



Pioche Walking and Driving Tour

Page 4



Winter Sports in Pioche

Page 8



Thompson's Opera House

Page 13



Who are they?

Page 15

TREASURE HILL CHRONICLES

PIOCHE THEN AND NOW

Winter, 2010

Piñon Pines of Lincoln County

By Donald Shanks

The elevations between 5,000 and 8,000 feet in Lincoln County include vast tracts of piñon and juniper forest, PJ for short. Some tree connoisseurs from more humid regions derisively call it the pigmy forest, and nearly everyone in the region takes them for granted, a weed tree to be removed or exploited. They were used by the miners to make charcoal and timbers; settlers used them for fence-posts and burned them to bring back grass; and later, huge amounts were chained, but still they claim new territory. There is an ongoing debate as to whether they are an invasive water-wasting weed, choking out everything else or are just reclaiming their former turf.

Years of fire suppression have left few natural firebreaks, so biomass projects are on the drawing boards. But native Americans certainly found many uses for them, including a very

nutritious food source, the large, tasty pine nut. There are two varieties of piñon pines in the region comprising the Great Basin and the Colorado Plateau. *Pinus monophylla*, the single leaf piñon, grows in much of the Great Basin, including Nevada in areas above about 6,000 feet, although strangely, is missing in the area north of the Truckee and Humboldt Rivers. *Pinus edulis* is the two-needled pine, with smaller pine nuts, but still highly sought after, that grows further east in the more humid summer climates of the Colorado Plateau, although a few of this variety are found in Lincoln County.

A more recent use that is gaining popularity is the harvesting of piñon pines for Christmas trees. Many families are finding that a trip into the countryside to harvest their own tree makes a great kickoff to the Christmas season. The Caliente Office of the BLM issues 5,000 tags per year that can be used anywhere on BLM



land in Lincoln County other than wilderness areas and the higher peaks that contain more valuable and scarcer ponderosa pine, bristlecone pine, white fir and Douglas fir.

Prime areas around Pioche include the Highland, Bristol and Wilson Creek Ranges, Meadow Valley Wash north of Spring Valley State Park, Highway 93, 13 to 27 miles north of town in the area known as the Cedars and the Pioche Hills (be careful, there are a lot of private mining claims in the area). It helps to have a 4-wheel-drive vehicle because the roads are often muddy or snowy in late fall, otherwise stick to paved roads.

Some harvesting tips: The BLM includes important information with the Christmas tree tags; read this carefully.

— See *TREES*, Page 12 —

BLM Tree Permits

An individual may purchase from one to five tags (trees) at \$4 each with one check or money order. They are for pinyon and juniper trees only. Over the counter tag sales at Caliente Field Station continue through December 23, 775-726-8100.

2010 Pioche Christmas Season — Events —

Nov. 30

Tree Lighting

Tree lighting: 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 30th. This marks the beginning of the Christmas season with the first lighting of the Main Street decorations and the Christmas-tree in the Uptown Park. This event includes cookies, cocoa and a visit from Santa.

Dec. 3

Pub Crawl

Pub Crawl, adults only: Friday, Dec. 3rd. Admission ticket, one Pioche shot glass. These can be purchased at the Silver Cafe, Chamber Cottage, or participating pub (bar) for \$6. This shot-glass gives you one free drink of your choice from each participating pub.

Dec. 4 and Dec. 11

Breakfast with Santa

Breakfast with Santa: Saturday, December 4th and 11th from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The Silver Cafe serves the children breakfast for a reduced price while they are joined by Santa.

Dec. 4 and 11

Cookie Crumb Trail

Cookie Crumb Trail: 11:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m., Saturday, December 4th and 11th. Local stores serve cookies and hot drinks to customers who have purchased the official Cookie-crumb Trail mug (available from the Silver Cafe or the Chamber cottage for \$5) as they leave the store after Christmas shopping. A hayride around uptown Pioche will also be part of the festivities.

Take Me Back

By Peggy Draper Hone

In the summer of 1991 I found myself unemployed and looking for a job. I was able to pick up the position of summer tour guide at the Million Dollar Courthouse which was just seasonal; however, I fell in love with the job and met lots of very interesting and wonderful people.

It was time to close one afternoon when a woman walked in. She acknowledged the fact that she knew we were closing but asked if she could please spend a few minutes in the courtroom. She wanted to see what it would have felt like for Helen J. Stewart to sit in the trial of the men who murdered her husband. I told her of course and please take her time. I wasn't in any hurry.

After about fifteen minutes she came down and introduced herself as Carrie Miller Townley. She said that she was in the process of writing a history of Helen J. Stewart and doing a little homework for the story. I was not acquainted with either name but in asking her about the story she told me to check out the library. They had it.

After she left, although it was time to go home, I went up to the large courtroom and sat very quietly for a few minutes. I wanted to feel the spirit of that old building and all that had transpired within its walls over so many past decades. I pondered the feelings of this magical place and wished I could know every story therein.

I did check out the library and was able to find Helen J. Stewart's story and came to love and cherish it. Helen and Archibald Stewart had spent some time working and living in Lincoln County and the Pioche area. They ranched out in the Fairview area and later moved into Pioche living near the Courthouse. They eventually purchased the Las Vegas Ranch and moved down there.

Helen was expecting her fifth child when Archibald was shot and killed by three men at Kiel Canyon on July 13, 1884. Conrad Kiel, Schyler Henry and Hank Parish were all three believed to be involved in the incident.

Helen was summoned to the ranch to claim her husband's body. She built his coffin out of the doors of her home as that was the only planed wood available for that purpose. It is believed that she received help with this task.

Henry and Kiel were arrested by Deputy Smith and taken to Pioche August 8, 1884. Helen arrived the next day. A grand jury was held and due to lack of evidence there was no conviction. Hank Parish was never arrested. Helen gave birth to a boy January 25, 1885.

Hank Parish received his justice after killing a man at Royal City in 1890. He was hanged for his crime. Helen always believed he was the one responsible for the killing of Archibald and carried her hatred for him throughout her life.

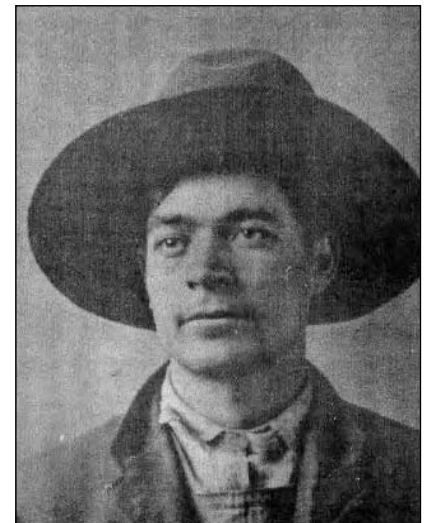
Helen ran the ranch in Las Vegas for many years to come and is known as the "First Lady of Las Vegas". She is truly a hero in my eyes and always will be.

Moving to Pioche has been an adventure and how you can do so without experiencing the treasure of taking time to journey back to those early days is not comprehensible to me. There is true magic in the trips that bring history into our space and teach us what it used to be like. Plan some time to reflect and ENJOY!

Grateful thanks to Carrie Miller Townley for her research and documentation of this wonderful story. It can be found in the Nevada Historical Society Quarterlies for winter 1973 and spring 1974.



Helen Stewart



Archibald Stewart

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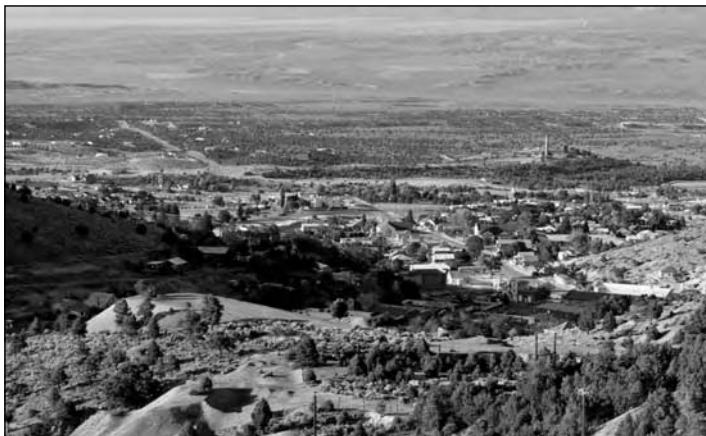
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Pioche Main Street.



Looking down on Pioche from Treasure Hill.

Welcome TO OUR TOWN

Before you set out to explore the town and its surroundings, please take a few minutes to browse through this informative little paper. You will find a tour of the uptown historic district, a brief overview of life in a boom town mining camp miles from mainstream America that is in stark contrast to the present day village. We are surrounded with what is probably our biggest asset, the natural World of the high desert of southeastern Nevada. You will find a description of our state parks, nearly endless public lands, the wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing possibilities. For those that want to stay a while, our businesses are advertising their services and for those that might be tempted to permanently join us for a more laid back lifestyle, we have included a relocation section with a listing of community services, fees, etc. Lastly, we have included a bibliography for further reading and internet browsing.

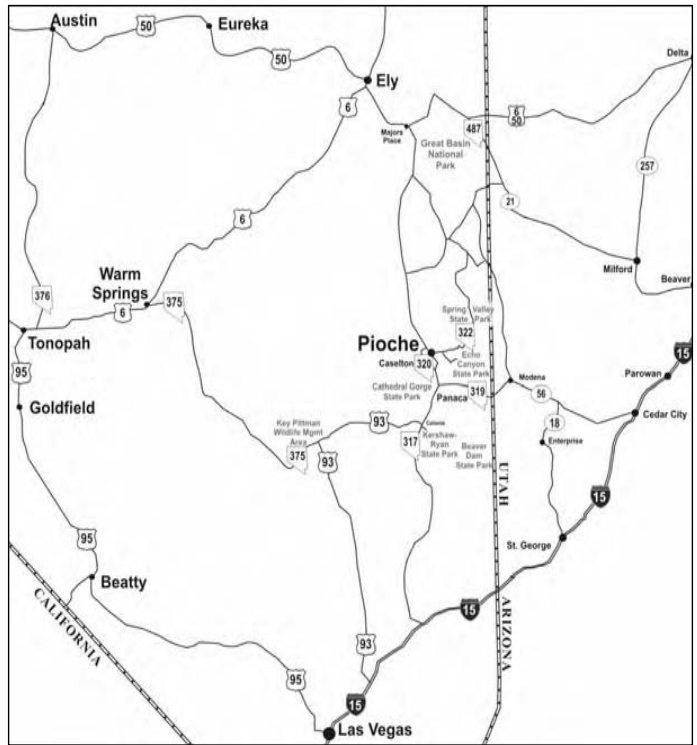


Pioche in 1870 before the big fire



Pioche in 2009 taken from Lime Hill

PIOCHE ON THE MAP






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WALKING TOUR

PIOCHE, NEVADA




1. The Million Dollar Courthouse

The Million Dollar Courthouse was designed by Edward Donahue and was built in 1871. It is constructed of brick and stone and borders on the "Classic Revival" style of architecture with its detailing and proportion. The Courthouse originally cost \$16,400, and the jail an additional \$10,000, for a total of \$26,400. Due to "cost over-runs" at the beginning of the project by politicians, and delayed payments with mounting interest, the price soon ballooned to nearly 1 million dollars (\$800,000) by 1936 when it was finally paid off.

2. McCannon/Cedar Streets

McCannon/Cedar Streets are where the first prominent families built prestigious homes, some of which are still in use today. Several of the homes were built by mining bosses, while others were occupied by doctors and lawyers. These streets were considered to be the fashionable place to live in early day Pioche.

3. The Miner's Union Hall

The Miner's Union Hall is presently the Episcopal Church. It is a 3-story wood framed structure with a gable roof. This building was built to fit into the landscape and is a typical example of "Plain Early" 20th Century style. The Miners Union was a center of social activities in this community for nearly 50 years.

4. Meadow Valley Street

Meadow Valley Street was the original entry street from Meadow Valley to the south of Pioche's business district. Many of the miners' cabins were located on the southeast end, and businesses flourished on the northwest end. It was one of the main business streets with the Catholic Church, Hanley's Opera House, 2 livery stables, blacksmith's shop, bakery, and dentist office being some of the first businesses located here. A few of these buildings were moved to nearly 1 million dollars in 1894 when that town started booming.

5. Main Street

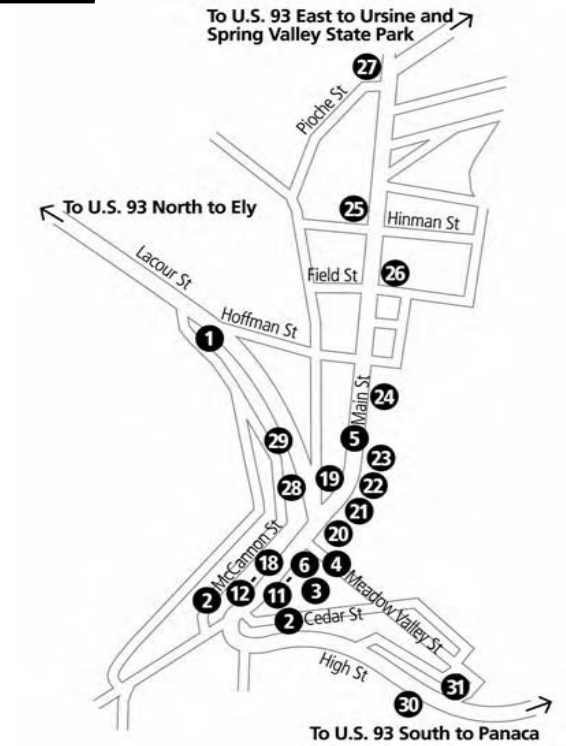
Main Street runs from the famous Treasure Hill to the current Lincoln County Courthouse. From the days of mud and ruts to its present day concrete walks and asphalt paving, there have been thousands of exciting, tragic, happy, and wonderful events that have occurred along this Main Street. People from all over the world have traversed this small area and were charmed by its charisma. Some have

stayed. Many have returned again and again. With its gun fights and killings, Pioche became known as the roughest, toughest mining camp in the West. Most of this happened on Main Street.



6. The Lincoln County Museum

The Lincoln County Museum is housed in the building built by A. S. Thompson around 1900. A victim of a fire, it was rebuilt once, then later remodeled in 1929 to make it more modern. Upon the death of Charles Thompson, Sr., the building was sold to James Gottfredson, Sr. and he operated a mercantile and clothing store for a time. Later, the store was closed and the Gottfredson family donated the building to Lincoln County in 1962, to become a museum. Over the years, it has evolved into one of the best museums of its kind in the state of Nevada.



7. The Pioche Odd Fellows Lodge

The Pioche Odd Fellows Lodge was built in 1872 and was originally J. J. Halpin's Hardware Store before he moved his business to Silver Reef, Utah. It has been used for many lodge functions, community dances, parties and social gatherings.

8. The Nevada Club

The Nevada Club generally dates back to the early 1900s. It is on the site of the original Pioche assay office that had been destroyed by a fire. The present structure is constructed of brick, concrete and stone to reduce the fire hazard potential.

9. The Pioche Hotel

The Pioche Hotel dates from the turn of the century. The hotel was

operated by Virginia Cottino and family until the mid-1950s. It is now a private residence.



10. The Commerce Cottage

The Commerce Cottage was one of several lending libraries in Pioche that was operated by commercial establishments in the late 1800s. In 1940, the Lincoln County Library



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system was started with the purchase of this building which had been a jewelry store. It served as a library for 10 years. After a number of years of neglect, this building was refurbished in 1984 to become the Pioche Chamber of Commerce "Commerce Cottage" and Information Center.



11. The Pioche Record

The Pioche Record is the second oldest continuously printed weekly newspaper in the state, which was started in May 1870. Through the years it has changed owners and editors many times. The newspaper office was located for many years in the current Peggy's Store at 768 Main Street, a building that appears to date from the early 1900s. The Pioche Record is now known as the Lincoln County Record and is headquartered at 195 Clover Street in Caliente. Two of its most notable editors have been E. L. Nores, who bought the paper about 1920 and ran it for many years; and Thos. L. Clay, a retired attorney, who bought it about 1970 and ran it until his death in 1979. More recently, Connie Simkins was the editor for 28 years, from 1979 to 2007. Stephens Media acquired The Record from owner/publisher Raymond Thompson in the fall of 2010.

12. The Stockum House

The Stockum House is one of the rare survivors of age and fire in this part of Main Street. It was built in 1866 and has been used as a residence, boarding house, hotel, church and once housed the Francois L.A. Pioche Art Gallery. It is presently a photography portrait studio.

13. Pioche's First U.S. Post Office and Western Union Office

Pioche's first U.S. Post Office and Western Union Office building was constructed in 1864 of stone to resist fire. The post office was established on August 17, 1870. Western Union service commenced in 1873. The front was later remodeled and modernized several times, but in 1985 the owners, the John

Christian family, had the front rebuilt to its original design. Over the years, it has served as a cafe and has housed many other businesses. It is presently used by Rainbow Cable and Cell Phone Sales, a division of the Lincoln County Telephone System network of services.

14. The Alamo Club

The Alamo Club was originally built in the mid 1800s and was The Pioche Bank. It is noted for the large bank vault in the rear of the building. Throughout the years this business has hosted many notables and delinquents alike. Ernie Ferri operated the Alamo Club bar and gambling business for about 30 years, and upon his death, his wife Lena continued to run the business. The Ferris owned the oldest continuous gaming and liquor license in the state of Nevada for many years until the 1988 sale. The current owner, Jim Marsh, renamed the bar to "The Bank Club."

15. Stever's Store and Beauty Shop

Stever's Store and Beauty Shop, originally built in the late 1860s, was partially burned and then rebuilt several times. It served as Stever's Apparel Store and The Garden Bar from the 1934 until 1997, when the Stever family sold the business. It has gone through several hands since, and the current owner is the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

16. The Pioche News Stand

The Pioche News Stand was originally built in the 1860s, and was partially burned then rebuilt in the early 1870s and in 1919. The false front "Pioneer" style and treatment of the fake brick tin appears to date from the early 1900s. The first telephone system was operated from this building and was owned by J.W. Christian. For many years, part of this building was used as the Pioche Post Office. The Rag Doll gift shop now occupies this area. The News Stand and Phone Company area is now used as storage by the owners, the Christian family.

17. The Pioche Mercantile

The Pioche Mercantile was originally known as Hodges & Cook Mercantile. The Christian Brothers, Edwin and Lloyd, operated the store for about 40 years, following the death of their father in about 1925. For years they handled groceries and would order any amount of needed mail order supplies that you would want. The business was acquired from Edwin Christian by Jerome and Tom Sears, descendants of J. L. Sears, a telegrapher that came to Pioche around 1873 from New York. Tom sold the business in 2001. Ted Daskas is the present owner.

18. The Bank Club Building

In the Bank Club Building, former businesses Lincoln County Market and Treasure Chest had weathered the storms of Main Street, including fires and the mining boom and bust cycles. Many businesses have come and gone in these buildings. John Valenti operated the Bank Club bar and cafe for many years and in 1996, it was remodeled into the Grubsteak Dinner House, which closed

in 2001. It is now Grub Pub and Deli. Next door is the new Dougherty's Fine Jewelry shop that opened in 2009. It was previously a deli. The Lincoln County Market housed the Navajo Bar before being converted into the Stop and Shop grocery market, which closed in 2002. That site is being offered for sale. The antique store was first Welland's Mercantile, then Gottfredson's Dry Goods, followed by Cowley's Drug Store and later, the Baptist Church-Treasure Chest. Corbett's Antiques opened in 1993 but had been closed the past few years. Leo & Dee Schafer opened Purple Onion Antiques & Collectibles in May 2010.

18 A. Historic Silver Café

Historic Silver Café, located north of the antique store in number 18, has been in business for 102 years under several owners. It is one of the oldest continuously operated businesses in the state. Sisters Judy Kwiatkowski and Julie White have owned and operated the restaurant for the past three years. They expanded last year with the opening of the adjacent Silver Mine Gift Shop.



18 B. Miner's Market

Miner's Market is located north of Silver Cafe, on the corner of Main St. and LaCour St. Owners Orlando and Debbie Sandoval opened the market in 2008. The town had been without a grocery store since the closing of the last one in 2002. In earlier days, the building was the site of Amsden Garage, Foglianos' car dealership, Orr's garage for almost 30 years, and Alfano Brothers' The Workshop (custom woodwork).

19. The Commercial Club/Amsden Buildings

The Commercial Club/Amsden Buildings, built about 1865, are located at the junction of Main and LaCour streets and were once the hub of community activity. Pioche's old Fire House is adjacent to the Amsden building, and it served for nearly 40 years as the fire house and apartment for the fire chief. Attorney A. L. Scott owned the Commercial Club Building for about 50 years beginning around 1916. He conducted his law practice on

Walking Tour continued on Page 6

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Walking Tour, Continued from page 5

the first floor and lived in the basement area.

20. The Leader Store Building

The Leader Store building is the impressive building on the northeast corner of Meadow Valley and Main Street. It was owned for many years by the Ben Cohen family and operated as a dry goods store. It now houses a used merchandise business. Next door is a massive stone building once used as a bar, the Allen's Cash Store, and a warehouse for the Leader Store business.

**21. The Overland Bar and Hotel Building**

The Overland Bar and Hotel building was constructed in 1940 by Bob Free. It has been burned and rebuilt several times over its colorful past. It originally had a bowling alley in the basement, and the west half was rented to the Allen's Cash Store for more than 30 years. This part is now a dance hall, with an antiques shop up front. Candace and Ron Mortenson have owned the Overland since 1995.

22. The Brown/Thompson Opera House

The Brown/Thompson's Opera House has survived from its 1873 construction date and was recently extensively renovated. It is entirely constructed of wood and has a classic revival style combined with an early pioneer board construction. It was built by Aleck Brown in March of 1873 and renamed the Thompson's Opera House in April of 1892. It was later used as a movie theatre. The Opera House is currently owned by Lincoln County and will be used for public meetings and can be rented for private use. After the new movie house was built, the Gem Theater, the Opera House was used for weekly dances for many years. The Gem Theater showed movies until 2003, when high winds blew the roof off. The roof was repaired, but the owners decided not to reopen because it was more of a community service than a viable business.

23. The Orr Garage

The Orr Garage was built in the early 1870s and was con-

structed of stone. Its original use may have been as a blacksmith shop or harness shop. In later years, from about 1915, it was used as an auto repair garage.

24. Pioche School

Pioche School was built in 1909 in a "Mission" style of architecture. This was the oldest continuously used school building in the state of Nevada in 1999 when it was abandoned for a new building, built on the northwest side of town by the Pioche Division of Forestry Honor Camp. The original school building was sold and is now privately owned.

25. The Pioche Town Hall

The Pioche Town Hall was built in 1936-37 by the Mormons with donated labor, material and money as the first LDS meeting house in Pioche. It was dedicated in 1950 when it was completely finished and paid for. In 1986 when the new LDS chapel was built, the old building was sold to the Town of Pioche for a public meeting place. Now known as the Pioche Town Hall, it serves many organizations for weekly or monthly meetings and social events. The most noteworthy activity held here is the "Pioche Heritage Days," which takes place in June or July and again on the Sunday of the Labor Day celebration. The presentation includes plays, usually one being a melodrama and the other an original, locally historical sketch about the colorful Pioche characters of the past.

26. Boot Hill

Crime was rampant in Pioche in the early 1870s. During the first settling of Pioche, it was said that 72 men "were killed with their boots on" before anyone died a natural death. Many of these men are buried in the "Old Boot Hill" Cemetery. A monument commemorating Boot Hill was built and donated by E. Clampus Vitus in 2009.

27. The Lincoln County Court House

The Lincoln County Court House was constructed in 1938 to replace the historic courthouse on the hill. It is a simplified version of the modern Art-Deco style, and it continues to house most all of Lincoln County's government functions. The Sheriff's Office and Jail have been moved north of town off S.R. 322. Excellent park facilities are located adjoining the courthouse with a swimming pool, ball fields, horseshoe pits, playground and picnic areas.

28. St. John's Masonic Lodge

St John's Masonic Lodge has been in continuous operation since 1873, making it one of Nevada's oldest lodges. It is constructed of stone and brick and is a typical "False Front Pioneer" style.

29. The Mountain View Hotel

The Mountain View Hotel was built in 1895 by the Ely Valley Mines to house their guests. It is a combination of styles including "Shingle" style and early 1900s "Classic Box."

The building is presently in need of restoration.

30. Treasure Hill (Nevada Centennial Marker No. 5.)

Silver ore was discovered in this range of mountains in 1864, but no important developments took place until 1869 when mines were opened and the Town of Pioche appeared. Pioche soon became the scene of a wild rush of prospectors and fortune seekers and gained a reputation in the 1870s for tough gunmen and bitter lawsuits. Over 5 million dollars in ore was taken out by 1872, and by 1900 Pioche was nearly a ghost town. Designated the seat of Lincoln County in 1871, Pioche survived hard times as a supply and government center for a vast area. In later years, notably during World War II, profitable lead and zinc deposits were developed.


**31. Pioche Aerial Tramway**

This aerial tramway operated in the 1920s and 1930s carrying ore from the mines on Treasure Hill to Godbe's Mill in the valley. Built by Pioche Mines Company, the tramway was mainly gravity powered with the aid of a 5 horsepower motor. The ore in the full buckets rolled toward the mill and provided the momentum to return the empty buckets to the bin. In 1928, the cost of delivering ore to the mill via this tramway was six cents per ton.

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THE EARLY DAYS

By Leo Schafer

The activity around Pioche started in the 1860s. In the early days Pioche was known for two things: silver and lead. The silver was extracted from the mines, and processed in or near Pioche. It was transported in the form of bars, often each weighing over one hundred pounds, by way of stage coach to the outside world. The lead was quite another matter. It was not extracted, but rather delivered. It was already processed, weighed less than an ounce, and was transported by firearms to such places as a local resident's back.

Early in the 1860s white men were introduced to the area around what is now Pioche. Gunlock Hamblin was the first to arrive. He was taken to the area known as the Meadow Valley Region by an Indian. Moroni, the Indian, visited Gunlock at his home on the Santa Clara Creek near the present city of St. George, Utah. The Indian showed Gunlock a sample of glittering ore, or panaka the

Paiute name for the ore. He had brought the panaka from the vicinity of the present town of Pioche. Moroni who was described as "well known and semi-civilized," said that for years chosen members of his tribe had used the ore to make paint. He had been shown the ore by his father, a chief of the tribe. His dying father had told Moroni to never disclose the location to the whites, this area being a hunting ground for the tribe.

Moroni was initially reluctant to show Gunlock the location of the deposit. But after some time with repeated kindness and the enticement of a rifle, Moroni changed his position and decided to guide Gunlock to the area. Together they left the Territory of Utah and traveled to the Pioche area. Gunlock was impressed with the ore that was visible above the ground and dug down several feet exposing a well defined vein. Gunlock returned home and discussed his findings with some of his neighbors. Thus was the discovery of silver and the beginning of Pioche.

Not only Gunlock's neighbors were interested and investigated but a prospecting party from Salt Lake City induced Gunlock to take them to the site. So now there were two factions scrambling around staking claims, each trying to get rich. But then a third entity appeared on the scene. General Patrick Connor, stationed near Salt Lake, had an interest in mining and directed troops to the area. They were ordered to stake claims also. During the summer of 1864 the area, which was named the Meadow Valley District was congested with prospectors. All this congestion would of course contribute to the number of lawsuits that occurred after the mines started making big money.

Gunlock, William Haynes Hamblin, would pay very dearly for his discovery. Years later he was murdered to prevent his testimony in a trial dealing with a mine claim dispute.

After the initial development, Indian difficulties retarded improving the district for a time, but by the

late 1860s things were back on track. Two driving forces advanced the efforts to establish a working mining community. One force was the partnership of W. H. Raymond and John Ely. That partnership quickly went to work to establish



PIOCHE

themselves as prominent players in the Panaka lead; in fact the Meadow Valley District was renamed the Ely District. The other driving force was a wealthy San Francisco financier, Francois Pioche. Pioche's financial presence went even further than establishing and promoting the mining district; the town was named after him.

Beginning in 1870 and lasting for 10 years, the mines boomed. Pioche shipped nearly one-half of a billion dollars worth of ore (at today's value of money). At least that was the amount reported. One thing should be noted though that the state of Nevada taxed mines on the amount of reported production, and there are some people that might think the reported amount could be less than what was actually produced.

Most of the ore was produced during the first three years of the 10 year boom. And the population followed the production of the ore, reaching a peak of over 7,000 residents during that three year period. Of that population, extrapolated data implies that nearly one half were foreign born. Approximately one half of those residents were Irish or English. Others included Germans, French-Canadian, Greeks, Slavs, and Italians. Pioche even had a China Town. The local newspaper had the following observation: "...The Chinese population of Pioche number not less than two hundred, and

occupy the principal portion of the space lying between Pioche street on the west and lower Main street on the east..."

During the early part of the boom Pioche experienced a devastating fire that left all residents, foreign and native born, in a state of disarray. Pioche was almost entirely destroyed. The loss of property was immense, diminished only by the loss of life and human suffering. On a Friday night around midnight flames were spotted coming from the upper part of Main Street. The fire was able to gain substantial headway before enough people were assembled to fight it. There was little to fight with since the town did not have a water system as yet. The only water available was what local residents and businesses had stored.

The fire progressed rapidly from structure to structure, with attempts to retard its flow unsuccessful. The fire raged for about two hours. It left ashes, embers, and as many as two thousand homeless. A crowd had gathered near the Felsenthal & Co. Mercantile [Meadow Valley and Main]. Then things became worse. There had been three hundred kegs of blasting powder stored in what was believed to be the fireproof cellar of Felsenthal's.

The enormous explosion sent deadly burning projectiles over a vast area. Shrapnel raked the already terrified crowd. Doors were blown from their hinges; windows shattered; and some men were knocked from their feet. A stone door on the store, weighing five hundred pounds, was thrown nearly one-half mile away.

The cries of the wounded and dying were heard while men, women and children raced in all directions seeking each other and safety. A temporary morgue was established in a church. Some bodies were thoroughly burned, some decapitated, others without limbs. The horrific demon would eventually claim eleven lives.

Pioche recovered and rebuilt. Several months after the fire Doctor D. Virgil Gates, a former resident of Pioche, in a letter stated his opinion of the status of the mines and working conditions. The letter was written at the end of 1871 in Salt Lake City, during the very beginning of the boom in Pioche.

The Early Days, Continued on Page 10



HAMBLIN



CONNOR



WINTER SPORTS IN PIOCHE

By Barbara Rohde

When snow blankets the hills in Pioche, residents don't bemoan their fate and turn up the thermostat: they throw on their long-johns and winter coats, and head outdoors! Snowmobiling used to be popular, until ATV's came along; now many folks just load up their ATV's and head for the dirt roads and explore from sun-up to sun-down. The Silver State ATV Trail can be accessed from Pioche, by following the old road to the "Ely Valley Mine" and the brown Carsonite (skinny fiberglass) markers. Many other dirt roads are popular for those that want to trailer their ATV's to start exploring; for any of these adventures be sure to take along extra gas, warm & dry change of clothing, and a small Coleman type stove in case you run into vehicle problems along the trail.

Those that enjoy self-propelled activities grab their cross-country skis, and sometimes (before the side roads are plowed) just ski right out their front door! The Pioche Golf Course offers some good downhill and side-hill runs for testing one's cross-country skills, with parking right beside



State Route 322. One Pioche resident has even found some slopes steep enough to use his downhill skis, but doesn't recommend it for the faint-hearted: to reach the top, you must do some hefty hiking - and then it is a short run, indeed!

Ice-fishing may be done from late December until mid-February, at Eagle Valley Reservoir, Spring Valley State Park. Fishers usually open their own holes with ice-augers, and these often remain open for a few days afterwards if you don't have your own auger. Bundle up for ice fishing: it doesn't resemble the same sport made popular in the movie "Grumpy Old Men" in which people bring or build huts to erect over their fishing holes! While the ice is usually sturdy enough for pedestrian traffic or even ice skating, vehicles and structures are not allowed (or recommended) on the ice! (The State Highway Department maintains State Route 322 in plowed conditions, to the park fee station; beyond that, conditions on the graveled road can be questionable.) The ice is usually 12 to 15 inches thick; call the park office before your visit, 775-962-5102, or the Regional Visitor Center 775-728-4460, for current conditions. The regular Nevada fishing license is required for fishing in all waters of the state, no exception for winter ice-fishing! During the winter, the German Brown trout seem to be hungrier than the Rainbow Trout, and near-trophy size trout are sometimes taken from the lake. Echo Canyon Reservoir, at Echo Canyon State Reere-



ation Area, sometimes freezes hard enough for ice fishing; but generally only during the coldest winters. For any of these activities, be sure to bring along warm and dry change of clothing; days may reach the 40's or 50's, but as soon as the sun goes behind a cloud (or the hills), the temperature plummets rapidly. In addition, storms can often develop quickly, and a north wind usually brings these storms in - which can be very cold if you haven't prepared. Dressing in layers is usually best: with long-johns underneath street clothing, fleece or down vest with wooly cap may keep you warm enough on sunny days, with a wind-resistant outer layer and wooly mittens or gloves when the wind comes up. Bringing along a Thermos full of hot cocoa or coffee will also warm your insides!

THE HUNT

By Roscoe Wilkes

The month of October in the 1940's and 50's was a cherished time in and around Pioche, Lincoln County, Nevada. Why? Deer season, of course, what else! The guys brought their rifles out of the closet, cleaned and oiled the working parts, then went down below town and sighted them in on targets. The only standard of accuracy acceptable was a "Bulls Eye" at 100 yards.

To hunters who had a horse it was get him shod, groomed and on oats in preparation for the serious work to come. Also it was time to grease the wheel bearings on the horse trailer, thoroughly service the pickup truck and lay in the necessary supplies: hay and grain for the horse, more than enough "grub" for the anticipated hunting group and without doubt a plentiful supply of Jim Beam, a necessary enhancement for the eagerly looked for evening campfire social life.

Did the wives have a part? They certainly did and understood it well. They were unanimously cooperative knowing what it meant to him. Always they blessed the husband's group with a large cake, often applesauce-nut, known to retain its moisture for the camp's anticipated duration. Often also there was a large pot of chili beans or beef stew just in case it was needed as an addition to the esteemed campfire cooking, carefully planned and enthusiastically carried out at camp.

At the same time preparations were being carried out in full swing, the "stories" began to swirl: "Let me tell you what happened last year." The big buck, trophy buck yarns emerged, often a bit sadly about how that "monster" managed to get away. "It won't happen again this year, he's a goner. I know where he hangs out and what he does. You'll see."

You likely already know but it's worth repeating that when a hunter is hot on the trail of a trophy, he knows it - - by the tracks left by that objective. Large tracks, large buck, small tracks, small buck or a doe. Over the years some distinctive tracks were seen. There was "Old Split Toe" and "Old Half Track", monster bucks who for one reason or another had one deformed hoof. They were nonetheless big ones, no question about that.

Then there was the very famous "Old Blue". He was in many, many conversations, his fame had spread. Very nearly every hunter in northern Lincoln County aspired to be the one to bring in "Old Blue". He was a monster among monsters, approaching more the size of an elk than a deer. His antlers were described as two dead cedar trees one on each side of his head, awe inspiring as he bounded away into the trees and out of sight.

It was believed that he was so old his dark brown hair had turned grey, much the same as occurs in very old people. However, off at a distance his grey hair appeared to be a light blue, thus his name "Old Blue", a very well known and respected legend in his own time.

I listened intently and enjoyed those deer hunting tales every October and carefully considered and remembered many. So far as I ever heard or knew about no one ever claimed to have bagged Old Split Toe, Old Half Track or Old Blue. This being so sound logic dictates that each one of these Monster Bucks must still be out there waiting for some lucky hunter to bring him in. This assumes, of course, that at one time they in truth and fact existed. I invite you to be the judge of that.

I have mentioned that come October of each year the stories were passed around from hunter to hunter and to anyone else who cared to hear them. In all fairness some may well have been fiction, but some were true. The few that I propose to relate in this writing were, I am convinced, true.

I THOUGHT. Charley and three others were barely out of camp. It was very early in the morning, and each had yet to decide the exact direction he would take in his pursuit of hunting success. Charley was an expert, I must submit, self-proclaimed. He was proud of his knowledge, perceptiveness and acumen as to how to properly hunt deer. He wasn't adverse to sharing that ability when he believed it would help the hunt. He made an announcement.

"John, I think you should go over to that little knoll and sit down and wait. Be as inconspicuous as you can and keep your eyes on the gulch below you. Bill, you go over to that rocky ledge and hide behind that big rock. Frank, you go south to those trees and keep behind one of them. All of you keep your eyes on the gulch. I will go below, walk up the gulch scaring the deer out. They will proceed up the gulch and we will all get good shootin."

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The Early Days

Continued from Page Seven

Doctor D. Virgil Gates:

"The almost daily shipment of bullion from Pioche has caused considerable excitement regarding the mines in that section, and many are rushing thither and others are preparing to go without considering whether employment can be obtained. Allow me, pro bono publico, (as I lived in Pioche from last April to the 6th of the present month [November 1871]) to state the situation of matters there as they are and will be all winter. The town of Pioche was destroyed by fire on the 15th of September last; it is now rebuilding fast, but the residents are poor, having lost everything in the fire, and business generally is very dull and money scarce.

"All the bullion...comes from three mines—Raymond & Ely, Meadow Valley, and Pioche. These mines are very easily worked, employing but few...The ore from...the Raymond & Ely...is as easily mined out as sand or ashes. Thousands of tons of good ore from good mines about Pioche are already but can't be crushed for want of mills...The great need of Pioche is two or three 30 stamp mills as there is enough ore on the dump to keep them running night and day for two years...Not less than from 500 to 700 idle men are lying on their oars, waiting for something to turn up..."

Mills were inevitably built. At first due to the lack of water they were built several miles to the south at a location that had water. A town, Bullionville, was built there and it grew to a population of several hundred. A railroad was constructed to connect Pioche to the mill town. Eventually water was piped into Pioche and mills were built near the mines.

In another letter written in May of 1872 (several months after the previous letter) a visitor to Pioche, Van Jaquelin, had these comments:

"...Though the town has been burned down and rebuilt since my last visit, it does not present to me a very changed appearance. Most of the houses are of about the same character as before the fire, and are in almost the same places. Some ordinary one-story stone buildings have been erected, though many of the frame buildings will not begin to compare with those standing on the same sites before the fire, and anybody can see that the town it is a town built in a hurry. The last fire made an ugly hole in the main street, the blackened ruins (there ain't much ruins) presenting an unsightly appearance. This, however, is partly relieved by a mansion erected on the center of one of the lots, by an enterprising citizen formerly of Austin [Nevada], Mr. Jack Harris. The material of which it is built is charred fire boards. It has one open front about six feet in height, with a shed-roof extending to the ground in the rear, and the sides are constructed with a view to the proper ventilation of the whole.

"The doors and windows which are being made in San Francisco have not yet arrived. I had no opportunity of visiting the interior, as at the time of my visit, Mr. Harris was absent, and the honors were being dispensed by as mild a mannered bull-dog as ever took a piece out of a leg. Mr. Harris deserves great credit for his enterprise in erecting a building such as this, so soon after the fire, especially when it is understood that his purpose in erecting it was purely patriotic. After the fire there was, of course, neither house nor fence on the lot, and it being Government land, Mr. Harris feared some unscrupulous person might jump [take control or claim] it, and therefore erected this house and is now holding the land for the government."

Jack Harris was a renowned outlaw. He had established his reputation as a stage coach robber in western Nevada. Jack's reputation was nearly legendary and his extensive exploits are still written about today. Former Pioche resident Vernon Jeffcott:

"...Pioche was the home of...Jack, a stage robber. His plan of operations was to be very much in sight in Pioche when the stage left there with bullion. Then cut cross country on a good horse and intercept the stage and rob it cut back and be in Pioche when word came of the robbery making a good alibi for him. He usually buried the bullion near the scene of the robbery for some time, then brought it in later when things had quieted down. It

was quite generally believed he was the guilty party. But they could never catch him."

There were three bars of bullion Jack had stolen and had buried outside of town. After a time when things had "cooled off" he went to retrieve it. Jeffcott continues:

"...he was living in a small shack just west of the school...He finally took a pal who was living with him and went out and dug it up. They took a good supply of whiskey with them and got well lit up on the way back and got to quarreling (they quarreled about who would carry the bars into the cabin). And when they were nearly back to Pioche Jack pushed his pal out of the buckboard and left him, and...north [of] town he buried the three bars of bullion...and left it there for years afraid to try to sell it as they were watching to catch him trying to sell any bullion...Jack lived the rest of his life in Pioche and died and never told just where he buried the bullion and it is still there..."

Jack Harris died several years later in Pioche and is buried in the cemetery. He was the most famous person buried in Pioche during the 1800s. Van Jaquelin continues his story:

"There has been, however, a great increase of population, though judging from appearances, should think that the non-producing population has increased in a greater ratio than the producing. I don't know what the population is in numbers, but have heard it stated that there are 1,700 men regularly at work in the mines, which is probably not far from the truth, although there is a large number of idle men. The supply in the labor line as well as in all other branches of business being far less in excess of the demand. There can be no doubt but that the mines here are rich and extensive, for there is everything to prove; the principal

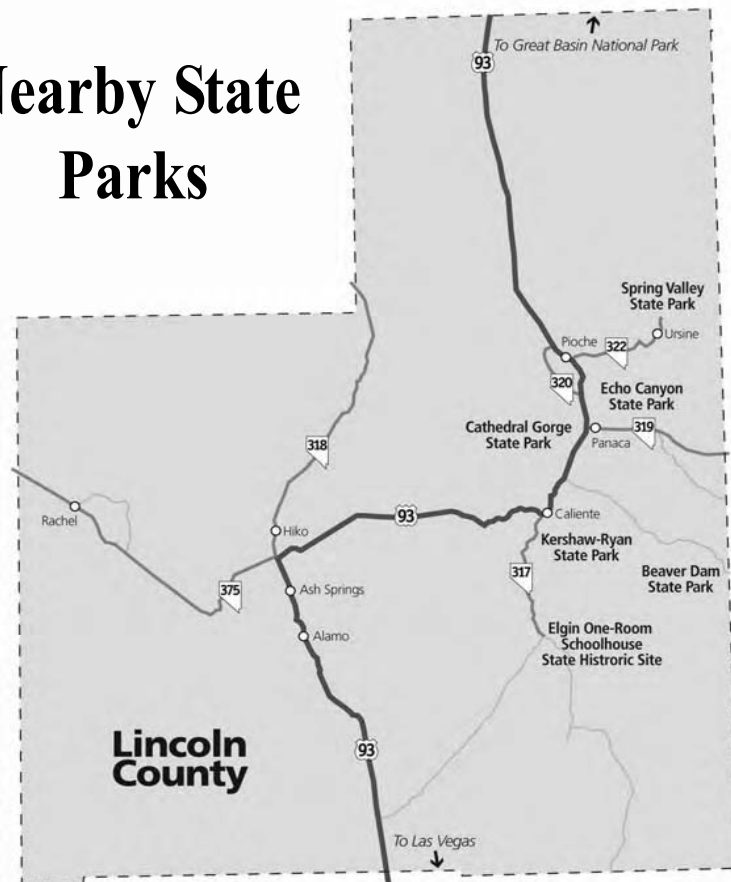
argument in support of the proposition being the immense bullion shipments..."

"One of the aggravating features of living here is, that the mail from the West is only tri-weekly, but I believe it is the intention to change the stage line, hence to Hamilton [Nevada] to a daily; but the mail contract only calls for mail once a week. Another unpleasantness is the absence of bath-houses, in as hot a climate as this. It is said that the old residents haven't washed their feet since they have been here, and new comers are obliged to walk twelve miles to the spring for that purpose, but I suppose, if ever the pipes are laid this thing will be obviated. I don't believe that this place is as healthy as either Austin or Hamilton. The atmosphere is very close and sultry, and I hear an almost universal complaint of a feeling of lassitude or drowsiness..."

"I think the people of this place must be stuck after me, for whenever I come here, they always manage to get up some pleasing diversion for me. This is my third visit, and on each of my visits there has been a little shooting scrape got up. The one on this occasion was between Judge Jesse Pitzer and a gentleman named Johnson, said to be a former resident of Austin. Neither of the principals was hurt, but an outsider got shot in the knee, and since had his leg amputated...a lot of these fellows around here are like broken down oxen, too lazy to get out of the way of a six-shooter ball."

Unfortunately this broken down oxen, H. A. Wickware, had lost a leg which probably made Judge Pitzer and Colonel Johnson feel poorly. It could have been worse; he could have died. And, after convalescing for a time, he did. Nothing was made of the incident; after all, this was life in the early days.

Nearby State Parks



Peaceful Times in Pioche

By Leo Schafer

It was approaching the end of the year in Pioche. The time frame was the late 1800s. November and even December had some days where the temperature had reached the low 60s during the day. Not only was the weather mild but this season found Pioche relatively calm since the big mining boom of Pioche was over and the population was but a handful of the several thousand former residents. There were still a few mines operating but nothing like times had been during the heyday that brought the remarkable growth that so many mining towns like Pioche had witnessed during that era in the West. Pioche had experienced one characteristic that was quite unique though, the amount of violence. The nature of the Pioche violence was often very brutal. Pioche was a bloody town then, but at the time of this story, it was rather peaceful.

As Christmas approached one "Bronco Pat" brought his fiancé in to town to obtain a marriage license. But the County Clerk would not issue the necessary document. It seems the bride to be was but fifteen years old and Bronco could not produce any proof that the parents had consented to the arrangement.

Bronco was not to be stopped buy some silly legal technicality. He found a clergyman willing to conduct the service, so to avoid any further delay or inconvenience, the three proceeded to the nearby Utah border. He didn't bother to check with any of the Utah authorities. On to the ceremony, Bronco stood on the Utah side, the blushing bride stood in Nevada and clergyman straddled the line. The entire affair was legal enough to satisfy all present. The newlyweds spent their first Christmas together.

At approximately the same time the ceremony was taking place Thomas Stevens, a mine worker in Pioche, discovered \$60 was missing from his cabin. Stevens went to the Sheriff and told him that William Tregear, also a miner, had taken the money. The Sheriff was unable to do anything since Stevens had no proof of his allegation.

Like the Bronco, Stevens devised his own method to remedy his problem. No, he did not take Tregear to the border; he took a hatchet to Tregear's cabin late at night. Tregear was awakened and threatened with the hatchet. Tregear was told to return the money or he would be killed. Tregear denied any knowledge of the money whereupon Stevens took a swipe with the weapon, then another. Tregear was cut twice while attempting to shield himself. A third thrust and dodge of the hatchet buried it in a bed board. Stevens had swung it so hard he could not extract it. Stevens apparently felt this was the appropriate time to withdraw, and he did, in haste.

Stevens was later arrested for attempted murder. This might sound like a serious matter, but not in old Pioche. Stevens paid a small fine and was released. There was no further mention made of the \$60.

A fine Christmas was celebrated on a Wednesday in Pioche. Children received presents, donations were taken up for widows, and it was reported that the usual holiday proceedings transpired, which included an assortment of intoxicated individuals and fights. The local newspaper stated that "...the day passed as would a Sunday."

Just one week after the New Year, an altercation occurred. The root cause of this incident was again money. The amount was \$258. It seems a mine employee by the name of Clark loaned that amount to a friend. That sounds simple enough and this story has the common dynamic that the friend can't repay Mr. Clark, but the friend had an idea. It seems he had a sister and he thought perhaps the unattached Mr. Clark would like to become acquainted with the young lady.

Mr. Clark welcomed the arrangement with enthusiasm. So the friend approached his sister to see if she was open to the idea. The sister was quite agreeable to her brother's plan. Soon Mr. Clark and the sister became an item. The debt was forgiven, the couple was quite pleased, and there were no loose ends, well almost.

The sister, Miss Himmelwright, was in reality, Mrs. Himmel-



wright, and Mr. Himmelwright was not pleased with the arrangement, at all. He approached the law and sought redress. But the law could not intervene. So instead of a hatchet our Mr. Himmelwright took up a pistol. He found Clark and placed the pistol to his chest. Two shots were fired and both bullets struck ribs and glanced clear. Not out of the game, Clark shot Himmelwright in the jaw where the bullet apparently danced around in his face for a bit and upon exiting took off part of Himmelwright's ear. He also took one in the arm, which was broken by the bullet.

Clark's wounds were described as mere flesh wounds, but his opponent was very seriously wounded. It was thought that if he were not properly nursed back to health he would die. Was there someone available that might nurse Himmelwright back to health? Yes! But not his loving wife, she was busy tending to the not so seriously injured Clark. It was reported that Clark also had a sister and she was concerned that if Himmelwright died that might put Mr. Clark in a bad way with the law. So as the story goes, she came forward to help Himmelwright.

Both men recovered. There is no evidence indicating what became of Clark's sister after Himmelwright was well. Himmelwright could be facing some serious legal issues, such as attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon. The Grand Jury was presented with the case but took no action; after all these were peaceful times in Pioche and why make a fuss, no one died. Fortunately for everyone this entire incident and the participants fade from view, until the following year when there is a faint glimpse of one of the players. News arrives of Mrs. Himmelwright.

Pioche Weekly Record:

"THE KILLING OF DUTCHY.—We got the following particulars in regard as to the cause of the killing of "Dutchy" by Ben Tasker a short time ago. Dutchy was a member of Tasker's gang, but growing tired of being under Ben's supervision, desired to sever his connection with that band of outlaws, but King Ben refused to accept his resignation, fearing that Dutchy, after getting out of reach, might betray some of the band's secrets, and killed him. It is to be hoped that other members of the gang will desert and that Ben will catch and kill them, for it will be so many cattle thieves less. Dutchy was married on Christmas day to Mrs. Himmelwright, a former resident of Pioche, and it will be remembered that Hammilwright and Clark had a shooting scrape about a year ago, caused by her deserting her husband and going to live with Clark."

Ben Tasker and his gang headquartered in Utah, just east of

Pioche. They were a tough bunch and renowned rustlers. The Pioche newspaper reported that Dutchy had stolen a valuable horse belonging to Ike Mathews. While he was making his getaway, Ben Tasker and Mathews shot him five times and he died in less than 24 hours. He was buried at that place.

Information was later uncovered that indicated that the details of Dutchy's death had been fabricated. Dutchy had been a butcher for Tasker. Tasker stole cattle, primarily from Utah ranchers and had Dutchy butcher the beef, which Tasker sold in Pioche. It was the finest beef Tasker could steal. It was reported only the hindquarters were sold in Pioche. Dutchy wasn't receiving any pay for his work and there was little hope of collecting, so he decided to leave Tasker's ranch. Dutchy left on foot for Pioche. Tasker caught up with him and shot him in the head before he left the ranch. He placed the body in a shallow grave that was later discovered.

Tasker's story about the horse theft was apparently not believed by the authorities in Utah. He was apprehended and placed on trial there.

Salt Lake Daily Herald:

"Verdict in the Ben Tasker case: Guilty of murder in the first degree.

"This was one of the two or three indictments hanging over the head of the notorious cattle thief at the commencement of the present term of the court...and the verdict is the equivalent to death, unless he should escape such fatal punishment on a second trial, or getaway from jail...The murder for which he has been convicted was on the person of a German, commonly known as 'Dutchy,' and committed some months ago on Ben's ranch, in Southern Utah. Ben is a bold, bad man, with a notoriety as a horse thief second to none in the West..."

Tasker was not executed, and his conviction was not overturned during appeal; he escaped and reportedly gathered up his valuables and hastened to Mexico.

"Dutchy" was in reality Albert Ferdinand Engelking. It was reported he was a deserter from the United States Army. Was the new Mrs. Albert Ferdinand Engelking (the Dutchess) really a widow? There was a rumor that the body was not that of Dutchy, a tale unlikely true. So the Dutchess was free again seek out her true soul mate.

In any case Mr. Clark, Mr. Himmelwright, Mrs. Himmelwright-Engelking, Dutchy, and Tasker, the provider of fine beef to Pioche, all contributed their part to the peaceful times in Pioche; a town that had settled into normality.

THAT WAS PIOCHE!!!!

By Carol Shanks

We've been practicing - well it seems about a year.
But tonight is the night - our Christmas play is here.
Every grade from 1st thru 4th does a play.
And you can bet that ours is best, of course.
Screaming angels, laughing elves, foolish wise men
Fill the halls, there's even a cardboard horse.
The kids are pushing and straining to see.
Oh where, Oh where! can my parents be.
When all the plays and singing are done
It's time for Santa - Boy is that fun.
The tree in the gym is up to the sky.
How'd they put the star on, up so high!
After this evening, with the excitement and cheer.
We're free from school 'til after New Year.
Next week the Leader Store brings Santa on down.
The line of waiting children stretches all around the town.
A paper bag, filled with candies and toys.
They twirl and whirl and make lots of noise.
Decorations in the windows and all the doors.
Up and down the street in all of the stores.
Makes you feel like shopping, that's for sure.
Mom, Dad, brothers, sisters and even more.
It seems somehow, but I'm not certain,
The snow fell so thick it made a curtain.
That held us all snug on Christmas Eve
As we waited for Santa - I Do Believe.

I don't know, it must be just our perceptions, but Christmas seemed so much better in those by-gone days.

TREES

(Continued from Page One)

The trees always look smaller out in the woods, so bring a measuring tape as well as a saw. The stories are legion about people that have dragged trees home that fill the whole room if they can even get them in the door. Avoid forest areas with mature trees, because these trees are far too big and there are few young trees of suitable size. The young trees are mostly in more open areas.

You are allowed to top trees that are under ten feet tall, but cut away the remaining stump to as close to the ground as possible. The lower branches tend to curve upwards, so be careful when topping or trimming, that the shape of the tree doesn't change significantly. The trees are odiferous at first, so give them a few days outside to air out. Make sure you have a roomy and sturdy base that holds water, because piñon trunks tend to be thicker than the spruce and fir trees normally sold as Christmas trees.

A few interesting stats about these trees: The Single-Leaf Piñon Pine and the Bristlecone Pine share the title of Nevada State Tree. The piñon is the only pine bearing a single needle per fascicle; the oldest known tree of this species is 903 years old and the largest ever discovered is 4.4-feet in diameter, 46.3-feet tall, with a 48.1-foot canopy.

COLD ★ COCKED

By Roscoe Wilkes

The term cold-cocked, is it proper English? It isn't my dictionary. Even so it is a word used back in my hometown with an easily understood meaning, i.e. being knocked unconscious as might happen to a boxer in the second round. I'll use it. It's good American slang.

Back in 1950 I enjoyed friends in Lincoln County, Nevada, close friends, socially and in many other ways. I immediately think of four. Each was hard working, supported his family, always voted, paid taxes and were generally accepted as good citizens. I liked them all very much.

These four were ardent, devoted sportsmen including hunting, and particularly they pursued and sought that big buck, that trophy mule deer, and there were some in the nearby hills and mountains. Did any of these four ever shade things a little while hunting, like maybe a look around a little before or after the regular season? Or might they place their wife's tag on a deer so they could continue their quest for that big one with a heavy wide antler spread? Well, little rumors floated around from time to time.

I will not hazard an opinion on that subject matter. At the time I was District Attorney and bound by oath and position to prosecute where violations of the law occurred. These men were valued personal friends. Clearly there existed a possible conflict of interest. It was discussed a few times, sort of.

When in a group setting these friends, signaling to each other, wink, wink, would then pose the question: "If the game warden brought one of us in, you 'really' wouldn't prosecute, would you?" "You better damn well not get caught, and if you do, you better damn well hope the matter doesn't land on my desk. A word to the wise should be sufficient." Again wink, wink, laugh, laugh, and on with the social event, often an outdoor barbeque.

In those days, at or near deer season the deer hunting stories numbered more than just a few. Told over a Jim Beam around the campfire and elsewhere they were highly entertaining and sometimes even true. One had to love those stories. I recall one that decidedly struck my fancy because it was worthy and very likely true. I heard it several times.

The story involves one of the four friends earlier mentioned, and I will refer to him only as "friend."

He was one of the most likable men I ever knew, truly a great friend and loved by all. Friend had a ranch, grew hay and did it well. To reach his haystack area it was necessary to leave the road, pass through a large gate, and proceed along the edge of a field to the enclosed stack of hay.

As the story goes it was late afternoon or evening. Friend had a deer. He was at his haystack proceeding to open a space at the bottom of the stack to place the deer in it and then cover it all up with hay. All told it was a good way to store a deer on a temporary basis. While in the process he detected the presence of a visitor. When he turned around, lo and behold there stood the game warden. No! It couldn't be the game warden, but it was.

As I heard it all no mention was made as to what, if any, conversation then and there took place or what was done with the deer. What was made known was that friend and the warden left the haystack, walked back across the field to the gate and road.

The gate was large, to accommodate big loads of hay on wagons or truck. It was constructed of wood and was heavy. Also it was located at the top of a little incline. When opened, it would need to be held or gravity would cause it to swing without restraint forcibly down the hill.

Friend opened the gate and, while likely in a state of nervous excitement, accidentally let go of it. It swung open wildly. When that gate's swing had ended, friend looked down, and there flat on his back lay the game warden cold-cocked by a swinging gate.

Racing through his mind were many worrying thoughts. My God, what have I done? How badly was the warden hurt? Could it be serious? What now? Serious minded and the good guy that he was, friend immediately did what he could. Pulling his large red cowboy handkerchief from his pocket, he busied himself running back and forth to a nearby creek wetting his aid and applying it to the warden's forehead. Shortly, but seeming an eternity to friend, the warden regained consciousness.

How did it all end? Was the warden angry hot or grateful for friend's cool and helpful first aid? If the latter, did he confiscate the deer, issue friend a warning and thereby end the matter? Or did he issue friend a charging ticket? If so, friend may have appeared before a Justice of the Peace, entered a quick plea of guilty and paid a fine, customarily about \$50.00 in those days. The case never came to my desk.



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Thompson's Opera House has a long history in Pioche



What is now Thompson's Opera House was built in 1873 and opened as Brown's Theater. It had been a central gathering place for the residents of Pioche, Nevada from the time it was built. Thompson's had enjoyed community use as a dramatic theater, musical hall, dance hall and movie theater over the years, until it closed in the 1940s.



After Lincoln County completed a major renovation of the Thompson's Opera House, the building was reopened in 2009. The unique facility is now available for rent by public and private parties. It is a perfect venue for many events, such as weddings, business meetings, reunions, small conferences and entertainment. Recent use includes weddings, seminars, and community meetings.



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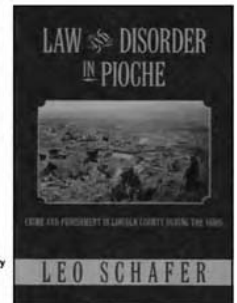


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Bureau of Land Management, http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html.

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The Less-Wild Side: Churches in Pioche

By Barbara Rohde

Despite the wild reputation Pioche had gained in its early years, there was a mild and cultured side that revealed itself with the coming of wives, families, and churches. The first church service (Episcopal) was actually held in a bar in Sept. 1870, for lack of another suitable building; after many Sundays of raising a sizeable church-going crowd, the Episcopal congregation raised funds to build their own church. The Episcopal Church stood on Cedar Street. In August, 1873, the "Episcopal church ladies held a fund-raiser for their bell and tower, held at Brown's (Thompson) Opera House." Sometime during the history of the town, it burned down; by the early part of the 20th Century, the congregation had moved into the old Miners Union Hall, where they still meet today.

The Catholic Church also had a strong presence in Pioche: St. Lawrence's Parish was started in 1870, and they dedicated a building on Cedar Street (about seven lots down from the Episcopal Church) three months later. In October, 1872, they started a "St. Vincent de Paul Society, and raised funds to build a hospital. The Catholic Cemetery stands well apart from the other three in town (the Public Cemetery, Boot Hill, and the I.O.O.F./Masonic Cemetery). After 1876, the Catholic "presence" diminished (coinciding with the slowdown in mining, and desertion by its church-members?), and it was downgraded to the status of a "mission."

The Presbyterians established a church in 1873, but disbanded in 1879 – perhaps also due to the movement of miners out of Pioche after the "boom" years ended. During the fire in August, 1872, "a small church on Meadow Valley Street was used as a morgue" – perhaps this was the Presbyterian Church? Reference

p. 168 of Treasure in the Hills>

There were a few Jewish people among the early residents of Pioche; but they had no synagogue, and celebrated their holidays with each other in their homes. In 1873, the newspaper recorded the "first circumcision ever held in Pioche," done on the child of merchant Jonas Cohn. The Cohns ran a store in Pioche. In October of 1876, the Pioche Record noted that the "Israelites" in Eureka, Nevada, had "organized a congregation for religious worship – numbering about 30 people, and it is the first and only Hebrew congregation ever organized in the state of Nevada." Adolph Cohn started a tobacco and cigar store in Ward, Nevada, in December, 1876; and the newspaper reported that much of Jonas Cohn's stock was shipped to Adolph's store. This was at the time many miners were leaving for "richer pastures."

By the 1930's, other denominations had come to Pioche. One woman, writing of her youth in Pioche from 1929 to 1933, mentioned that "the different churches in Pioche would usually have summer school, all of us attended them. All the Churches sponsored a play and we all wore costumes rented from the 'Salt Lake Costume' house." (p. 207, Treasure in the Hills)

In the early, wild days of Pioche, there were no Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) in Pioche; their church president had warned them away from associating with the lawless miners and saloon girls... though they would bring wagon-loads of produce, hay, eggs and meat to sell in Pioche, or some of the Panaca residents would haul ore from Pioche to Bullionville (a mile west of Panaca) until the narrow-gauge railroad was built. When Mr. J.A. Caselton established a new mining/milling area near the Prince Mine, on the western slopes of the Ely Range (3 miles west of Pioche), he preferred to hire Mormon miners, observing that they did not drink or "party," and would show up on time for

their work. In 1929, a branch of the L.D.S. Church was established in Pioche, and in 1938, they completed building their first meetinghouse. This building now serves as the Pioche Town Hall since a new, larger (and all one-story) church was built in 1988.

A small church stands at the head of Main (High) Street, which was the Unitarian Community Church in the 1940's, then was called the "Four-Square" church during the 1980's and 1990's. During the 1940's, the Morris Motor Company had operated the "Quonset" style building which now bears the name of "Channel of Light;" which denomination or congregation met there is an unknown.

The Baptist denomination met for many years in the old, 1930's Cowley Drugstore (where the Purple Onion Antique Shop is now located); then built a modern church in 1988, on the developing, northern edge of town. This is a thriving church, which sponsors a "Vacation Bible School" in the summer (as alluded to by Arlena Heidenreich Duke, earlier) open to children of all faiths.

The wooden cross on Lime Hill has been an "institution" as long as any of the early 20th Century residents of Pioche could remember. While no one remembers its origins, everyone associates Christmas with the lighting of the cross, and of the "town tree" at the head of Main Street, in the small mining park. In December, 1876, the Pioche Record newspaper recounted that "the music and literary (association) entertainment to be given to provide funds for a Christmas tree for the children of Pioche, at the Episcopal Church on Cedar Street." It is tradition for the townspeople to gather there on the first Monday of December, to sing carols, share hot chocolate, and wait for the arrival of Santa Claus, usually arriving by horse and buggy!

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Lodging

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 Overland Hotel(775) 962-5895
 Sweet Life Guest Cottage(775) 962-5188
 Wright's Country Cabins(866) 810-7303

RV Parks

Eagle Valley RV Park(775) 962-5293
 Pioche RV Park(775) 962-5570
 Roll Inn RV Park(775) 962-5566

Transportation (getting here)

Major Highways

From Las Vegas I-15 northbound to U.S. 93 north
 From Ely U.S. 93 southbound
 From Salt Lake City to Cedar City I-15 southbound
 To UT SR-56 to NV SR-319 to U.S. 93
 Lincoln County Airport(775) 728-4409
 Lighted, paved runway, 4800 feet long
 12 miles south in Panaca

Bus Service

Lincoln County Transportation..(775) 728-4477

Education

Pre-school/(775) 962-5832
 Elementary School K-6
 Junior High School(775) 728-4655
 Students bus to Panaca, 12 miles south
 High School(775) 728-4481
 Students bus to Panaca, 12 miles south

Utilities

Pioche Public Utility(775) 962-5840
 Solid Waste – NWS Crestline(775) 728-4333

County Government

Lincoln County Clerk(775) 962-5109

Taxes

Lincoln County Assessor(775) 962-5890

Police

Lincoln County Sheriff(775) 962-5151

Telephone

Lincoln County Telephone Co ..(775) 962-5131
 www.lctsys.com
 WUE Inc. (cell phone service) ..(775) 962-5161

Cable TV

Rainbow Cable(775) 962-5111

Internet

Lincoln County Telephone(775) 962-5131

Medical

Grover C. Dils Medical Center ..(775) 726-3171
 25 miles south in Caliente
 Caliente Clinic(775) 726-3121
 Steven Klomp, Dentist(775) 728-4432
 12 miles south in Panaca
 Lincoln County Ambulance911
 Shannon Kirchesh, Masseuse(775) 728-4325
 Panaca
 Lincoln County Physical Therapy (775) 726-3117
 Caliente
 Meadow Valley Pharmacy(775) 726-3771
 Caliente

Churches

Berean Baptist(775) 962-5886
 Christ Church Episcopal(775) 962-5835
 Holy Child Catholic, Caliente(775) 726-3669
 LDS, Pioche Ward(775) 962-5469
 United Methodist Church, Caliente.(775) 726-3665

Newspaper

Lincoln County Record(775) 726-3333
 Caliente admin@lincolncountyrecord.com

Other Community Services

Pioche Senior Center(775) 962-5378
 (serves lunch daily)
 Pioche Chamber of Commerce ..(775) 962-5544
 www.piochenevada.com
 Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce
 www.lincolncountynevada.com ..(877) 870-3003
 Lincoln Links Golf(775) 962-5206
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 unteers always welcome.(775) 726-3447
 VFW, Caliente(775) 726-3156



Looking down on Pioche from the slopes of Treasure Hill.

PIOCHE PROFILE

Much in contrast to its colorful past, today Pioche attracts new residents with its friendly, picturesque hometown appeal. Pioche is the Lincoln County seat; the courthouse is a prominent fixture of the town. With full amenities, Pioche offers good food, lodging, shopping, automotive and emergency services. The town's recreation center includes park and picnic facilities, a swimming pool and a baseball diamond. A 9-hole golf course, with artificial turf T-boxes and greens, is located 2 miles north of town at mile-marker 2 on SR322.

Pioche has two parks. The Mining "pocket" park is located at the upper end of Main Street, where the Business route from Highway 93 comes into town. It has a bandstand with a bench, overlooking a mine tunnel replica. The main town park is at the lower end of Main Street, by the new Courthouse. It has a baseball field, large grassy play area, a large picnic shelter with cooking areas, and playground equipment. This is where the Labor Day celebration events are held, including the mining/drilling competitions. The town swimming pool is located on the other side of the baseball field, and is open only during summer months.

The town's free R-V Park is located across the street from the swimming pool; six pull-through sites are available for short-term stays (less than one week). Water and sewer are available, no electricity, and a donation is requested for use. No restroom facilities are provided at this RV park. There are two commercial full-service RV parks for those wanting or requiring all the amenities.

With a population of about 800, Pioche is the northern-most community in Lincoln County. It is located 175 miles north of Las Vegas on U.S. 93 at 5,500 to 6,200 foot elevation in the high desert of southeastern Nevada. The relatively high elevation and location out of the rain shadow of the Sierra gives the town an invigorating 4-season climate. Average climate data:

- July average high, 89 degrees F.
- January average low, 21 degrees F.
- Annual rainfall average, 13.5 inches
- Annual snowfall average, 44 inches.

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