nasty Nazis in our last five-film series and endured the horrors ... and laughs ... of Frankenstein and his zany, campy bride, Classic Movie Night now settles into a happy, all-singing, all-dancing motion picture holiday series that the whole family is sure to love!

The series “Merry Musicals” premieres on Wednesday, Nov. 14, at 7 p.m. at the Historic USO Building.

Academy Award® winner, Meryl Streep leads an all-star cast, including Pierce Brosnan and Colin Firth in this 2008 musical celebration of mothers, daughters and fathers, and true loves lost and new ones found. This musical romp is based on a Broadway smash hit and filled with the ABBA songs you know and love. And, it inspired a 2018 sequel that just finished a long theatrical run. This one will leave you singing and dancing in your heart... all through the holidays!

The emphasis is on incredible athletic dancing in the joyous 1954 frontier musical that screens on Wednesday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m. Set in Oregon in 1850, the film starts when Adam (Howard Keel), the eldest of seven brothers, goes to town to get a wife, and convinces Milly (Jane Powell) to marry him.

They return to his backwoods home and ... his six unruly brothers are all living in his cabin and wanting wives of their own!

The film is noted for Michael Kidd’s unusual choreography, which makes dance numbers out of such mundane frontier pursuits as chopping wood and raising a barn. (Be sure to ask our own Carol Porter what her connection is to



Meryl Streep in Greece, 2008

Creative Commons



*Howard Keel and Jane Powell with their dancing brothers
Theater card (altered to obscure the title)*

this film!)

It will definitely raise your spirits as we head into December with two more “Merry Musicals” scheduled for December 12 and 26.

For film titles, call 760-375-8456 or stop in for a new film schedule.

Films screen on flex Wednesdays at 7 p.m., with our thrifty Snack Bar opening up a 6:30 to serve up all kinds of taste-tempting movie snacks!

Admission is, as always, FREE, but a much-appreciated \$2 donation will definitely put us all in the holiday spirit!

Seasonal Bounty, indeed! See you at the movies! ... for the Holidays!

— Nick Rogers

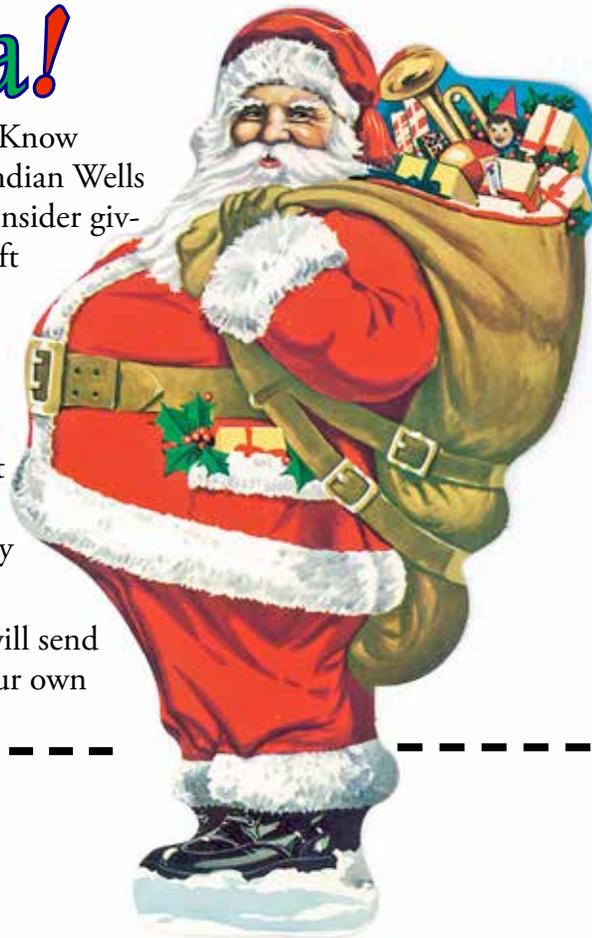
Visit the Historic USO Gift Shop for See’s delicious candy to bring to the Thanksgiving feast! All Gift Shop purchases benefit HSUMD!

Be an HSUMD Santa!

It's November — and time to start thinking about holiday gifts! Know someone out of town who'd like a monthly reminder of life in the Indian Wells Valley? Got a friend or family member who's nuts about history? Consider giving a gift of the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert. A gift membership costs a mere \$35.

Or you could order a commemorative brick in your recipient's name, giving him or her a permanent presence in Ridgecrest and helping HSUMD at the same time. Please contact Andrew Sound (information given on the last page) to learn more about how to get a brick giving your favorite recipient a presence forever on the walkway in the front of the Historic USO Building. Our sidewalk already has a gratifying number of bricks, but there's still room for more.

Whichever HSUMD gift you choose, order by Dec. 10 and we will send your recipient a card announcing the gift. Don't forget to renew your own membership!



Please enter a gift membership for:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Sign gift card as follows: _____

I enclose \$35 for each membership and \$45 for each commercial membership. (Send to address as given on back page.)

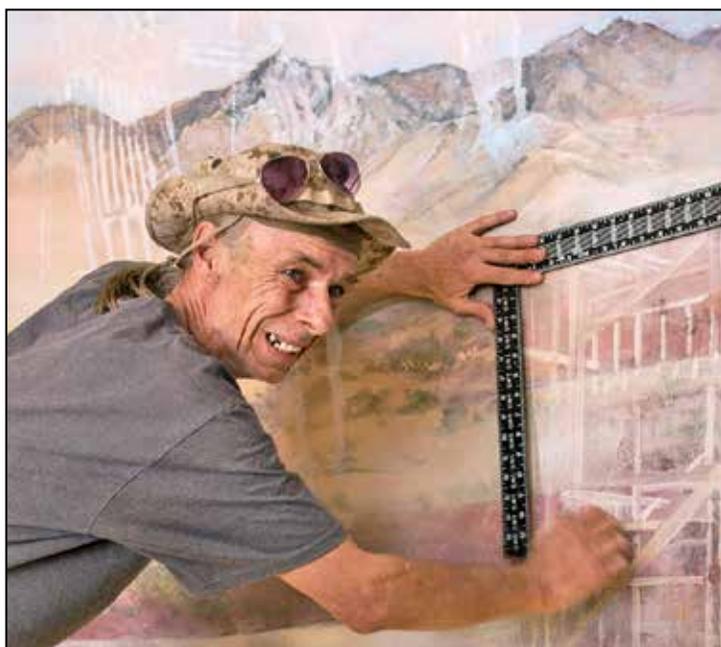


Photo by Liz

In Memory of T. Scott Sayre, 1954-2018

Scott Sayre is shown in 2014, working on restoring his treasured historical mural in the entry of the Historic USO Building.

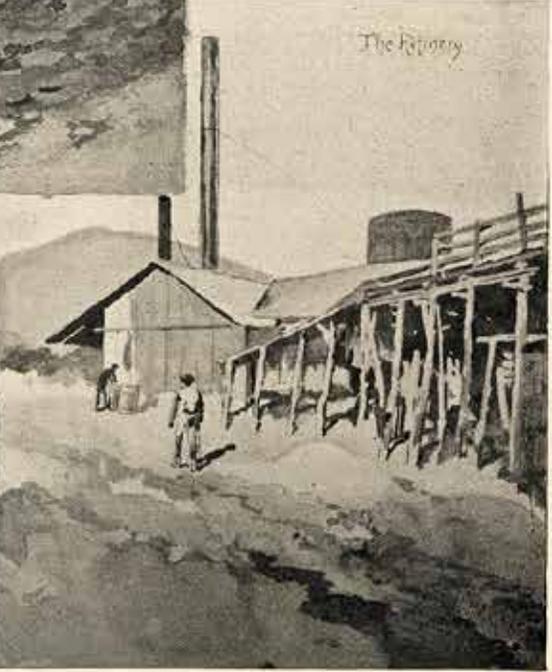
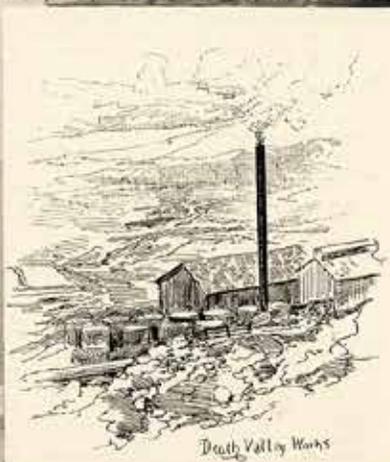
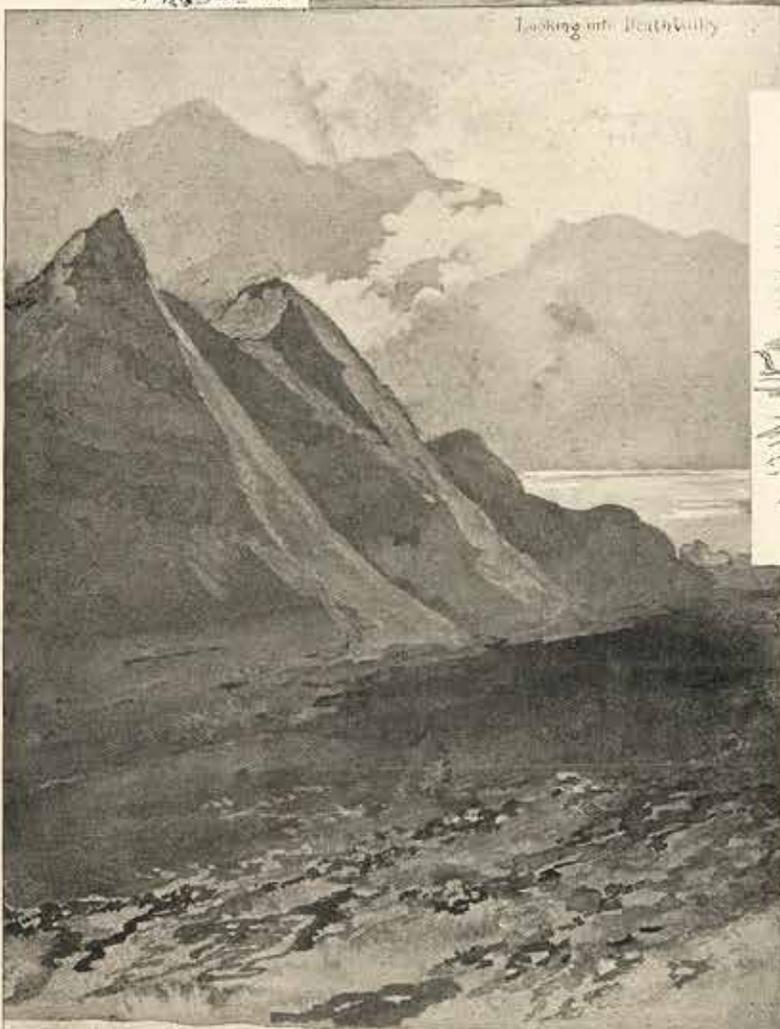
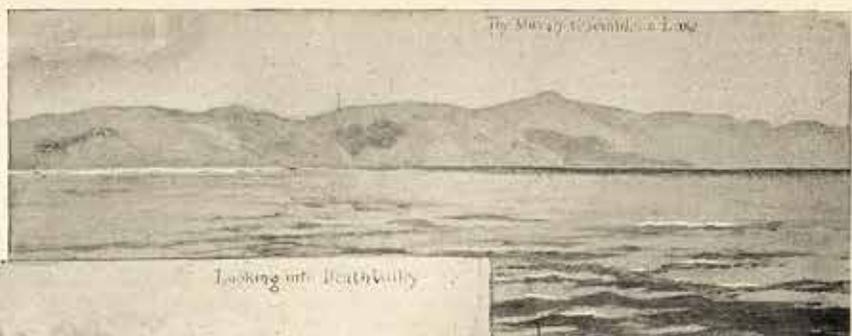
Scott's background included many years as a railroad conductor, as well as a lifetime of murals and other artistic creations, still on display all over the country. During the last years of his life, he lived in the Trona area.

While the Historic USO mural celebrates our early timers (Native American as well as Navy), the mural on the south exterior wall of Trona's Old Guest House Museum focuses on Searles Valley history — miners, the mineral plant, even the town's sandlot football field.

Other murals in businesses and residences in both communities will help keep the wonderful artist's memory alive in the High Desert. Our condolences to his family.

LESLIE'S WEEKLY.

1894 Glimpses of Death Valley



Here's a page from the July 5, 1894 issue of *Leslie's Weekly*, a popular American literary and news magazine of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Fred B. Schell, the illustrator, was best known for having done numerous engravings depicting the Civil War. Here he turns his drawing skills to Death Valley and the colemanite mining that was going on in the area.

When I acquired this page from eBay, the seller also sent me two other pages of the magazine "Colemanite Mining on the Desert" by John R. Spears. Carol Porter has the original pages and would probably show them to you on appointment.

— Liz Babcock

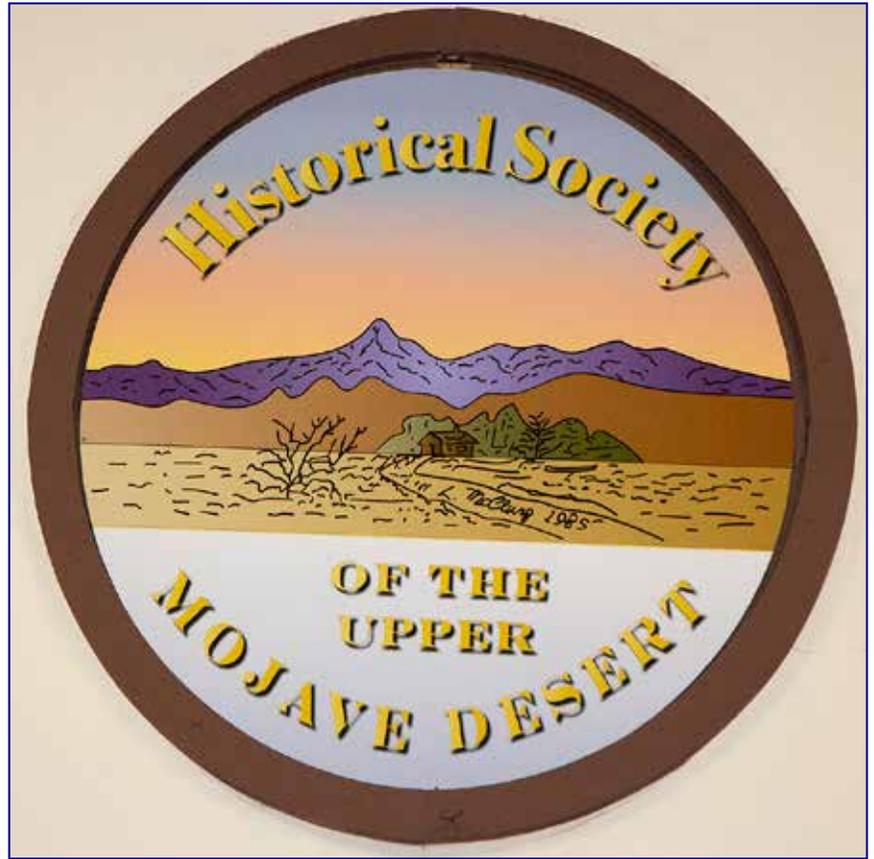
COLEMANITE MINING IN THE MOJAVE DESERT, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.—DRAWN BY FRED B. SCHELL FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND SKETCHES.—[SEE PAGE 6.]
Copyrighted by the Arctik Weekly Company.

Beautiful Cover for Our Round Window

Have you looked up recently at that large round window over the stage in the Joe Fox Auditorium? It's now covered by the beautiful version of our logo shown at right.

That round window is the largest and perhaps most prominent one in the Historic USO. Back when Kathy Armstrong was raising funds by peddling window sponsorship, the Sound family paid to sponsor that window.

After some discussion, artist Cheryl McDonald created a colorful new version of our original logo (notice how she kept Lorraine McClung's 1985 signature?) and Kem Park scaled it up, printed it, and hung it over the window. Looks great, doesn't it? — *ed.*



Member Categories

HSUMD has three membership categories — all very important to us. Our regular memberships are \$35 per individual or family. Our business memberships are \$45 each. We also have a special category: life member, which is something the board bestows only on members who have supported HSUMD in sustained and special ways. Our life members' names are displayed on our website.

New Members

Patrice Kuby
Diana Said
Carol Weins

Business & Nonprofit Members

Ale's Steakhouse and Bar
Allen County Public Library,
Genealogy Department
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor
Best Western China Lake Inn
Bob & Ardyce's Bicycle Shop
China Lake Photographic Society
Clarion Inn
Comfort Inn
Comm. Light Opera & Theatre Assoc.
Cordell Construction Co.
Desert Empire Fair
Diana Said, Vaughn Realty
Earth Landscaping
Eastern California Museum
Econo-Lodge
Edward Jones Investments –
Brook H. Andreoli

The Flower Shoppe
Heritage Inn
High Desert Genealogical Society
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney
Inyokern Chamber of Commerce
IWV Premier Landscaping
Jack & Dana Lyons, Realtors
Kern Antelope Historical Society
Kern County Historical Society
Kern River Historical Society
Maturango Museum
MOAH
Mohahave Historical Society
Mojave River Valley Museum
Motion Tire & Wheel
Needles Regional Museum
The News Review

Pleistocene Foundation
Rand Desert Museum
Red Rock Books
Ridgecrest Area Convention &
Visitors Bureau
Ridgecrest Automotive, LLC
Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce
Ridgecrest Moving & Storage
Ridgecrest Regional Hospital
Roaming Dog Kitchen
S&M Coins & Collectibles
Searles Valley Historical Society
Shoshone Museum Assoc.
Starbucks
Gary P. Staab & Assoc., Inc.
Tehachapi Historical League
Vaughn Realty
Warren's Automotive
Wrightwood Historical Society

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

Just email Liz at *lizbab@fastmail.fm* and ask to be put on the list to get a PDF copy emailed to you each month.

We don't plan to stop sending paper copies, but online is the way to go if you prefer living color. Unless you stipulate email only, we'll also continue to mail you a copy.

Important Reminders

- ★ Annual dues are \$35 (family) and \$45 (business).
- ★ Please remember the Historical Society in your wills, trusts and other gift giving. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

MEETING OF NOVEMBER 2018
Tuesday, Nov. 20, 7 p.m., Historic USO Building



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Upper Mojave Desert
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