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Desert

WESTERN TRAVEL / ADVENTURE / LIVING

DECEMBER 1965

50c

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white short-sleeved blouse and a red skirt with a white pattern, stands in a desert landscape. She is looking up at a large, spiky yucca plant that has a long, thin branch reaching out with clusters of small white flowers. The background shows a vast desert with low mountains under a blue sky with some clouds.

SONORA HOLIDAY

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Desert Calendar of Events

During the annual Mid-Winter season, visitors entering San Diego County from the north along U.S. Highway 101 view miles of rolling hills stretched out at roadside in a brilliant carpet of blooming poinsettias.

Other events this month are: Barbershop Singers' Show, Yuma, Arizona, Dec. 4; Jaycee's Rodeo at Mesa, Arizona, Dec. 4-5; Phoenix Dons Club Travelcade to Jerome, Prescott and Montezuma Castle National Monument, Dec. 5; Miracle of Roses Parade, Scottsdale, Ariz., Dec. 12; Las Posadas, Mission San Luis Rey, San Diego (public invited), Dec. 19; Gymkhana at Monte Vista Ranch, Wickenburg, Ariz. Dec. 29.

Most all communities have Christmas events, but they are too numerous to list. Write to local Chambers of Commerce for dates and places.

EVENTS DEADLINE. Information relative to forthcoming events in the West must be received **TWO MONTHS** prior to the event. Address envelopes to Events Editor, Desert Magazine, Palm Desert, California 92260.

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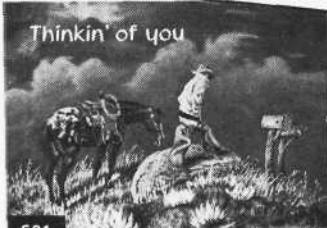
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Our 21st Annual Round-up!

WESTERN CHRISTMAS CARDS

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New Books for Desert Readers

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J. ROSS BROWNE: Confidential Agent in Old California.

By Richard H. Dillon.

The author has done a superb job of assembling fast-moving passages from letters and reports of J. Ross Browne. The book sweeps along with strong continuity and the humorous, sometimes satirical, observations and rare adventures of this 19th century travel-writer, essayist and government servant will hold your interest to the end. Browne's scathing appraisals of our often eulogized pioneer forbears will come as a shock to many readers. As author Dillon observed, they are not likely to win friends for Browne among native-son societies whose defensive jokes about skeletal horse thieves in the closet may now be proven true!

Browne arrived in California about the time of the gold rush and was one of the few public-minded citizens of that time who was more interested in reform and honest government than in gold dust. Piracy in the Customs House, graft in the collection revenue and dishonest disbursement of public moneys were grist for his mill—and this mill was loaded with grist.

Browne's travels on his assignments as a special agent covered most of the West, from Texas to Oregon. However, his painful honesty became too much for a public servant to flaunt and periodically he lost favor with those in power. During such times he traveled in Europe and wrote of his adventures or, on one occasion, visited Nevada to look for silver. His writings about Washoe are among the best on the Silver State.

A number of reprints of J. Ross Browne's adventures have been published during recent years, but this is the first to cover a relatively unknown facet of his life—that of confidential agent. Hardcover, 218 pages, \$5.95.

FIESTA TIME in Latin America

By Jean Milne

Travelers have mixed emotions about Latin America fiestas. While they interfere with shopping and certain other activities, they also present tourists with opportunities to participate with natives in countries where normal life goes on behind high walls. In this book, the author gives a month by month calendar of religious, civic and tribal fiestas that take place from the Mexican border to Tierra del Fuego, and she misses none of the flavor in describing them.

As old traditions are lost, they are replaced by new ones. The author describes one amusing incident which occurred a few years ago when some boys in Guatemala accidentally broke off a large branch of a mango tree. Revealed in the cut was a natural formation resembling a Virgin. The tree became a shrine and the anniversary of this discovery is now celebrated every year.

Fiesta Time is full of interesting stories like the above. Hard back, 236 pages. \$4.95.

NATIONAL PARKS OF THE WEST

By the Editors of *Sunset*

A pictorial record of the national parks of the West, this book encompasses material familiar to most Western families. Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Zion, and all parks west of the Rockies, including Alaska and Hawaii, are presented in photos of glowing color and with lots of information about the political and governmental complications in getting bills passed to designate areas as national parks, etc. The most interesting information is contained in photo captions. The book doesn't offer much verve or vitality in presentation, but it suggests basic tools for mountaineering, has a chart to designate park life zones and other charts listing historical chronology, accommodations, and so forth. Hardcover, 320 pages it sells for \$11.75. You will find this a useful and beautiful book if your travel adventures are directed toward national parks.

OLD FORTS OF THE FAR WEST

By Herbert Hart

Third in a series about historical Western military posts, this one concentrates on the Southwest. Written with a gusto that fits the subject, Marine Major Hart takes you back to Civil War times when flimsy forts were thrown together as settlers and armies moved West and Indians moved in. His research is truly remarkable. He has covered forts at little known at Fort Piute in California, about which practically nothing is published. Maps and directions about "how to get there" are included. Readers of this book will learn things about their own communities which will surprise them. How many residents of Las Vegas, Nevada, for instance, know that on the maps of both Confederate and Federal armies a Fort Baker was designated where Las Vegas now stands? It was founded in 1855 by Mormon settlers who were sent from Salt Lake City by Brigham Young with orders to build a fort to protect immigrants and the U. S. mails from Indians—and to teach the Indians how to raise corn, wheat and potatoes. The post, constructed of adobe, was occupied until 1858. The barracks building still stands near the present site of the Elks Lodge.

This is a worthwhile book for history buffs, whether you are interested in old forts *per se* or not. Treasure hunters will find a lot of ammunition here, but let's hope they confine their activities to recovering just that, rather than tearing down historic sites! Hardcover, large format, with 191 pages, the book sells for \$12.95.

HAWAII COOKBOOK

With the advent of supermarkets and air transportation, even a Hawaiian luau can take place on the desert—and is. This informal manner of entertaining is popular with desert hostesses and desert sands often substitute for beach sand just as corn husks or foil replace ti leaves and spinach takes the place of taro. This cookbook, with 180 traditional recipes from Hawaii, suggests readily available substitutes for foods distinctive to Polynesian Islands so you can have a luau in your own back yard. Beautifully illustrated in color with 96 pages, it's a paperback and sells for \$2.00.

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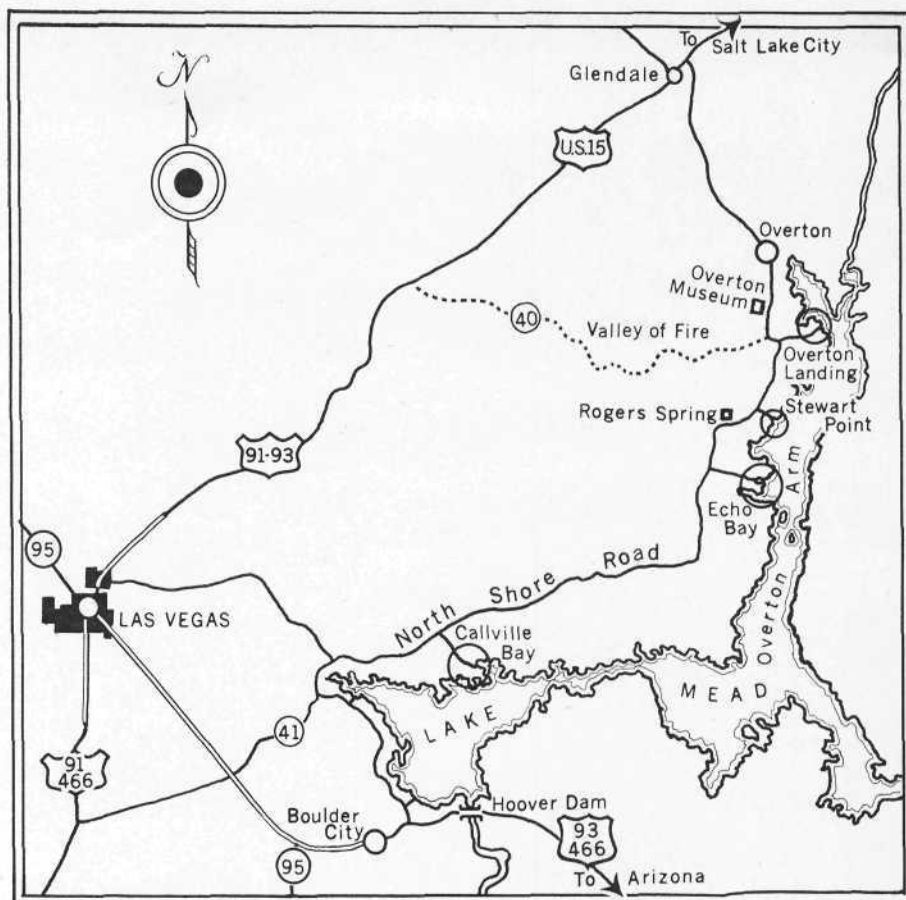
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Lake Mead's New Scenic Route

By Jack Pepper



HERE'S A NEW highway motorists traveling between Salt Lake City and Las Vegas, Nevada, have been waiting for. It won't save you any time, but it opens up some of the most spectacular country in Nevada.

Instead of the dreary scenes along this part of old Highway 91, you may now swing through Overton and down to Las Vegas along a 46-mile route that passes through the Lake Mead National Recreation area. The country is wild and colorful—sort of a prelude to the Valley of Fire, which frames it on the west. On its east side, you get occasional glimpses of blue, blue Lake Mead.

The new road leaves Freeway U. S. 15 at Glendale and winds through the Moapa Valley where Mormons have spent a great many years converting the barren desert into productive farms. The Latter Day Saints first settled here in 1881 to grow cotton along the Virgin River. They still farm, but Overton today is chiefly a supply center for fishermen and boaters on the Overton Arm of Lake Mead. There are good motels and one particularly good restaurant. Overton provides an ideal stopping place for motorists not wishing to buck the razzle-dazzle of Las Vegas.

Although the Mormons came to Overton in 1881, they were not the first homo sapiens to live here. Pre-historic people

roamed the area 3,000 years ago, succeeded by the Basketmaker and Pueblo Indian cultures. Archeological artifacts and displays of these ancient cultures are displayed at the small, but interesting, Lost City Museum just south of Overton.

Undoubtedly the place of worship for the pre-historic peoples was the nearby Valley of Fire, which may be reached by a side road off the highway a few miles south of Overton. Covering 30,000 acres, these brilliant sandstone formations rise from the valley floor like prehistoric monsters. The area is best photographed in the early morning or just before sunset. Now a Nevada State Park, there are picnic facilities and trails leading up to interesting formations, including some fine petroglyphs. (See *DESERT*, Feb. 1965.)

Opposite the entrance to the Valley of Fire is the road to Overton Landing where boat launching facilities and fishing supplies are available, although presently the water line is considerably lower than the facilities.

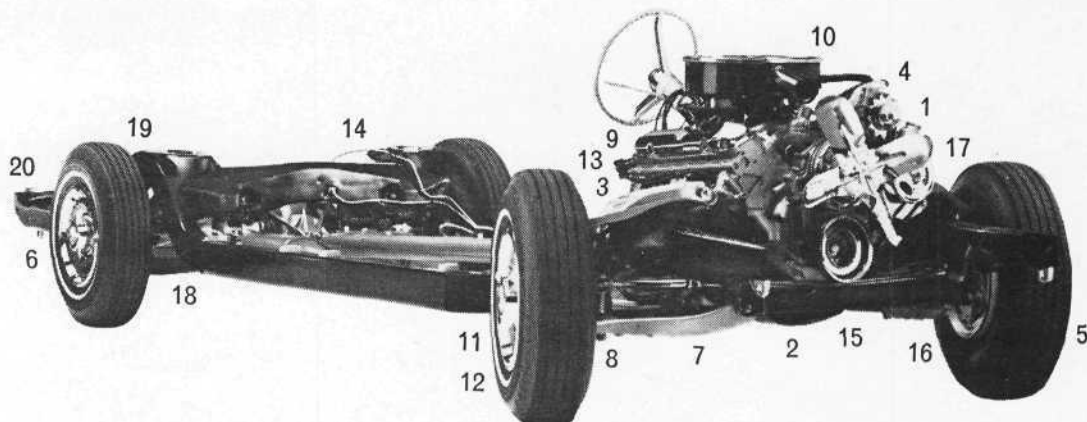
The next point of interest along the new North Shore Road, as you continue south, is Roger Spring, a small body of water where there are limited camping facilities. The water is warm and we were told the spring was once owned by a man named Rogers who raised tropical

fish in the pool, until it was taken by the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. A variety of small fish still dart through the clear water. Several families were camped when we stopped, and both children and adults were swimming in the naturally heated pool.

North of here is a stand of palm trees which would also make a nice campsite, except for the trash dumped by people who do not appreciate the outdoors and care less for their fellow man. We cleaned up the area as best we could, but it would have taken a ton truck to carry away the garbage.

Just north of this area a road leads to the shores of Lake Mead and Stewart Point. Approximately 50 small vacation homes are located here, with fine views of the lake. At one time it was possible to lease this land from the Federal government, but the land is no longer available.

Ten miles south of the Stewart Point turn off is the road to Echo Bay. Anticipating increased traffic due to the new road, a luxurious concession is in the process of developing campgrounds, mobile home and trailer facilities and an enlarged boat launching area. Fishing supplies, boat gasoline and rental boats are available. A really sensational hotel is under construction, but the opening date



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is not yet announced. There is also a ranger station located there.

Although some children were swimming on a small beach near the boat dock, we were told swimming is not legally allowed. This unfortunate restriction is true in practically all of the public facilities surrounding this giant lake, with the exception of the largest concession at Boulder Beach. Accessible swimming areas are either too rocky, too marshy or too busy with boat traffic to be comfortable. As one disgruntled family informed us, "For a man who cannot afford water transportation, Lake Mead is strictly for the birds and boats!" In the registration book at Echo Bay a tourist had registered and then, evidently, looked over the facilities and left, but not before scratching over his name and adding under comments "No Swimming Allowed!"

From the turnoff at Echo Bay, the new connecting link of the North Shore Road winds through country tinted every shade of red imaginable. Once Indian country and later explored by prospectors and adventurers, mountains and washes along this stretch are no doubt rich with Indian artifacts, lost bonanzas, or who knows what? A number of old mine workings are evident.

The road winds between the edges of the boundary of the Lake Mead National Recreational area and the Muddy Mountains on the right and the Black Mountains on the left. Although it leaves the Lake Mead shoreline it goes through the "Bowl of Fire" and fascinating geological formations. Lake Mead is visible from several points.

Callville Bay, now only accessible by boat, will be the site of another concession scheduled to be completed sometime in 1967. Callville in the early days was an important port where boats coming up the Colorado River with passengers and freight for Salt Lake City discharged their cargo. A side road from the new highway now leads to the area, but ends on a hill overlooking Callville Wash.

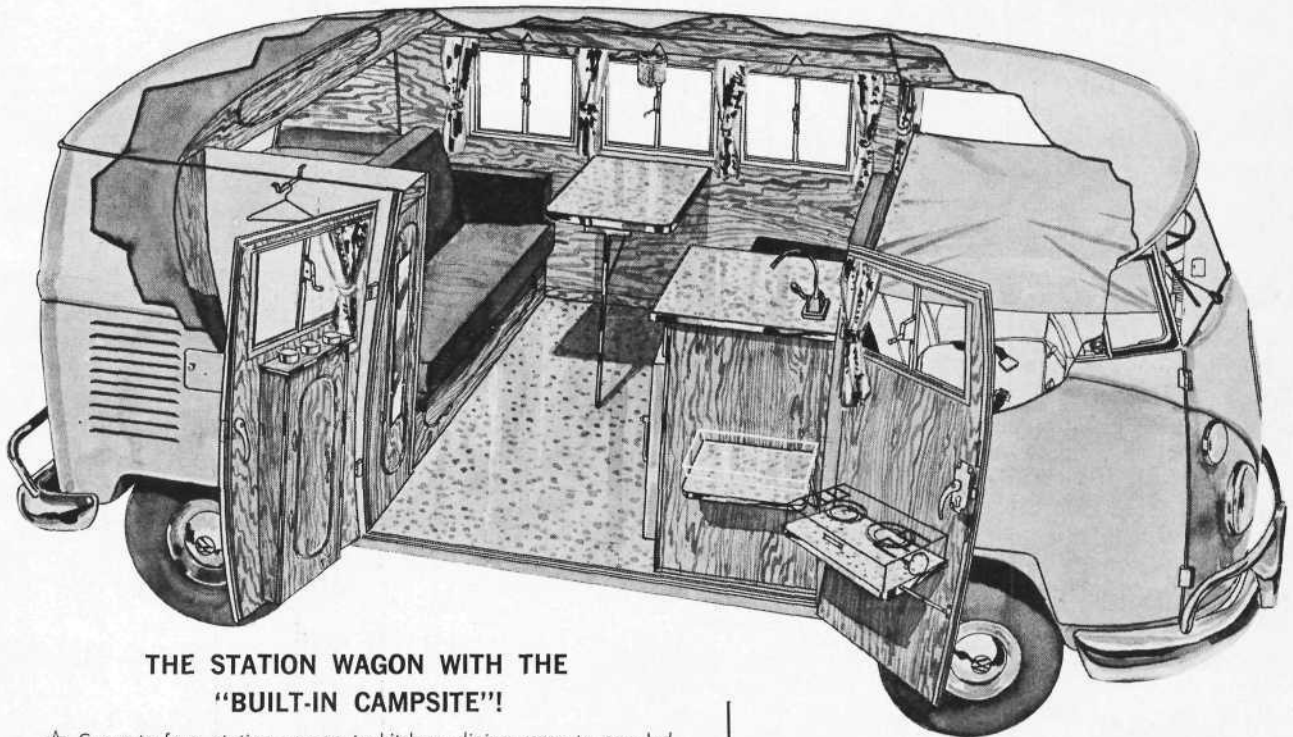
At the end of the North Shore Road motorists can either turn left and go into Las Vegas, or continue on to Henderson or Boulder City, thus eliminating the Las Vegas traffic. Or, you can once again join U. S. Highway 15 to Los Angeles by taking a short paved road between U. S. Highway 95 and 466 to Arizona.

Regardless of whether you're going north or south, the new North Shore Road of the Lake Mead National Recreational Area will be something to remember. Once you've passed that way, you will want to return. □

Lake Mead's new North Shore Road winds through colorful and weird geological formations (top photo). Swimmers relax in the warm water at Rogers Spring (center). Echo Bay's boating and camping facilities have been enlarged and improved (bottom).

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Two Missions Time Forgot *by Robert Bennett*

FAMED THE world over are the 19 ancient Franciscan missions which line California's Mission Trail from San Diego to the Bay of San Francisco. But rare is the historian who even recalls two little "pueblo missions" on the California bank of the Colorado River which for eight months, in 1780-81, sought to bring peace and Christianity to the Yuma tribe of what is now California's Imperial Valley and the delta of the River Colorado. Only attentive historians have even heard of the Mission Purissima Concepcion de Maria Santissima or of the Mission San Pedro y San Pablo del Bicuier.

Today, amid a well-kept garden on the crest of a knoll overlooking U.S. Highway 80, there stands a modern Spanish-type church and monument to a martyr. This land was once Fort Yuma, California, facing out across the river to the city of Yuma, Arizona, on land which is now a Yuma Indian school. The site of this memorial marks both the first and the last of the Spanish "mission towns" in California. It was then known as the Mission Concepcion Purissima, but of

the old mission itself, there is no trace. Nor is there trace, or even a marker, of its sister mission, San Pedro y San Pablo. It, too, was located on the California bank of the Colorado, some three leagues (about eight miles) downstream from Concepcion Purissima. Treasure hunters have never been successful in turning up evidence of it, although they search even today.

Though it was more than two centuries later before these two lost missions of the Colorado were definitely established, the trend of events leading to their founding started when the Spanish leader, Melchior Diaz, journeyed in 1541 north from the Gulf of California and battled both the Yuma Indians and the horrors of the desert to reach what is now Imperial Valley. He defeated the Indians, but four days of the "trembling desert sands like hot ashes" sent his party fleeing. He was, so far as is known, the first white man to set foot upon the Colorado desert and the first to face the savage tribes inhabiting the lands along the river which cut through it and gave it its name.

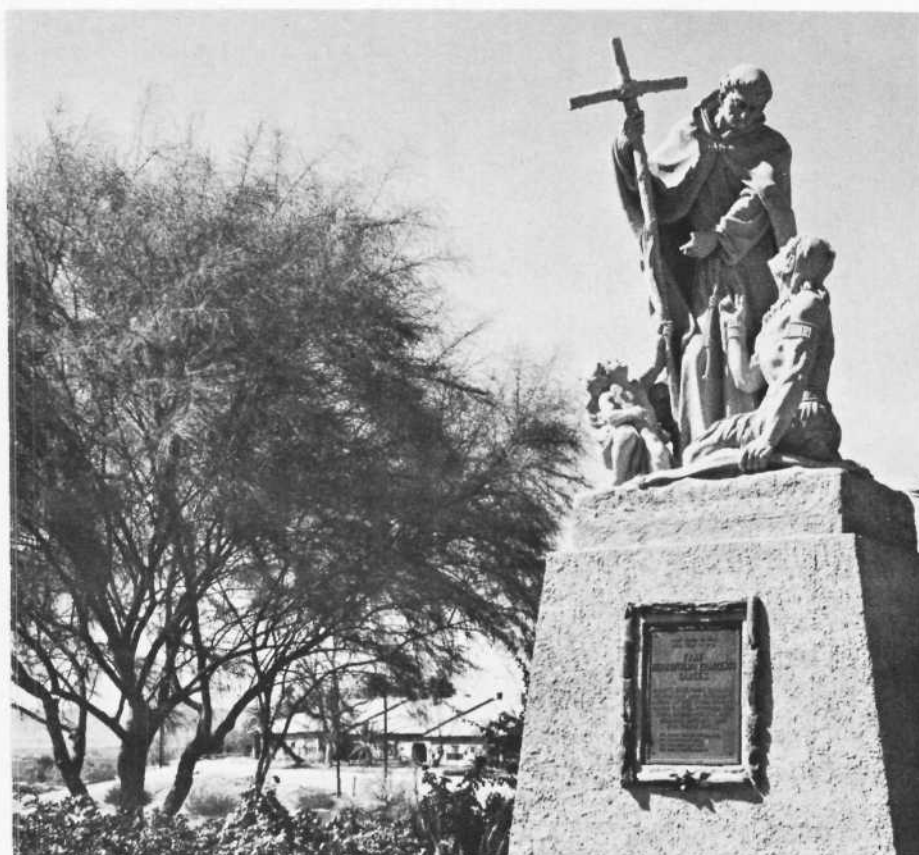
Fr. Serra's mission establishments were already well in progress along the Alta California coast when, in 1771, Fr. Francisco Garces came from San Xavier del Bac, near Tucson, crossed the Colorado, presumably near the Yuma ford, and became the first missionary to reach the desert. No record exists of what are called "his confused wanderings in the wilds" at that time.

Fr. Garces returned to the desert, however, in 1774, as a member of an expedition led by Captain Juan Bautista de Anza and guided by a Christian Indian, Sebastian, who had found his way from Fr. Serra's San Gabriel mission across the San Gorgonio Pass, down through the desert to the Yuma ford and then up to the Tucson area. De Anza's goal was to explore a land route to link with the California missions.

On reaching the Colorado, De Anza made friends with a great Yuma Indian chief, Palma. Fr. Garces converted Palma. The De Anza expedition, after first becoming lost on the desert for six days, returned to the ford and was guided by Palma's men from water hole to water hole until it reached the San Gorgonio Pass. De Anza went on to Monterey, but Fr. Garces returned to the ford.

A second similar, but much larger, expedition made the same trip under De Anza's leadership in 1775, and for the next five years the route was well established. During these years, however, there had been developing friction between Fr. Junipero Serra, "presidente" of the Franciscan missions in California, and the Spanish governing authorities. At issue was the relative command authority of the missionaries and the military. On the one side were Fr. Serra and his subordinates and cohorts of the religious establishment. On the other were Comandante General Teodoro de Croix and the governor of the Californias, Felipe de Neve.

Monument of Father Garces shows old Yuma military garrison in the background. The compound serves today as headquarters for the Yuma (Quechan) Indians.



Remains of one of these forgotten missions is often sought by treasure hunters, but to date remains unfound.

In 1777, by order of King Carlos III, De Croix instructed De Neve to draft a new set of rules for California government. This he did, without consulting the missionaries and set up a scheme for future mission conduct utterly at variance with Fr. Serra's Franciscan plan which had, until then, worked so well. Fr. Serra protested vigorously, but vainly.

During this same period, Fr. Garces had repeatedly urged the establishment of missions along the Colorado. His recommendations and the journal of his explorations, together with a plea from Chief Palma for missionaries, finally reached the Spanish king. De Croix was directed to comply with the request, which was also supported by De Anza, although De Anza warned that such missions would have to be supported by troops because of hostile Indians in the area.

De Croix dallied for as long as possible and then sent about establishing the Missions in accordance with the new scheme in which the friars would have no voice of authority. Instead of two missions, protected by sizable garrisons of soldiers, such as had worked so well on the coast, De Croix decided to set up two mission towns, or pueblos.

The fathers of the College of Santa Cruz at Queretaro were directed to establish the missions and the soldiers and colonists were ordered to proceed to the Colorado. There were 20 colonists, 12 laborers, 21 soldiers, all with their wives and children, and four missionaries in the expedition. Despite his misgivings, Fr. Garces was among them.

At the same time, De Croix ordered Capt. Don Fernando Rivera to organize another expedition of colonists and soldiers to proceed overland to the Santa Barbara area, there to establish two missions so long sought by Fr. Serra. These missions, too, were to be set up along the lines of the De Neve and Colorado River concept, rather than as recommended by the missionaries.

In the fall of 1780 the Colorado River colonists reached the mission sites. The settlers took possession of the fields in the fertile lowlands without regard to Indian rights. The missionaries had no possibility of protecting those rights, nor had they gifts of food or clothing to

bestow. Converts were few, and those difficult to keep since they were not compelled to obey.

By June, 1781, when provisions brought by the colonists from Sonora were exhausted, a party set out on the trail to San Gabriel and returned with fresh supplies. Late that same month, Rivera arrived with 40 colonists and families and armed escorts bound for Santa Barbara. He, likewise, had a large number of cattle and horses. Rivera sent back the greater part of his Sonora escort and dispatched the main body with a nine-man escort on to San Gabriel under the leadership of Ensign Alferéz Cayetano Limon. He himself then recrossed the Colorado with 11 or 12 men and almost all of the livestock. He planned to restore his horses and cattle to better physical condition before continuing the trip across the desert. He made camp opposite Mission Purissima Concepcion.

The sight of their grains and grasses being further devoured, provided the last straw for the Yuma tribes. On July 18, 1871, both missions and the Rivera encampment were set upon by infuriated savages. Some prisoners were taken, but most were massacred. One lone colonist fled southward with the news to De Croix at Arizpe.

De Croix promptly ordered Lt. Col. Pedro Fages and Don Pedro Fueros to lead a punitive force, which was to rescue any captives, and to capture those responsible for the massacres. Fages did free the captives and did find the bodies of the four missionaries, including Fr. Garces, but despite several engagements with the Indians did not find their leaders. The missionaries were taken back to Sonora for burial. The other bodies, including that of Capt. Rivera, were buried where they were found.

Several other punitive expeditions were led to the scene, but they failed to capture the warring chiefs.

When first word of the massacres had reached De Neve he promptly delayed the foundation of any further missions, fearing attack by the hostile Indians. Troops and colonists destined for Santa Barbara and the missions there were held at San Gabriel and ordered to remain

Continued on page 33

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Bases of these trees are styrofoam cones to which have been attached, with airplane glue, all sorts of pits and seeds.

Below: Tied to this Century Plant blossom-stalk are Christmas-red cookie-cutters shaped like angels, trees, candy canes, lanterns, stockings, birds. The plant was silvered before cookie-cutters were added, and this tree is perfect for a child's room since cutters may be removed to make real cookies of the youngsters' favorite shapes.



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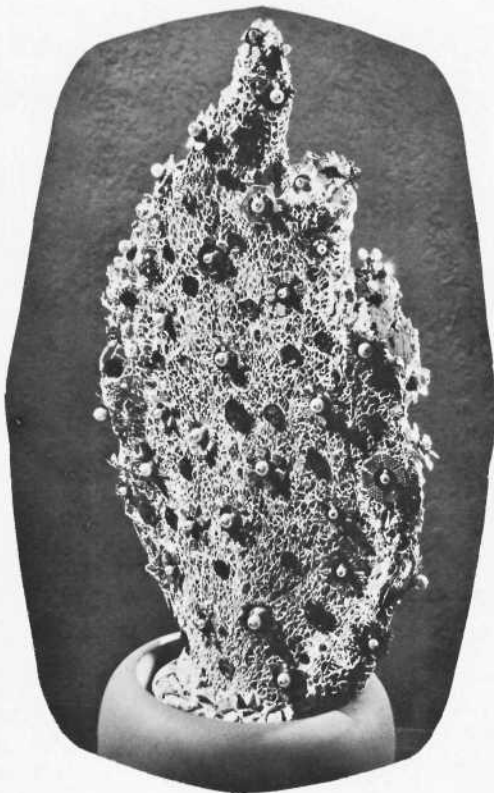
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Make Christmas a desert holiday

by Louise Price Bell

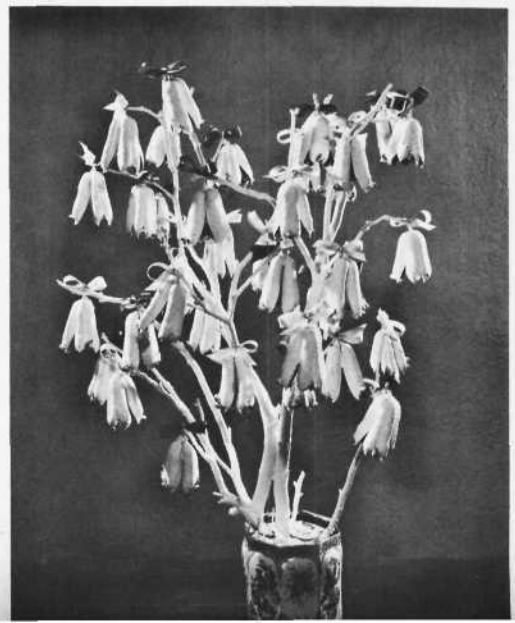


This is a single pad from a Prickly Pear cactus, with outside skin peeled off, thus revealing the interesting cobweb-type skeleton beneath it. Small ornaments and sequins were added to glamorize the "desert Christmas Tree," after the base was sprayed silver.



Palo Verde branches are sprayed green, then red (dime store) beads pushed on all available ones. Tree is set firm in pebbles in green bowl, the unit set in center of wreath made of eucalyptus buds pressed into plaster-of-paris and allowed to set, then sprayed gold. Eucalyptus buds drop off trees, are easily obtainable.

Base of this tree is a manzanita branch, and the "bells" which decorate it are yucca pods, turned upside down to simulate bells. Entire setup was sprayed white, then white velvet bows added (over wire by which bells were fastened to tree) to some, Christmas-red bows to others.



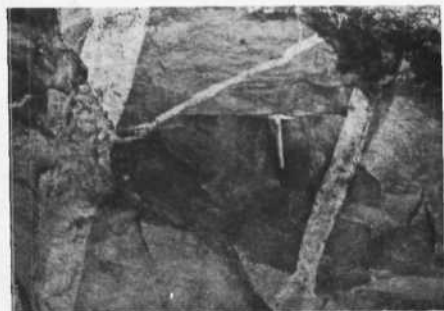
Each weekend brings more amateur prospectors into the desert. Here are some tips.

For Weekend Prospectors

By George Thompson



Horizontal flows of igneous material in sedimentary rock.



Vertical dikes with small connecting dike, in granite.



Vein of rich silver-lead ore showing foot and hanging walls.



Vertical dike in granite. Softer material comprising dike has eroded away.

THE INCREASING interest in prospecting stimulated by rising metal prices and desert exploring has brought about a need for knowledge of basic geology and mineral deposits. Fortunes may be overlooked simply because a weekend prospector or rock collector doesn't know what to look for, where to look, or how to identify the minerals he finds.

In order to understand the fundamentals of prospecting, it is necessary to learn first how mineral deposits were formed. Nearly all ores were deposited by highly solvent water solutions which acquired a mineral content while flowing through areas of mineralized rock. The water solutions which made these deposits were generally hot, rising from great depths in the earth, and were especially solvent due to temperature as well as chemical composition. In some areas surface waters penetrated mineralized zones, sinking to the point of deposition. This, however, is less common. These solvent solutions flowed from the mineralized zones along fissures, faults, and fractured strata, depositing their mineral content in these broken areas when pressures or temperatures dropped or chemical reactions or changes occurred. Erosion of the earth's surface, or elevation of its underlying strata, have exposed many of these deposits.

Outcrops are the most commonly exposed form of deposit familiar to prospectors, although probably only a small percentage of ore deposits actually outcrop. The size of an ore body cannot be pre-determined from the size of an outcrop. Variations peculiar to an outcrop on the surface will probably remain nearly the same in the vein as it is followed underground. Outcrops do not gain in width with depth. Actually, more veins pinch out as depth is achieved. Intersecting veins, dikes and shear zones are particularly conspicuous for mineral content. These are zones of broken and cracked rock in which the fractures have been filled with gangue and mineral, which in some cases has been subject to secondary enrichment. Watch for these.

Contrary to common belief, depth usually does not increase ore value, even though there are instances in which this is true. Often surface deposits have been leached by water action, their values being absorbed into soluble solutions and carried downward to enrich lower parts of the deposit. This action is known as secondary enrichment. A deposit which has been subject to secondary enrichment contains ore which is richer than that which was originally deposited. These so-called bonanza zones were created when precious minerals were absorbed in solution and then re-deposited in concentration, usually at the permanent ground water level. Not all minerals are subject to leaching, but those which do leach are responsible for some rich secondary enrichments, usually at depth. In some cases the mineral involved was not subject to leaching, but the surrounding worthless gangue material was and did leach out the deposit, leaving the valuable mineral in concentrated form. Don't follow an outcrop with unapparent value in the hope of encountering richer ore at a greater depth due to leaching. Although deposits have been formed in this manner, the gamble is not one for the weekend prospector with little capital or equipment. And, of course, not all outcrops with mineral indications contain ore of value.

Large deposits of certain ores, such as tungsten, lie some distance below the surface. These deposits were formed by the intersection of veins or dikes, by deposition from solution in underground cavities or volcanic vents, or in pegmatites. Ore shoots often extend outward from them and in time erosion of the surface over-burden exposes some of these shoots as outcrops. These ore shoots, which generally grow larger as the ore body is approached, are referred to as blowouts. This term is a mis-nomer, however. They are formed by usual means, but occur in unusual shapes and sizes such as necks and pipes. Prospectors working this type of deposit have helped give rise to the theory of increased value with depth.

Pegmatite dikes, simply defined, are cracks in igneous (volcanic) rock, such as granite, which have been filled with mineral deposited by hot water solutions or by intrusion of molten magma accompanied by water in quantity and in occurrence with gangue materials. Gangue is the worthless rock which accompanies mineral in veins, dikes, etc. The surface of the fill material cooled rapidly, creating pressure which forced the water solutions to the sides and depths of the pegmatite where the majority of mineral was deposited. Although the surface area may show only common quartz or gangue material, mineralization may occur within a short distance of the surface. Pegmatites are major sources of tungsten, beryllium, titanium, tin, rare metals, and a number of gemstones. Pegmatites are common formations, are found nearly everywhere, and in view of the variety of minerals found should not be overlooked by the prospector.

Just because a formation contains a percentage of a mineral, it is not necessarily an ore of that mineral. Unless the mineral can be extracted, milled, and sold at a profit after all expenses of operation are paid, it cannot be considered a commercial ore. Mills and smelters pay

only for the mineral the shipper wants extracted. Other minerals, which probably could not be profitably extracted, become the property of the smelter. Further, the smelter penalizes or charges the shipper if certain elements are present in quantity in the ore. What the prospector is concerned with is not what minerals are present in a suspected ore, but whether the ore can be profitably worked for a particular mineral or minerals. Only an analysis by a competent assayer can determine this. Most state universities and some governmental agencies will make assays for the prospector without charge or for a nominal fee.

So, remember this when you go prospecting—look for outcrops and veins, intersecting veins or dikes, faults or shear zones, and pegmatites. The richest ore is usually found near the surface. Leaching, resulting in secondary enrichment, is usually evident near the surface, the enrichment generally found from the surface to permanent water level. Although most minerals are conspicuous by their weight (or lack of it,) and color, crystal and cleavage, these characteristics should not be relied upon in lieu of a competent assay or analysis. □

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IS THIS AZTLAN?

By Ralph Caine

IN THE YEAR one, according to the great stone calendar of Mexico, the highly civilized Aztecs (Crane People) of that country began the wanderings from a valley of tremendous caves and extensive marshland far to the north of their present habitat. This place, called Aztlan, has been searched for for centuries, but its exact whereabouts still remains a mystery.

The fabled Vale of Aztlan (place of reeds and herons), from whence the Aztecs came, is described in an ancient codex as a valley surrounded by mountains in which a large lake and much swampy land existed. There, "their people first lived on a lake island where they found a tremendous cave." A drawing of the place is still preserved in an early pre-Columbian manuscript, the Codex Boturini. The picture shows a lake, with an island near its western shore, on which a boatman is crossing the waters to the southwest. One of the inset sketches depicts an inverted bowl-like formation that was their cave home; another shows eight tribes starting off on their early migrations. Ideograms, drawn somewhat like our modern cartoons, explains the scene while the calendar symbol for the Aztec year one appears in the center of two glyphs.

According to different authorities, this first year begins in 648, 1064, or 1168 A.D., all dates differing by the multiple Aztec cycle of 52 years.

The Aztec Indians belong to the largest and most important family of Indians on the North American continent, the Nahuatl peoples. This linguistic group extends from British Columbia, in Canada, to as far south as Panama. It includes the Shoshone Indians of the Great Northwest, the Paiute, Mono, Panamint, Serrano, Gabrieleno, Luiseno, Capenoes and Cahuilla tribes of California and the Hopi and Comanche Indians to the east. In pre-Columbian days successive waves of these Nahua speaking peoples drifted south from Aztlan and on into Mexico, beginning with the Toltecs, the great stone builders, and ending with the Aztecs.

The latter arrived in Mexico at a late date. At the time they were considered a small tribe of barbarians, but by the year 1324, because of their fierce and predatory nature, they were able to conquer all the peoples around the present site of Mexico City. Aggressive and intelligent, the Aztecs rapidly assimilated the advanced learning of the subjugated tribes and by the time of Cortes had reached the highest degree of culture existing in the New World.

Zealous church officials, following in wake of Cortes, destroyed the archives and temples of the Aztecs. To reconstruct the events of this cultured race today's historians have access to but a few originals, along with some pre-Columbian codices. According to these authorities, the Crane People set forth from an island with seven caves in search of a similar place that was foretold in prophecy, where they would find an eagle perched on a cactus with a serpent in its mouth. Today, this sign is recognized as the national emblem of Mexico and is displayed on the coin and flag of that republic. It is an interesting coincidence that the place where they encountered this divine omen and finally settled was again on a swampy island in a lake. There the Aztecs built their temples and laid the foundations for Mexico City. They called themselves Mexica, presumably from the name of their great war god Mexitl.

But, where is this place called Aztlan, the original island with its Seven Caves and the Laguna de Oro, whose scenes are described by the early Aztec historians? The places acclaimed are almost as numerous as the number of investigations made. They extend from Texas in the east to California in the west and from Utah in the north to Panama in the south. Edgar L. Hewitt believes that

the valley of the Casa Grandes ruins of Chihuahua, Mexico, is the Vale of Aztlan. A book entitled *Aztlan*, written in 1885 by W. G. Ritch, places the ancient home of the Aztecs in New Mexico. Prominent historians such as Bancroft and Prescott placed Aztlan in the Great Salt Lake region of Utah. Others believe that the isle in the story of Aztlan is one of the islands off the coast of Sonora, in the Gulf of California. Seler suggests the island of Acocolo as Aztlan and Vaillant says that there may be some basis for the lake region in the State of Michoacan, Mexico. Prof. Wigberto Jaimiez, National de Historia, Mexico, points to the marsh lands and lagunes near Mazatlan as the probable site of Aztlan. Recently, the early migrations of the Aztec people have been retraced back from Mexico City to as far as the West Coast. This early Mexican frontier is called Aztatlan, a similar word with an extra syllable. To the north, beyond this point, the ancient migration trail fades into a vast wasteland and is lost in the ever changing desert.

As mud and adobe construction quickly disappear with the ravages of time, the only recoverable information is through artifacts found at these sites. But a cave on an island in a lake is not easily lost to antiquity; so, it is generally conceded, the place has never been found. Because of this, there has been

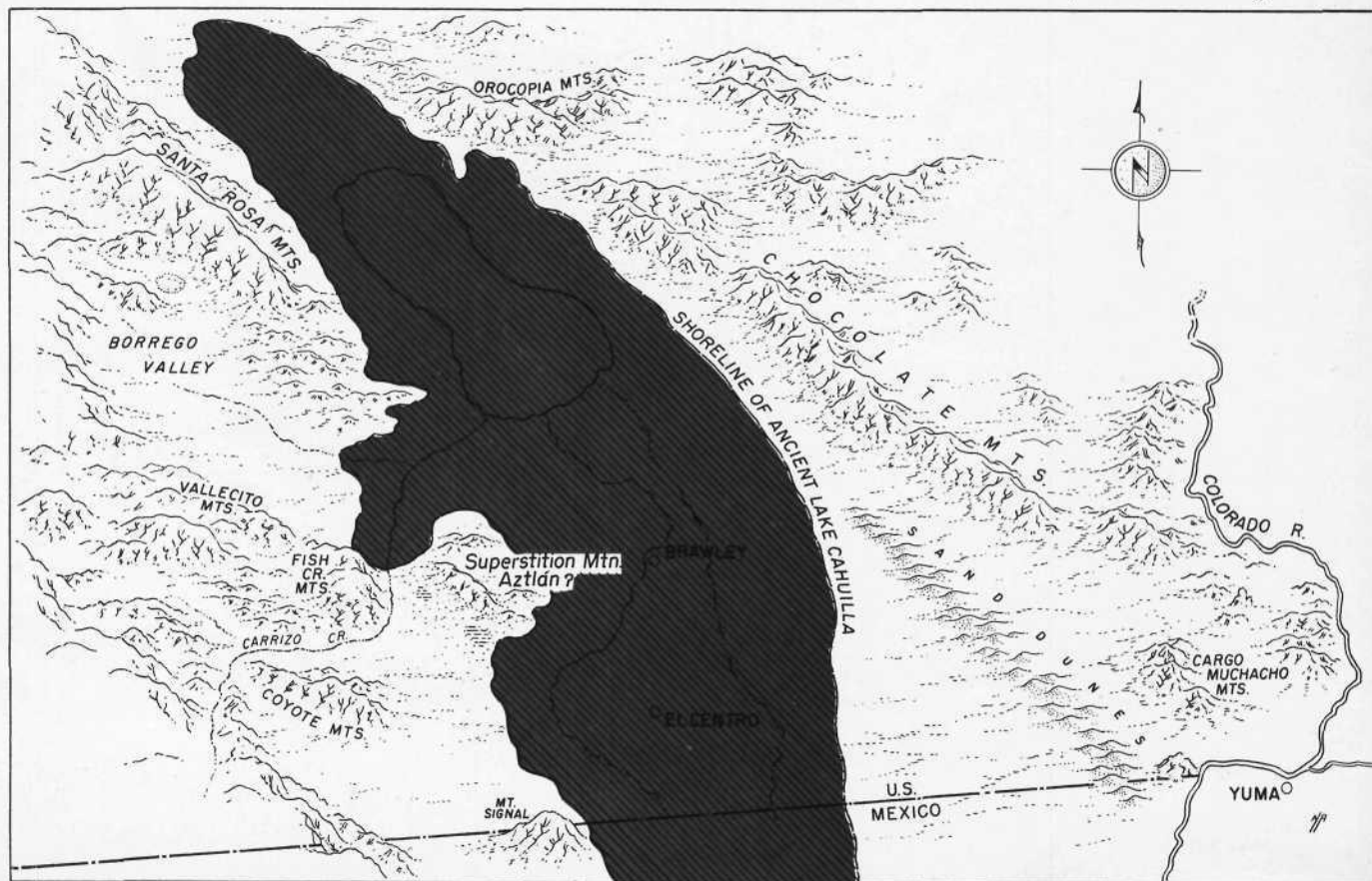
an unusual amount of interest and a concerted search by archeologists, ethnologists and historians alike to pinpoint the exact location. The author contends that the best possible clues remaining to solve the riddle of the lost land are those given in the historically recorded descriptions of the place itself.

The unrelated Pueblo (Village) Indians of the Great Southwest have a unique story of creation that suggests the same homeland as the Aztecs. According to Indian legend, Mother Earth gave birth to their early ancestors in a dark underground world. The locale is generally described in legend and mythology as being a parcel of land surrounded by land-locked waters. This "island in a lake" is said to have been the site of a "huge cave." The dwelling place was divided into many compartments, a "soot world, sulfur smell world," etc. The vast cavern is described as having been covered with a tremendous stone, "solid and resting upon the earth like an inverted bowl." A clue to the location states that "the mountains to the west are blue, to the north are red, to the south are white and to the east yellow." According to legend, a large water serpent lived at a lower level in the cave, causing floods and earthquakes. It is said the Indians abandoned their cave world soon after a severe earthshock, when the rock walls started to crumble and the waters lowered in the lake

A graduate geologist as well as a member of the California and American Bar Associations, the author has searched for the Aztec's mysterious Aztlan throughout Mexico and the Southwest. Here is an exciting and provocative conclusion.

around them. Then, the ground was described as having grown soft and damp, to be hardened later into rock which preserved tracks. Due to this last catastrophe they had to dig out of their cave world and never went back because the rock overhang was beginning to crumble and fall. After this final emergence to the world above, the Indians are said to have migrated eastward. Another clue is that "they had to cross a great river soon after leaving the cave." This same idea appears in the retraced migration route for the Aztec souls, back to their cave heaven, after death.

Again, both the Aztec and Pueblo Indians have legends in common about Montezuma, one of their most important gods, that merge in tales of antiquity and stories of hidden treasures. The Pueblos believe that their god, Montezuma, was born in a great under-



ground dwelling, a cave reaching far into the ground, that is supposed to be filled with hoards of gold and silver. The place is said to be situated in a "hollow desert mountain far to the west towards the setting sun." There is another legend that relates to that part of the Aztec Emperor's priceless hoard of gold that eluded Cortes' plunder of Mexico City which suggests that it is buried in their ancient cave home. According to this myth, the king heeded the dictates of an earlier prognostication by the Aztec priests. A captured Mayan king was to have been sent in command of a legion of warriors and bearer slaves to take the treasure far to the north, to be hidden at a place that is described to be "a huge cave in the desert." The bearers were to be disposed of and their corpses left behind as patron guards, or spirits, to keep an eternal vigil over the treasures of the Aztec gods. The Yuma Indians have a tale of many warriors and slaves coming north, over the Camino Diablo, centuries ago and the Martinez Indians have a legend that tells of hundreds of Indians going into a hollow mountain, never to return.

Surely, the historically recorded place and all these similar tales and legends of the Aztec and Pueblo Indians must have some element of truth and some origin in common. The question is, could there be or was there ever such a place as the one described? If an imaginary line is run far to the west from the present site of the Pueblo dwellings in Arizona and New Mexico and another far to the north from the west coast of Mexico, they would intersect somewhere in western Arizona or Southern California. The ancient trail south, from the present Shoshone country, must also merge in the same general area. This place would have to be at the site of a large lake or inland sea. This body would have to have had an island near its western shore. There would have to be a cave of tremendous proportions and unique character within a mountain, on this island, in this sea. Surely such a set of circumstances could not be duplicated in nature within a radius of many thousands of miles.

It is a well established fact that one of the great inland seas of the world once filled the below sea level basin of Imperial valley in Southern California. The Salton Sea as it appears today was nonexistent prior to the spring of 1905 when unusual floods threatened to refill the valley with water from the Colorado River. The level of the existing lake lies 300 feet below the surface waters of the

ancient Lake Cahuilla and covers but a small fraction of the area of the early sea. It is estimated that an unevaporated part of the former body of water existed up to 500 years ago, which coincides with the legends of the Indians. Today, the general area is sometimes called Coachella (little shells) Valley because of the profusion of fresh water shells that are scattered over the floor of the desert. The relic beach and shore line of this ancient lake encircles the valley at about 40 feet above ocean level. Travertine, a white calcium carbonate, marks the old lake level where the waters once lapped against the sheer mountain sides. Protuding above the surface of these ancient waters and near the western shore would have been an island mass consisting of Superstition Mountain and some low lying nearby hills. On this relic island a cave mountain does exist, generally unknown to the white man and shunned by all of the Indians of the Southwest, that exactly fits every detail of all the legends and myths of both the Aztec and Pueblo Indians. One day this site might well become a great shrine of the Indian world.

This archeological dreamland is truly a geological wonderland. A solid granite "stone cover, like an inverted bowl" over 50 feet thick, rests upon lower sediments due to the fault rift character of the district. This freak of nature once formed the largest and most unusual underground cavity in the world. It is not a leached-out cave, like the limestone caverns, but is a solid rock shelf over four miles long with an overhang of almost a mile wide, all under a granite roof. Nowhere else on earth has the rotational sheer force of nature so combined with crustal rift movements to create such a stupendous horizontal fault break. The flat sliced-off roots of this once decapitated mountain now lie 25 miles to the northwest.

A four-mile strip of low land between the cave and the mountains to the west was a few feet above the level of the ancient sea, but the inflowing of Carizzo Creek and a resultant higher water table would have made it appear as an island. This swampy extension of the lake would account for the expansive marshlands of the historical scene and gives new significance to the words Aztec and Aztlan, or Crane People and place of reeds. When the lake waters finally broke out of their above-ocean level basin, after a great earth disturbance, it would have exposed a wide strip of soft damp earth around the island, representing a drop of 40 feet, down to the slowly evaporating

sea-lake level. The clay mud would have quickly hardened in the hot desert sun to "preserve tracks," which settles another point in the legend. Further, an active fault runs directly under the overhang that sometimes vents the acrid odor of sulfur. Also, it is a "country of bright colors," as the hues in the different directions appear to fit the legendary description. Finally, the great river crossed in migrating eastward would have been the Colorado, to complete a legendary picture that is factual in nature. Superstition Hills, just to the east of the cave mountain, were also a part of the island land mass. This area must have been an important ancient ceremonial ground because a tremendous accumulation of shells can still be seen heaped in the center of a saucer-like arena.

Today, Superstition Mountain, a single rise approximately 6 miles long, looms up out of the surface of the desert many miles apart from other mountains. By day, it is a drab looking mass of shattered rocks. Great piles of sand lie over its surface, covering cave entrances. After the sun has set and cool air embraces the desert, strange sounds and weird noises issue out of the mountain. Prison convicts, once stationed at the old rock crusher, and many others tell strange stories of moans and rumblings at night and the author has sensed that eerie feeling as the mountain "breathes" and trembles when the subterranean cavity changes pressure daily.

So, a preponderance of evidence points to Imperial County as the site of the ancient sea, the Laguna de Oro, and Superstition Mountain with its fantastic granite "overhang" as the site of Chicomoztoc and the Seven Caves, with the general area being Aztlan. Even though the treasure of Montezuma is still a myth, the recesses of this unusual cave world might contain artifacts that would push back the frontiers of Ancient America.

Today, this dried up lake bed and surrounding mountains has a strange and peculiar fascination. Nowhere else are seen and felt the extremes of fertility and barrenness, light and shadow, height, depth and heat and cold. Strange piles of alluvial sediments abound with layers of gypsum. Fantastic sandstone and lava concretions are strewn over the surface, like toys left by the Aztec gods. There are also mollusk beds, sea shells, spouting mud pots, painted sands, terraced marine deposits and stretches of the ancient shore line. These formations and relics of the past deserve serious exploration. □

Letter from The Man Who Found Pegleg's Gold

In the March, 1965 issue of DESERT Magazine, this anonymous writer claimed to have found the legendary Pegleg black gold within a 30-mile radius of the Salton Sea. He also claimed to have recovered some \$300,000 dollars from this gold by removing the black covering and selling it to collectors and jewelers in Alaska. Moreover, he backed up his claims by producing the evidence. The gold nuggets he has sent to DESERT Magazine are on display in the bookshop of our new location where you may come to see them for yourself. The Man Who Found Pegleg's Black Gold volunteered to answer questions published on the Letter's page in each month's issue. Here is his most recent letter, which was accompanied by two more of the distinctive nuggets which he always sends to identify himself.

Dear Choral Pepper:

For the past three months I've been on my annual summer trip to Alaska and Canada. This is why you haven't heard from me. During my gold selling trips I developed a great fondness for the north country, especially in the summer months. I haven't taken any gold up there for several years, but still make the trip as a vacation to enjoy the hunting, fishing and the country in general.

Harry J. Phillips' letter in the August/September issue vindicates my theory of the origin of the Pegleg black nuggets in precise, scientific language. What more need be said to those who would doubt the Pegleg story?

My thanks to both the Willenbacher family and to Jack Derfus for the kind words in their letters which were printed in the October issue.

I'm enclosing two more nuggets with this letter. One has had the black oxidation tumbled off of it and the other is one of the underground nuggets with a

rather thin, reddish-black oxidation on it just as I found it.

Since most of the questions now are repetitious or of the nit-picking variety, there really isn't any reason to write in every month, so you probably won't be hearing from me in the future unless something unusual comes up. I've already explained three times the matter that Thelma Dunlap brings up in that I had quantities of nuggets smelted and refined into bullion while in Canada and then sold it there when I found out it would be illegal to possess bullion in the U.S.

As a matter of possible interest, I made a visit to my Pegleg site just after returning from the north country. Frankly, I was curious to see if anybody had found it. There were vehicle tracks in the sandy wash described in my original story, showing that someone had been that way fairly recently. It looked like they had camped overnight near the spot where I had parked my jeep

on that long ago day. Looking around I found traces of footprints (although they were mostly obliterated by the wind) that led into the country on the opposite side of the wash that I had taken on the day I found the black nuggets. I then walked to the hill and mound by a roundabout way and could see no traces of anyone having been there. I mentioned previously that I always took care to fill up all the holes I dug to recover nuggets and left the surface as undisturbed as possible, and always within a few days the wind had removed all traces of my visit.

Anyway, at least one person has been within two miles of the discovery site, and maybe one of these days somebody is going to stumble on it, although I think the odds are great that they would pass on over it without realizing where they were.

Sincerely yours,
The Man Who Found
Pegleg's Black Gold

This old time prospector was looking for the Pegleg black gold in the Superstition Mountains near Southern California's Salton Sea. Photo is dated 1904 and was found in the DESERT Magazine files.



Desert Holly

By Betty Mackintosh

A CLOSE-UP VIEW of this small desert bush, *Atriplex hymenelytra*, reveals the reason for its common name. Its tiny leaves have the same shape as those of English holly. In addition, the soft silvery whiteness of desert holly foliage, its graceful gnarled branches and keeping qualities give it a traditional place in Christmas holiday decoration.

Its charm, in fact, has almost lead to its undoing. Man in his enthusiasm breaks off a whole bush to carry home, when a few twigs or a really dead limb (if there are *any* leaves, it's still alive) would have done just as well. On public lands it should not be picked, as it is

protected by law. On private property, of course, it's up to the owner.

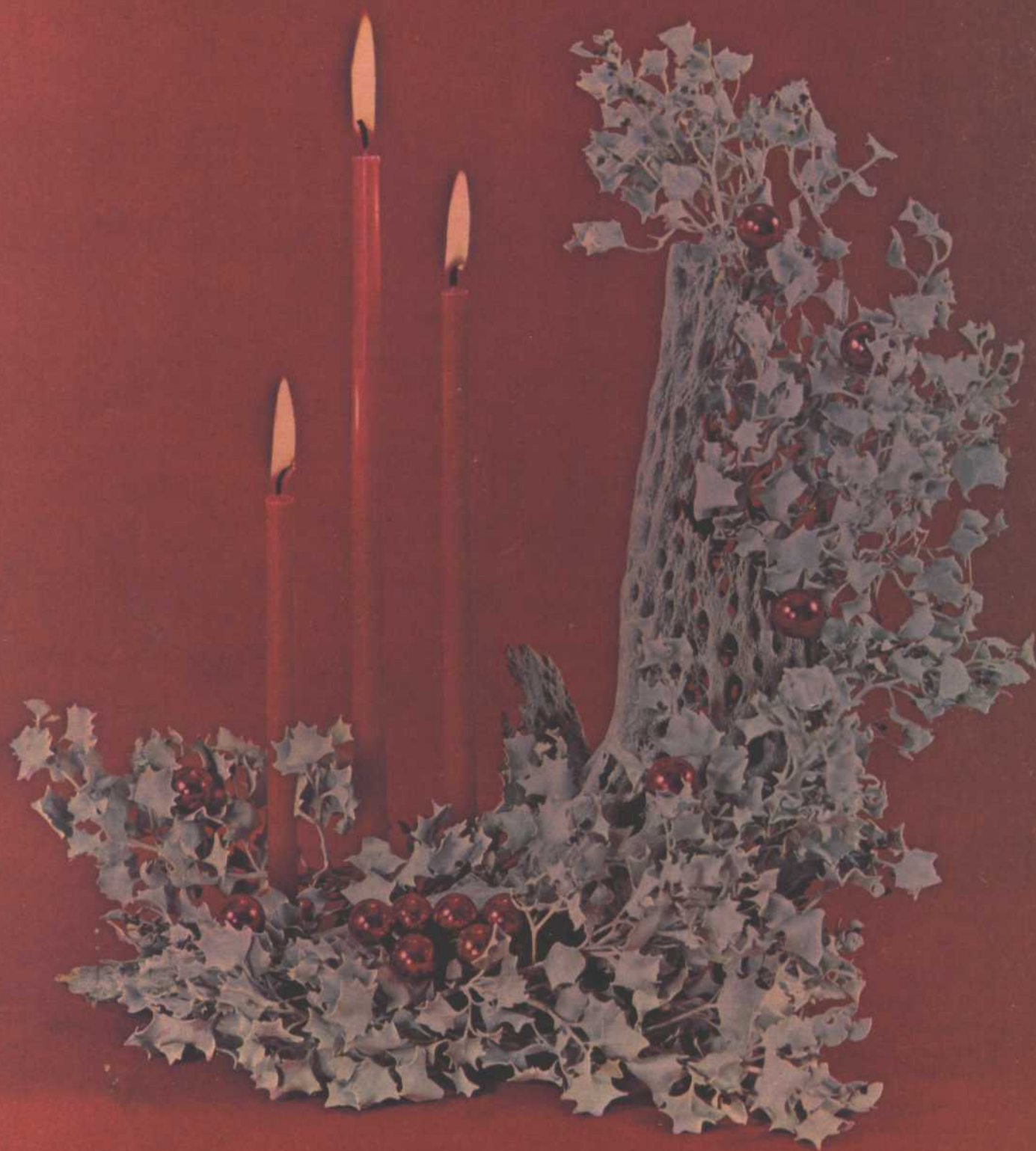
Plants are now available in desert nurseries and do very well in the garden, not only in desert areas, but also near the coast. In moist air, however, the leaves lose their whiteness and become greenish-grey. Plants may also be grown from seed "gathered late in summer and planted in sand" (*Desert* 12/61); or, "transplanted when quite small if placed in a mixture of 1/2 topsoil and 1/2 sand and kept moist until established" (*California Garden* 12/64 - 1/65).

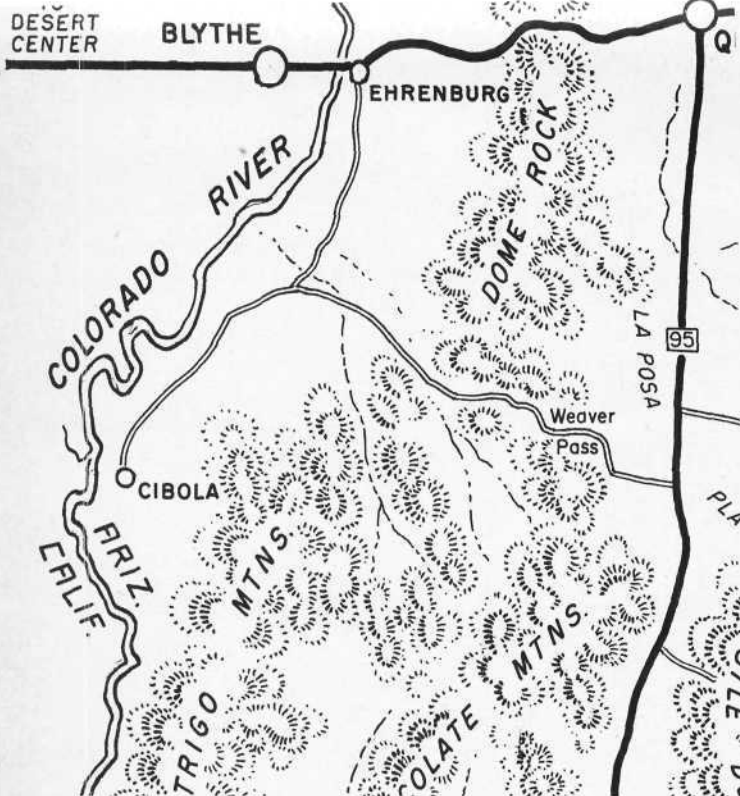
In its natural habitat, alkali washes of desert foothills from Utah to Sonora, the Desert Holly may be 16 to 20 inches high and spread 3 feet along the ground. Normally flowering January to April,

a fall rain will trigger the blossoming as early as November. Male and female flowers are borne on separate plants, like the pepper tree. It is not spiny, as are many desert plants. A covering of modified hair protects the leaves from the heat. In some locations, during the hottest summer months, the leaves turn a pinkish or lavender grey.

If you have Desert Holly in your yard, or know someone who has and will give you a sprig, hang it upside down to dry before you put it in an arrangement. This "sets" the leaves in their normal position. If treated gently, they will hold indefinitely. Stripped of leaves, the gnarled branches or the twiggy ones make graceful arrangements on their own or with small ornaments attached. □







THE CIBOLA GHOST

By Kenneth Marquiss

A COUPLE OF fascinating facts about lost money treasures are: information about their locations can pop up anywhere, and someone is sure to ring in a ghost to guard the loot.

In his younger days my father served a hitch as a missionary, and I spent most of my youth in India. Over there I ran into all kinds of superstition and saw many of the hoaxes of so-called "supernatural phenomena."

Later, in California, after I'd finished some college psychology and science courses, I became a confirmed skeptic and prided myself on a "scientific approach." You can imagine, therefore, the jolt I got when I ran into my one and only honest-to-pete ghost—guarding a treasure site on the Colorado River.

It came about in this fashion.

Just before the last honestly named War, not counting police actions and advisory missions, I had swapped off my old ox-yoke metal detector for a shiny new bug that the brochure said was "highly advanced, and with remarkable new capabilities." Compared to my present one, it was strictly model-T, but in those days it was the joy of my heart.

Pearl Harbor, followed by the freeze of gas rationing, prevented me from trying out those "remarkable capabilities." Younger readers won't remember the rationing handicap, but there will be plenty who do!

There was much construction needed, so I put my new bug and my camp gear in storage for the duration.

In the summer of 1943, I was working on a big desert hospital job. The supervisor was a ramrod and an organizer and the job was going good, but not for me. I indiscreetly laughed when I chanced one evening to overhear his little spitfire wife bullying *him*!

Being the mouthy type, one day at lunch I was telling my woes to a quiet man named Wulf and his son, who were good listeners. What I said couldn't be put in print—even in Berkeley—but the gist of it was that I had a new detector, knew a good treasure location in Nevada, and I was going to quit the wretched job and go treasure hunting if I had to prod a mule the whole way!

Mr. Wulf corked my tirade with a single sentence. It was, "If you could just get the gas, I know where you could go look for a big treasure buried lots closer to home—down by the Colorado River—and it's a good bet too!"

The big mouth turned to all-ears, and by a couple of lunch hours later, I had all the pertinent information tucked in my note book. Mr. Wulf said that along in the '20s he had a ranch near a place called Cibola, on the Arizona side of the Colorado, north of Yuma. He said that south of the ranch, on a small bluff overlooking the water, were the ruins of an old adobe.

One day two middle-aged women from Mexico showed up and asked permission to dig around those ruins. His permission was conditional on a full explanation; and a mutually satisfactory split, of course. This is the story they told him.

When their mother was very small, their grandfather had run a wood station—there was a dock there in those days—to refuel the big river boats fighting the tricky currents of the Colorado. It was a moderately profitable business, he hired a number of wood cutters, and was well liked and respected in the area.

The women said that their grandmother told them their grandfather had a fascinating hobby. He robbed stage coaches!

He was successful in this because he had a simple system and a good blind in the wood business. He was light-complexioned and spoke flawless English, so could pass as either an American or a Mexican. Spies tipped him to the movement of money; and he had a husky vaquero accomplice with a fast horse, a long loop, and no compunctions.

This helper would stake out a string of good horses for him. Our hero would then hijack the stage, posing as either a Denver dude or a Mexican bandito. As soon as the moneyless stage turned the bend, he would switch costumes and, by a series of fast changes of horses and directions, evade pursuit.

While this imaginative bandit was never snagged by the law, he hadn't reckoned on the ironic twists Fate sometimes holds in store for smarties. He'd been to Yuma on business, was returning on one of the big stern-wheelers, and made the mistake of watching a high-stakes poker game in the salon. A gambler goofed and the wrong card showed, followed in seconds by gunfire. In the resulting confusion, the goofing gambler made a safe



Looking out the door of the tent where the ghost appeared!

exit over the side, but the innocent bystander (our bandit-wood dealer) was plugged dead center and became part of the freight unloaded on his own dock. His asserted grave, some distance away, was still faintly visible when I first was there.

The women said that their grandmother told them he kept his loot in a big Mexican candy kettle and that "it was over two-thirds full." She knew this because about five weeks before his death she had helped him move his cache and it took two trips to complete the switch. He also kept in this kettle a small (about half pint size) milk-glass cosmetic jar with a hinged pot metal lid, in which he stored the stones pried out of jewelry, a couple of tiny gold watches, and other knick-knacks. A goat skin, tied with a rawhide whang, kept the dirt out of his bank.

After the bandit was buried, his wife went looking for the kettle, but it wasn't where she thought they had hidden it. Extended searching proved fruitless, so she took what little money remained and returned with her child to relatives in Mexico. Mr. Wulf told me that the sisters came back three or four winters in a row, but always left with empty hands.

It was a month or two after I heard all this before the job buttoned up and I was free to try. But there still remained that big fly in the honey jar—*IF* I only had the gas!

I bucked like a bronc around a snubbing post, but the hard-faced ration board wasn't impressed one bit. "It couldn't help the war effort," they said. "Don't come back!"

So a few days later I was singing the deep blues as I bought two "B" stamps worth of gas at the service station owned by a man we had best call "Arkie." He was one of those cherubic faced Jekyll-and-Hyde characters with a mind that worked like the inquisitive paws of a raccoon. And he had more connections than a Hollywood millionaire has in-laws. He suggested a talk over a cup of coffee in a nearby cafe. The upshot was that for a cut, I could get all the fuel I reasonably needed. The deal was *not* black market and perfectly moral, as the fuel was not actually gasoline; but it *was* highly irregular, slightly illegal, and best called "a loophole." Better yet, it made my old La Salle "rar up an prance" like a yearling trotter. So it wasn't long before I'd crossed the river and was trying to get to the adobe.

The first trip was a flop because the washes between the ranch and the adobe were so deep and rough I broke two tubes in the bug before I even took it out of its case. On the way out, the rancher at Wulf's old place sympathized, and said it was probably the work of the well known ghost that guarded the treasure. He seemed to know all about the treasure

story too. I just laughed at his ghost theory.

I went home, repaired the detector, built a rack, borrowed a canoe, and returned to the west side of the river where the going was easier. After I'd made camp, I paddled across each day to search around the old adobe.

Others had been there before me. There were holes all over the place. I found horseshoes, old stove lids, a small piece of boiler plate and other trash, but no money.

On the second night in the west bank camp, the ghost appeared. It was a lovely still desert night. After a hearty supper I went to bed early. The gentle fragrance of the apples and cantaloup in the box under the cot lent a Roman opulence to my contented couch. I remember thinking about the ghost superstition as I drifted off to sleep.

About 2:00 A.M. I was awakened by a feeling of danger. There was a part of a moon. When I opened my eyes I could see, in the dim light filtering through the tent roof, a white thing about two feet long slowly bobbing up and down through the tent door above me. In the

Continued on page 37



This was a hot rig in 1943. Enroute to the adobe (below) I pulled off to fix a flat.



Sonora Holiday

by Choral Pepper

SUCH HAPPY dead people, I've never seen! It was Christmas week when we crossed the border at Mexicali and the cemeteries along the highway exploded with artistry. We were headed for Alamos in Sonora, some 600 miles east and south, with a stopover en route at the bay of Guaymas.

Before leaving home we'd celebrated our American Christmas so Jack and our son, Trent, could give me the present they'd been concealing—a boat. A very special boat, in fact. It was designed to fit on top of our VW camper, was guaranteed unsinkable and had a mount for an old 2-hp motor we had around the house. For testing, we launched the boat in the swimming pool and, like Winkum, Blinkum and Nod, packed ourselves into the Fiberglas vessel. With our knees tucked under our chins, it was impossible to start the outboard motor without knocking one of us out and

there was no room whatsoever to wield an oar. On the third go-round the unsinkable boat dumped all three of us, but, like the man said, *it* stayed afloat. We finally concluded it would accommodate one comfortably, two sort of, and three not at all. I envisioned myself shoving off at Guaymas, waving farewell to the fond gift-givers ashore.

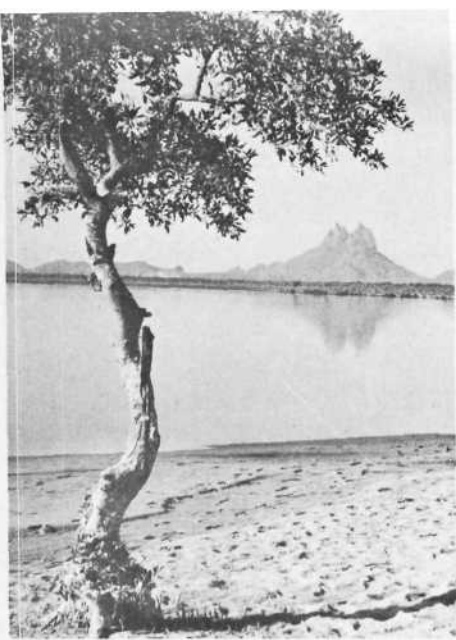
After leaving the festive burial grounds on the outskirts of Mexicali, we continued our journey to the pueblo of San Luis and then on to the Camino del Diablo, the Devil's Highway, famous for bandits, thirst and suffering explorers. We can understand how it came by its dramatic name. Gray wrinkled mountains, like elephant hide, frame the northern perimeter of the Gran Desierto, while to the east rise the pronged contours of Pinacate's dead volcano. To the south there's nothing, just sand, sand, sand. Midway between San Luis and

Sonoyta, grateful Mexicans have built a shrine on top of a rocky knoll. It's a pretty thing, with purple and turquoise painted rocks outlining a path up to the white shelter. There, behind a protective iron gate, is a dark-skinned St. Christopher flanked by candles. We tossed a few coins in among the pesos because we, too, were grateful for the paved road over this waterless stretch of unadulterated sand.

Now here's something that will make you absolutely paranoiac if you don't know about it—and you'll never learn about it from a Mexican. When you cross the border, wherever you cross it, you should obtain a tourist permit if you intend to spend more than 24 hours in Mexico. But do they tell you that you need also a car permit if you're passing further south than Sonoyta? No, they don't. And they don't even tell you so at Sonoyta where you have to pass







Our camping spot at Estero Solado.

through customs, regardless of where you entered the country. They let you show your tourist permit, they inspect your car and your belongings, and then they let you travel south until you come to the first checking station. There an officer, who speaks no English, waves his arms, refuses to let you pass, and says, "No permito!" You finally get the point. Then you drive *back* to Sonoyta, go to an office across the street from the customs office and get yourself a car permit.

From then on, it couldn't be any worse behind the iron curtain, as far as red tape is concerned. As far as scenery is concerned, it couldn't be much better in Paradise. Between stops every few miles to show your car permit, you pass through a desert as lush with extraordinary desert flora as any we've seen anywhere. There are also a number of interesting pueblos, but an article covering them is scheduled for a forthcoming issue, so we won't give them space here.

We spent the night in an attractive, clean motel in Caborca and had a wonderful dinner in the restaurant next door. The following morning we moseyed on to Hermosillo. We'd been told that Hermosillo was ruined with modernization. This may be true in part, but we found the city charming, especially while relaxing at the outdoor cafe of the San Alberto Hotel where Mariachis serenaded us while Mexican life passed by.

We'd heard an interesting story about a town some 60 miles east of here. It was told us by a great, bearded Dane named Don Jose Hensen who lives among the Yaqui Indians in Sonora, but who occasionally comes to the states to take a hot bath and drop into our office.

A gentleman named Senor Torres used to own a general store in a mining camp near Suaqui on the banks of the Rio Montezuma. In this store he installed a candy counter with a hole in it. Miners would come in and drop gold in the hole to pay for a piece of candy. Digging gold out of this hole made Torres one of the richest men in Sonora and you'll notice that many large business buildings between here and Obregon bear his name. Although the mines here are no longer operating, natives are still obtaining rich nuggets from a place between Sauqui and Soyapa, according to our friend Don Jose, but you'd have to be rugged and determined in order to find it. The hot spot sounds like "La Colorada," he said, but the Indians who dropped the name were conversing among

its silence was the splash of a pelican diving for fish.

Resembling a Monument Valley with water, stark formations cut surrealistic patterns against the evening sky and a cluster of wind-blown trees cast reflected fantasies in the water. We unpacked our gear and unloaded the boat, shuddering when its motor sputtered in the quiet. Fortunately there was no one to disturb but ourselves. The lagoon was large with a pass between two overlapping cliffs which, during high tide, let in the ocean. Trent sailed off on an exploratory mission while we wandered barefoot in the sand.

The next morning, after Trent and Jack finished cruising in *my* boat, we drove along the bay road to La Posada de San Carlos, a new resort on the sea



Broken glass, now purple with age, was set into the mortar of high walls surrounding Spanish villas to keep out bandits and wild Indians.

themselves and clammed up when he pursued the subject. However, on a map prepared by the Jesuits in the 1700s, we found a place a little north of Soyapa identified as Elana Colorada. We think that's the spot. And if that glorious boat hadn't been sitting up on top of our car, we'd probably have taken a jaunt into Hermosillo's back country to look it over.

The scene changed as we continued along Highway 15 toward Guaymas and more and more cars and campers towing boats appeared. Soon we could smell the salty sea air. We'd never been to Guaymas, but when we saw the big hotels spread along the bay, we could see it wasn't the place to set up our camping cabana and christen the boat. So we backtracked a few miles to a turn-off to Bahia San Carlos and, believe me, this *was* the place. We took the first dirt road to the left (this may be changed now) and followed it until we came to the sandy beach of a lagoon so private and serene that the only thing to ruffle

which beats anything we've seen in Mexico. Desert country with bearded cactus and jagged outcroppings creeps right down to the bougainvillea covered cottages of the resort. The hotel is luxurious, the dining room superb, the beach clean and both pool and sea water warm. There was only one thing wrong. We couldn't get a reservation. So we returned to our private campground at Estero Soldado and the merry yachtsmen had another day afloat while I paced the beach.

The next morning we set off early, continuing south into Yaqui country. We learned that the uniformed, gun-toting Yaqui guardsmen patrolling village streets are merely an excuse for the Mexican government subsidy promised this rebellious tribe when they were unable to be subdued by any other means. But there's still a menacing gleam in their eyes and you won't be inclined to go whistling up their streets.

These are the people Don Jose lives among in an isolated canyon far from the highway. According to Don Jose, who's

either the greatest liar in the world or the greatest adventurer, he's the only white man they've ever accepted into their inner sanctum and he's on a back-slapping basis with the chief, Pluma Blanca. Don Jose has lived among these people for a number of years and is known as their "Great White Medicine Man." On various sojourns to the states, he obtains penicillin and disinfectants to treat their ills and is currently concerned about a population explosion in Yaquiland, so great is his success! On a recent visit he brought some 18th century Spanish silver pieces and Yaqui Indian relics which are now on loan for display in the DESERT Magazine bookshop. In return for this exhibit, he requested that we ask if a reader might have an old microscope to contribute to his work. He has isolated some parasites he believes deserve closer inspection than is possible with the naked eye. We couldn't swear to it, but we think Don Jose is sincere in his dedication to helping these primitives, so if you have an old microscope you don't want, please let us know.

On the afternoon of Christmas eve, we approached Alamos. The 35-mile road between Navajoa, on Highway 15, and Alamos is now paved and passes through the country where the Spanish first discovered gold and silver in the 1600s. Ruins of the old ghost town of Aduana climb up the side of a mountain, half-buried among fig trees, date palms and semi-tropical growth. But what impressed us most were the "ghost trees." A ghost tree is not like any other tree you've ever seen. Its bark is tough

and white, like a hippopotamus hide, and during winter months its leafless limbs, like giant stems, bear fluffy white flowers similar to morning glory blossoms. In sunlight they sparkle like cotton bolls on their naked branches and at night they shine with ghoulish brilliance against the dark sky. Scientifically, its name is *Ipomoea murucoides*, and popularly it's called the Palo del Muerto, or Tree of the Dead. It's also called the Palo Bobo, or Fool's Tree, in parts of Mexico and there are those who believe one drink of the water contained in its blooms will make you mentally deranged. Whether ghost or fool, it's a stunning tree and if I were going to be a tree, this is the one I'd choose to be. They grow up to 30 feet high and the first time you see one, you won't believe your eyes.

We arrived in Alamos and started working our way through a maze of narrow streets, helped here and there by pedestrians warning us that some are too narrow to accommodate a car. This beautiful and romantic city was established in 1683 by Spanish silver barons and their immense wealth is evident in the stately mansions and courtyards visible through splendid wrought iron gates. Although at one time over 30,000 families made this the first educational center in northwestern Mexico, restoration today has been accomplished by the efforts of less than 5000 Mexicans, with a handful of Americans financing the project. It's the most rewarding restoration we've seen, since the Americans who are instituting it are able to own and live on the estates they're restoring and at

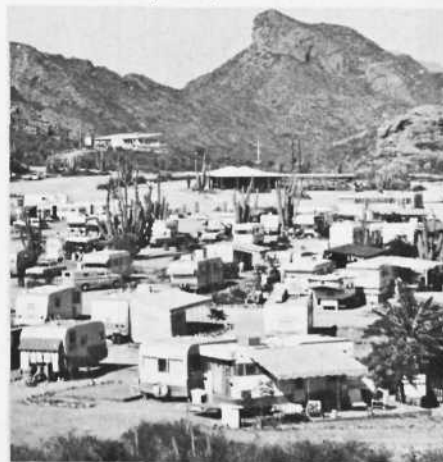
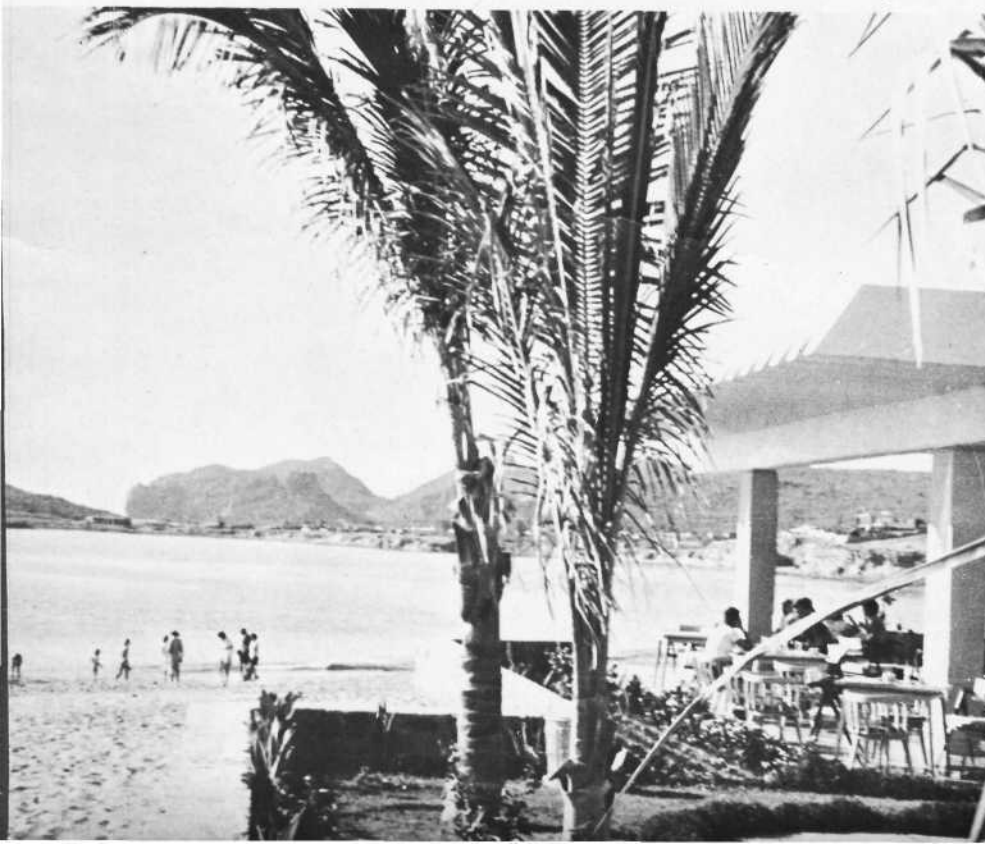
the same time it has brought work and community pride to the Mexican families who would have had little or no other means of support. Much has been written of the Moorish villas with their gracefully arched portales, sweeping vistas, high ceilings and opulent gardens, and it's all true. Here, a contrast with today's world, so lacking in repose, is exemplified in its most tangible concept.

Many travel publications list a Motel Alamos, but as of this writing it is closed. When we found we couldn't stay there, we wound up at Palo Acosta's very nice trailer park where we were able to shower and freshen up before descending upon our friend Darley Gordon, manager of the Casa de los Tesoros Hotel, who had invited us to join her guests in a Christmas celebration.

Casa de los Tesoros and Los Portales are the two splendid Alamos hotels, both restorations of such luxurious vintage it's like living in a museum to stay in them. However, Americans discovered the charm of Christmas in Alamos long ago and unless you start working on it very early, you might as well forget about a reservation during the holiday season. In lieu of anything in Alamos, we telephoned back to the Motel El Rancho in Navajoa to have a room held, which turned out to be a comfortable choice.

The Posadas is an experience I wish everyone in the world could have, whether Moslem, Jew or Christian. It's so simple and sincere, when performed by these people, that whatever you are, you're richer for having shared it with them. After dinner at the hotel, Mexican children gathered in the patio, two of them bearing a small litter with the figures of Mary and Joseph, and the others each carrying a lighted candle. As

The beach is beautiful at La Posada de San Carlos. In a distance may be seen the yacht club and mobile home and trailer park (below).



they filed out to the street, Mrs. Gordon gave each of us a typewritten note with the Spanish words of the role we were to play in the ceremony and we carried candles, too.

This is Las Posadas, so beautiful I hesitate to describe it.

In the dark, with the narrow cobblestone streets lighted only by our candles, we followed the children past a ruin next door, a shambles of magnificent

columns which once supported the roof of a very grand house. Then we passed a fragmented wall where fallen plaster revealed splotches of thick adobe. A faint light shown from inside the barred window. This was the home of a Mexican . . . happy, perhaps, but poor.

Next came gates. High, carved wooden gates with a heavy glass backing. This was a restored mansion. The home of a rich American.

Dramatic courtyard of the Otto Stutt residence. Hunting and riding are popular sports in Alamos and many Americans there keep horses.



Our retinue stopped. Someone knocked on the door. Inside a voice cried, "Who goes there?"

Outside, we sang, "We beg lodging. Joseph is here. His wife, Mary, is weary. Please take us in."

From inside came the chorus. "This is no inn. Go away. We dare not open. There are thieves in the night."

"We are tired," we sang. "We have traveled far."

"Go away," they retorted, "or our master will come and hit you with sticks!"

We moved on.

Again we knocked at an imposing gate. Again we sang our plea. Voices inside issued another negative response.

This was repeated one more time. Then we came to the Owen Churchill house. Its carved doors are the grandest in all of Alamo; its wrought iron lantern the most elegant. This time we changed our plea. This time we sang, "Joseph's beloved wife is Mary. She is here and she is tired. She will be mother of the Holy Child. Please let us in."

At this the chorus inside sang, "Come in, holy pilgrims. Come into our humble dwelling. Come into our hearts and let this be a night of joy. For here, beneath our roof, we will shelter the Mother of Jesus." The vast doors swung open and the children tramped in. Now would be the pinata party, a time for laughter and rejoicing.

We returned to the hotel for our pinata party, but as we walked through the candle-scented night, sweet voices still echoed in the streets.

Pinatas are the crepe paper fantasies you find hanging from rafters in shops all over Mexico during the holiday season. Some are whimsical — burros, poodles, fish — others are a mass of flowers or ruffles made to disguise an earthenware bowl buried inside. This bowl is stuffed with candy and the pinata is suspended from the ceiling by a cord. Participants are blind-folded and spun around until they lose all sense of direction. Then each in turn is given a stick long enough and heavy enough to smash open the decorated bowl and let the candy escape. At Casa de los Tesoros a Mexican orchestra accompanied the gyrations of the wildly swinging contestant and it was exciting. I found myself cheering Trent when his turn came, screaming, "Left, to the left," as lustily as though it were a big league game. The pinata, in this case, was a glorious thing—about two feet in diameter and studded with se-

Continued on page 39

Life was gay at the MONTE CRISTO



By Jack Sowell

THIS HAS nothing to do with the Count of Monte Cristo, the fabulous fiction character created by Alexandre Dumas. However, there is a certain comparison: Same name. Same reputed wealth. The one a disgustingly rich French nobleman, the other one of the richest silver mines in the southwest. There the likeness ends.

Monte Cristo, the man, scattered his wealth lavishly. Monte Cristo, the mine, has doled out in its nearly 70 years not much over \$15,000 of its treasures.

Along with the virgin silver said to be literally hanging from the walls of the now water-logged Monte Cristo mine, is reputedly an enormous quantity of high-grade gold and copper ores, not to mention other ores containing minerals of exciting values.

Monte Cristo's reasons for refusal to spill forth her bounty are many, but at present legal entanglements seem to be holding things up. Other reasons include poor management, water-logging, bad roads, and inadequate financing, all of

which, no doubt, could be surmounted by today's "big business" acumen.

But since 1958 the property has been in litigation, the participants bickering back and forth as to whom owns what portion, and hurling damage claims. One faction was actually driven from the property at gunpoint, but there has been no bloodshed, as might have happened 50 years ago.

But let's get you there first, so that you may actually stand at the mouth of the inclined shaft which leads to all this unbelievable wealth. Here are the simple directions:

Drive a good-natured car to Wickenburg, Arizona, then take a deep breath and the old Constellation road. This leads, roughly, both literally and figuratively, to the northeast for 15 miles. When you have practically given up—don't—Monte Cristo lies over yonder hill. . . .

You're just sight-seeing anyway, so stop for a look at that old brush-covered stone foundation on your right about 11 miles out from Wickenburg. This was Constellation, once the social center for miners in the area. It consisted of a com-

bination general store, stage depot, post-office and saloon-honkytonk, situated in a wide sand-wash between steep, cactus covered hills. Time: turn of the century.

One with lively imagination might hear Ed Devenney's buckboard stage once again clattering down the sandy road, its surrey top fringe fluttering in the breeze. And, just *maybe*, make out the ghostly crunch of heavy boots as hard-rock "stiffs" wander back to their "diggings" after a night on the town.

Whatever you hear won't drown out the endless buzzing of shiny black bees roving the lush mesquite for honey making materials. Now past a rusty old car body or two, left there by litterbugs of earlier years, the road climbs into the Bradshaw Mountains, called by some pretty good mining men "The Treasure Trove of the World."

As you reach what seems to be the top of the world and start down the other side, look far below to your left. Those dilapidated stone buildings are ghostly reminders of the once lively Copper Bell mining camp, adjoining the Monte Cristo

holdings. In every direction you see prospect holes—the cold gray ashes of colorful dreams burned out.

Monte Cristo is just over the next hill and you'll come first to the hugh boarding-house which is now a haven for wasps, spiders and scorpions. Other frame buildings on the property are likewise as useless as old dynamite boxes.

Across the ravine is the mill-room, devoid now of its crusher and flotation units. That shaky framework of heavy timber jutting out from the mill was the loading chute for concentrates, but now provides a runway for lizards. On another level spot up the hill, the 50-foot hoist tower sternly guards the mouth of the inclined shaft.

Like most histories of old mines, the Monte Cristo story must be garnered from old letters, scribbles on yellowed scraps of paper and information from early mining engineers' reports.

Just before the turn of the century a small group of Mexican prospectors stumbled across an outcropping of rich silver ore on a hillside a few miles northeast of Wickenburg. This later became the 61 claims of the Monte Cristo mine, over 1,200 acres in all.

The Mexicans built a kiln near the site and proceeded to smelt nothing but the highest grade ore for several years. Then two claim-jumpers forced them away at gunpoint because they were "fur-riners" and as such had no legal right to own or work mining claims.

But the Mexicans had so cunningly concealed the entrance to their workings that the claim-jumpers had nothing to show for their flagrant disregard for the moral angle.

The mine was released to Ezra W. Thayer, Phoenix hardware merchant, in lieu of grub-stake money owed him by the claim-jumpers. His efforts to locate the lost vein were fruitless, even with the experienced aid of Cousin Jacks (hard-rocker's name for Cornish miners). He then hired a young, self-made mining engineer, Frank Crampton, to scout around. Crampton was lucky and quickly spotted the opening concealed under heavy planks and covered with low-grade ore.

Under Crampton's direction the Cousin Jacks drilled and blasted in strategic places and, in the debris, found slabs of high-grade ore "as large as wash-boards." Hanging from the roof were other, larger slabs of horn-silver, the richest of silver ores. Crampton, in his book *Deep Enough*, told of later using one of these as a soft-toned bell. *Two wagon loads*

of the rich silver ore were hauled to Phoenix under heavy armed guard and displayed in Thayer's hardware store.

Charles B. Broan, long time Arizona mining man and Thayer's mine superintendent from 1909 to 1921, described the merchant as very "set in his ways" and determined to open up a big mine. However, instead of actually mining the ore, Thayer spent over half a million dollars in developing or blocking out the huge ore bodies, often remarking that he considered his money safer in the ground than in a bank.

Various mining concerns approached with tempting offers, but were always met with a very definite, "The Monte Cristo is not for sale!" until 1926, when Thayer could hold out no longer. The controlling interest was sold to C. C. Julian, widely known promoter, for a reported \$1,000,000 in cash.

Broan, in a letter dated March 7, 1933, told of driving the inclined shaft from 160 feet in 1909 to 1100 by 1921, with over two miles of drifts and intermediates disclosing "thousands of tons of high-grade silver ore."

Broan wrote also of finding large bodies of gold ore, one of them six feet in width which assayed at 25 ounces of gold to the ton. A technical mining report submitted in 1933 by Francis E. Agnew, a Los Angeles mining engineer, substantiated Broan's statements. Agnew told of the 33,000 ounces of silver that Julian had smelted and the silver molded into a bar weighing over a ton.

At the time of the engineer's report and Broan's letter the camp was served by a 43-mile electric line from Prescott. Corrugated buildings built by Thayer in earlier years housed hoisting equipment, blacksmith shops, tool and supply sheds and engine rooms. Frame buildings on the property housed the miners.

The mining report also mentioned the caved-in 1600-foot-long "Boarding House Tunnel" between the boarding house and the mill which connected with the Monte Cristo vein at its confluence with the Amethyst Vein, another Monte Cristo ore body. Agnew said this point was probably the richest in the entire Monte Cristo holding, as some ore showed 25 ounces gold to the ton. Seven veins in all were mentioned in the report.

Water had reached the 400-foot level in the inclined shaft at the time of the report and the engineer suggested that the 3,000,000 gallon accumulation could be used for regular mining and milling operations. Domestic water was available from two springs on the property.

He concluded his report saying, "With a normal cost of mining and milling," the Monte Cristo mine should show a net profit of \$1000 to \$1500 per day, *exclusive* of the hand picked higher valued ore which could be shipped directly to the smelter."

Among historical papers examined by the writer at the Arizona Department of Mineral Resources, headed by Frank Knight, was a typewritten sheet with the heading History of the *Monte Cristo Mine*. Prepared in 1933 it read, in part: "The Monte Cristo mine has the reputation of millions of dollars in ore reserves, included among which are considerable tonnages of the most sensationally rich silver ores known and mined today."

The paper seemed incomplete and was unsigned.

A fully connected chronological history of the various ownerships of the property after its purchase in 1926 by Julian, seems not possible, as some transactions were apparently not recorded. The Mines Handbook for 1931, however, states that the Monte Cristo Mining & Milling Company, incorporated in 1903 by Ezra W. Thayer was sold in 1926 to C. C. Julian of Los Angeles, California, for a reported \$1,000,000. Then, in 1928, a Phoenix rancher and minor stockholder named A. Krell brought suit against Julian et al, alleging fraudulent intent on Julian's part and asked for a receivership and an injunction restraining the defendants from further action with the company. Receipts for ore and bullion to that date were \$14,531. In July, 1929 the mine was sold at a sheriff's sale to A. Krell to satisfy a \$9,449.45 judgement.

The Agnew report and Broan's letter were both used in a brochure, uncopyrighted, by The Monte Cristo Mining Co., but since no name appeared in the brochure, whether or not Krell was still owner is not clear. Nor could any record be found concerning the Monte Cristo's activities from 1933 to 1940, when the property came into the possession of Dr. R. N. Morrison, Phoenix dentist. During his ownership Morrison leased mining rights to various operators, none of whom, it seems, were sufficiently financed for such a large operation. The present legal trouble began when the doctor passed away in early 1958.

The question now is, with the silver shortage, coinwise, so much in the news in recent months, why doesn't everyone stop haggling and *dig some!* □

TWO LOST MISSIONS

Continued from page 13

until the outcome of the conflict could be determined.

After a month or so, however, seeing no Indian pursuit or forays across the pass, De Neve gathered together all those who had come to colonize the Santa Barbara area and assigned lands to them about four leagues from San Gabriel along the Porciuncula River. This colony is known today as Los Angeles.

Both De Croix and De Neve now seem to have had second thoughts concerning the wisdom of the De Neve mission plan which had brought such tragedy to the only two pueblos founded by it. So, in 1782, when De Neve finally authorized Fr. Serra to go ahead with his plans for the Buenaventura and Santa Barbara missions, no word was spoken of the "new concept." Both were set up in accordance with the Serra mission plan, as were all subsequent missions.

In September, 1782, when the De Neve forces again approached the Yuma ford, they declined to give battle to the Indians even when the Indians openly challenged them. Instead, De Neve and his troops marched on to Arizpe.

Thus ended the entire campaign, "a failure," in Bancroft's words, "since the Yumas were not subdued, peace was not made, and the rebel chiefs were not captured. The nation remained independent of all Spanish control and was always more or less hostile. Neither presidio, nor mission, nor pueblo was ever again established on the Colorado; and communication by this route never ceased to be attended with danger."

Today, there's a bronze plaque on the monument which stands in the garden of what is now St. Thomas Mission on the Imperial Valley knoll known colloquially as Indian Hill. On that plaque is inscribed:

"Born April 12, 1728

Died July 19, 1781

Fray Hermengildo Francesco Garces
daring explorer, zealous missionary
and unfailing friend of the
Yuma Indians

Padre Garces founded the
Yuma Indian Mission and
nearby gave his life

for their souls

His faith was unshakeable

His hope tranquil

His charity joyous

His zeal triumphant."

It is ironic that even on this tribute to Garces' martyrdom, his two little missions should again be lost—by omission of their names. □

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A monthly feature by
the author of
Ghost Town Album,
Ghost Town Trails,
Ghost Town Shadows and
Ghost Town Treasures.

Mokelumne, California

BY LAMBERT FLORIN

WHEN A PARTY of prospectors from Oregon found gold in the Mokelumne (Moe-kel-um-nee) River they found a problem on their hands. The gold deposit was a rich one, no doubt of that. Also undeniable, supplies had nearly reached the vanishing point, but not a man was willing to leave the gold to go after more food, the nearest source being Stockton.

After much consultation, someone volunteered that he had once heard one member, a Mr. Syrec, voice his disgust with prospecting, contending that he was at heart a merchant. Confronted with this indiscreet remark, Syrec agreed to a proposition. The other men would advance him a considerable supply of gold dust and nuggets (more plentiful than beans and bacon) to set up a trading post on the hill above camp. Of course he would first have to pack to Stockton to obtain merchandise. Consoled by the yellow gleam of gold, Syrec agreed to the deal, later setting up the first store at what would be the village of Mokelumne, a town that outlived the goldrush and maintains some life to this day.

Syrec opened for business in a tent on November 1, 1848. In a few weeks a Mr. Dickerson set up another tent near that of Syrec—the first boarding house. From this small beginning grew one of the wildest camps in the Mother Lode, averaging a murder a week. Many a fatal fracas started by someone's attempt to take over a claim not legally his. Certainly values of the ground involved were a temptation. Some claims, though limited to 16 square feet, yielded over \$500,000.

The struggle for rich ground took on an international aspect with the "Great French War." In 1849 a group of French prospectors made some rich discoveries on the Hill. The sons of Gaul established a camp of their own, flying the tri-color over it. American miners resented the holding of good claims by "foreigners," and the brazen flaunting



of the French flag even more. They stormed up to gates of the "fortress," demanding the lowering of the offensive emblem and the abandonment of all claims. Tempers cooled somewhat with lowering of the flag, compromises over claims were effected, and peace restored without bloodshed. The Great French War ended.

Not so comic was the struggle with a group headed by Chilean Dr. Concha and dubbed the "Chilean War." Americans, looking for any excuse to keep claims for themselves, had set up a rule that no one could operate his claims by "slave labor," although at this time the southern states cultivated cotton with Negro slaves. The Americans not only accused Dr. Concha of using forced peon Chilean labor in his mines, but also of taking out claims in the names of his ignorant help, none of whom could be expected to share in the profits.

Resentments flared when reports reached the Hill that Dr. Concha had driven off a party of Americans from some ground rightfully theirs. Worse, Dr. Concha had gone to Stockton to secure warrants for the arrest of the Americans he said were poaching on his claims. Furious Americans met at the Hill to pass a resolution banning all Chilean miners from the area. At this, the Chilean leader gathered together a force of 60 men and marched on Mokelumne Hill. Taking the camp by surprise they killed two men and took 13 prisoners.

This was too much. The incensed Americans secured a force of Rangers from Stockton and marched on the Concha stronghold. In the meantime, the 13 American prisoners not only made their escape from the Chileans, but captured them in turn. Now the American force, augmented by Rangers, escorted the Chileans to Mokelumne for trial which resulted in a hanging for three and less severe punishment for the others. Hard feelings over this affair extended all the way to South America.

Mokelumne Hill today, on Highway 49, isn't an entirely ghostly ghost. The old and famous Ledger's Hotel still plays host to travelers and there is a garage which has taken over the ancient stone building to the left of the Adams and Co. Express Building, claimed to be the first three-story structure in California. A large colony of bats lives in the upper floor of the ancient structure. Each evening, on schedule, the animals pour forth in a black cloud to hunt their evening meal of insects. At about the same time, a flock of vultures come home to the old graveyard where they roost in the Italian cypresses there.

Our photo shows one of many beautiful ruins remaining in the town, the Mayer Bldg. It was constructed in 1854 with local rhyolite tuff. Its interior is filled with young specimens of "Trees of Heaven," the seeds of which were brought from China by slant-eyed miners so they would have a living token of the old country. □

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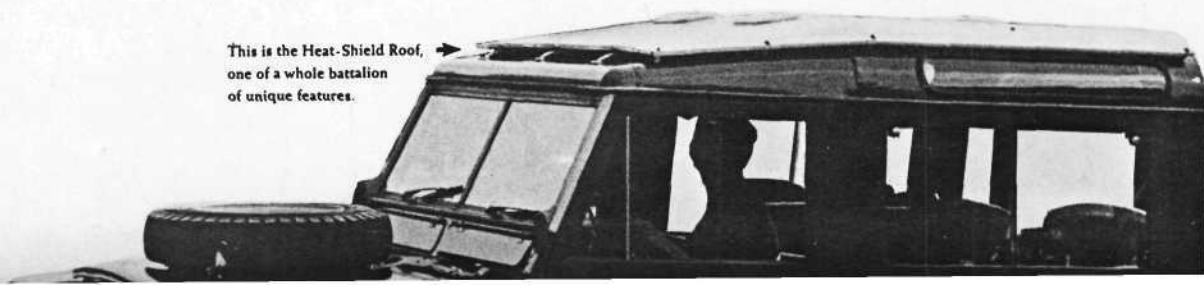
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Desert Dispensary

by Sam Hicks

THE HIGUERA CIMARRONA, the Wild Fig Tree, of Baja California is an eccentric tree with an odd inclination to grow only in impossible places. As its Spanish name implies, it grows alone and produces its fruit without companionship.

The literal translation of its name means wild fig and, except for the miniature figs it produces, there is no similarity between it and the fig trees universally recognized for their succulent fruit and historic prominence.

Higuera Cimarronas are usually found clinging precariously to the sides of windswept rocks high in the mountains of Baja, where their grotesque trunks and roots appear to be plastered across the faces of perpendicular ledges. A non-conforming Higuera Cimarrona will sometimes sprout on the ordinary slope of a hill instead of a sheer rock wall, but on these occasion the tree still emerges from a crevice of dry rock. In the subsequent process of its retarded growth, the base of the tree spreads outward like a thick desert substance, slowly enveloping as many rocks as it can grasp in its tenacles.

From Central Baja California to Cape San Lucas, these strange white trees, locally called Higuera Cimarrona, Zalate, or Higuera Silvestre, grow at widely

spaced intervals and always in the most difficult terrain.

A tea boiled from the tree's large rounded leaves is taken by people in enormous quantities as an antidote for rattlesnake bites. Five gallon cans of the same tea is brewed and poured down the throats of mules and cattle also suffering from the powerful venom of Baja rattlers. The fruit of the tree is exceptionally sweet when ripe and the figs, though very small, grow abundantly.

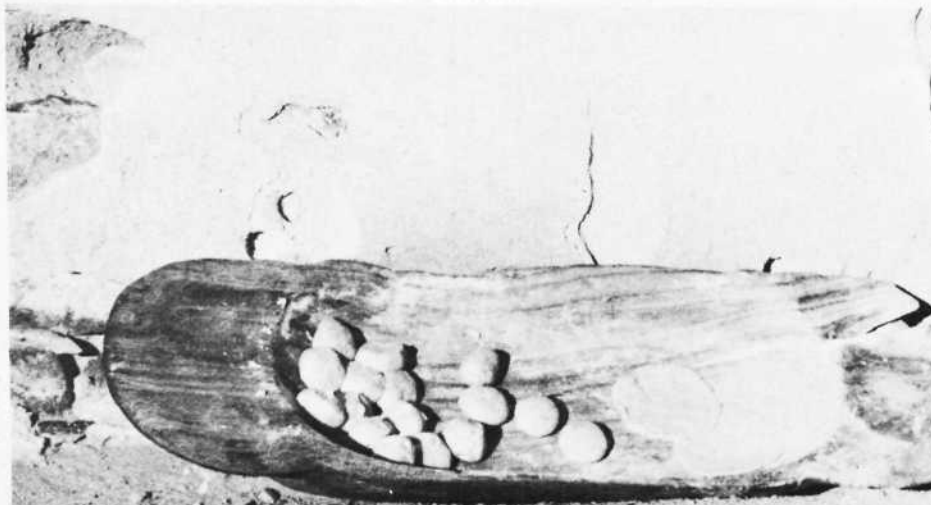
A large Higuera Cimarrona standing near one of the original stone buildings of the Mission Santa Rosalia de Mulege complex, is a splendid specimen and one of the first to be seen by southbound travelers following the Baja road. Residents of Mulege are proud of their ancient "snakebite" tree, which is close to the center of town, and they enjoy pointing it out to strangers and telling them of its virtues. Old timers there say that if the tree has increased at all in size in the last 70 years, its growth is not noticeable. One Mulege rancher, now in his mid-70s, has a small Higuera Cimarrona near his ranch house. He is especially fond of the tree and has watched it closely most of his life. The base has widened and now covers a slightly larger area on the rocky ridge where it stands, but the old rancher claims that



the tree is still no taller than it was when he first saw it as a young man.

Farther down the peninsula, Higuera Cimarronas are encountered more frequently and many of them, draped like surrealist paintings over the sides of rocks and steep banks, may be seen from the road in the San Bartolo area south of La Paz.

Seasoned Higuera Cimarrona wood is prized by the natives of Baja California for making durable bowls and kitchen cutting boards which, like the living trees, last forever. □



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CIBOLA GHOST

Continued from page 25

middle of this whitish blob was a round, unblinking white eye.

For a frozen second I just looked. Then the thing gave a blubbing sigh and I caught the stench of crushed cactus and grass. I forgot that I didn't believe in ghosts. With a wild yell, I went through the flimsy back wall of the tent like Wimpy with the Sea Hag on his coat tails.

I had forgotten that a few yards behind the tent was a venerable cholla cactus! I remembered as I came through the wall, twisting like a football hero. My twist was all right, but my evasion wasn't so good. I hit it going full speed, astern.

The resulting bellow was too much for the ghost. He took off over a small nearby ridge with a clatter of hoof beats.

Knowing, then, my ghost was not a ghost didn't help much. If you've ever lighted a gasoline lantern with pin cushion hands, or plucked cholla spines with tweezers in the reflection of a shaving mirror, you'll know why it was a good thing that scrawny, wall-eyed white horse stayed out of sight until afternoon.

It was grey dawn before I had all the devil-fuzz out. The coffee was plenty strong and really royal, that morning!

Since those days, friends have told me that the adobe is the ruins of William Rood's old Rancho de las Yumas and that there are other and different treasure stories concerning it. I don't know about them, as this is the only one I heard.

I know there isn't anything metallic close to the ruins, but Mr. Wulf said the women related there were two corrals "up on the bench behind the adobe." I couldn't find them, but if you have plenty of time, that might be a good place to search.

So now you know all that I know about the treasure—and that you have nothing to fear from ghosts!

But don't forget to pack a pair of tweezers, just in case! □

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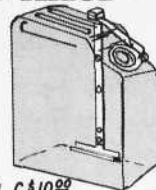
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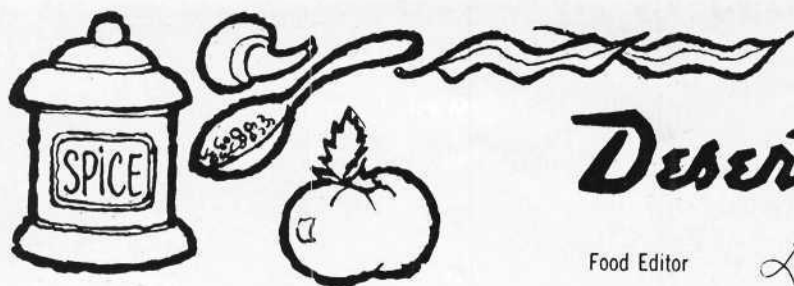
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GUM DROP BARS

- 4 eggs
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cold water
- 2 cups flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup shredded assorted gum drop (no licorice)

Beat eggs well, add sugar and water and beat again. Sift flour with salt and cinnamon and sprinkle a little of it over pecans and gum drops. Add remaining flour to the egg and sugar mixture, then fold in nuts and gum drops. Spread thinly in greased and floured shallow baking pan and bake in 325 degree oven for 30 minutes. While still warm, ice with the following icing:

ICING

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 teaspoon grated orange rind

Powdered sugar

Melt butter, add orange juice, rind and enough sugar to make rather thin icing. Spread thinly over the baked sheet and while still warm, cut into 2-inch squares and remove from pan.

NO-BAKE COOKIES

Mix together 2 cups vanilla wafer crumbs, or thin chocolate cookie crumbs, or a combination of both

- 1/3 cup sugar
- Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chopped nuts, either walnuts, almonds or pecans
- 1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries or Radiant fruit mix
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup condensed milk

Form into balls. Roll in powdered sugar. I sometimes add some chopped dates and not as many nuts. It is best to put the mixture in the refrigerator and chill before rolling into balls. Keep them in a can or a jar in the refrigerator.

LIME PARFAIT

- 1 package lime Jello
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon grated lime rind

Dissolve Jello in boiling water. In blender, mix Jello, softened cream cheese which has been cut into small pieces, sugar and juices. When well blended, add lime rind. Refrigerate until thick but not set. Whip 1/2 cup heavy cream. Alternate layers of gelatin mixture and cream in parfait glasses, beginning and ending with gelatin. Cover with a piece of Saran wrap and refrigerate. When ready to serve, sprinkle coconut over top.

PERSIMMON DESSERT

- 1 package Pineapple-Grapefruit or Orange gelatin
- 1 cup mashed persimmon or persimmon and banana (the banana adds to the flavor)
- 1 cup boiling water

Dissolve gelatin in water, cool to syrupy consistency, and whip. Fold in fruit, and place in mold. Top with whipped cream or sweetened IMO.

STEAMED PERSIMMON PUDDING

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder, dash of salt
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup mashed persimmon pulp

Mix together and turn into buttered, covered mold and steam for 3 hours. Serve with whipped cream topping. This is a delicious dessert and the flavor difficult to identify.

ENGLISH TOFFEE COOKIES

- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 1 6-oz. package of chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup finely chopped nuts

Cream together sugars and butter. Add the egg yolk and mix well. Add vanilla and flour. Mix well and spread on greased cookie sheet, pressing down with your palms. This will not fill a cookie sheet, but form into a rectangle on it. Bake for 20 minutes in a 350 degree oven. Remove from oven and sprinkle chocolate chips over. When they begin to melt, spread all over with spatula. Sprinkle chopped nuts over top and cut into bars. Let chocolate dry for several hours before storing.

DATE SURPRISES

- 1/3 cup soft butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 1/4 cups sifted flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon soda, 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 cup commercial sour cream
- 36 pitted dates
- 36 walnut halves or you may use pecans

Cream butter and vanilla; gradually beat in sugar; add egg; beat well. Sift dry ingredients and add alternately with sour cream. Stuff dates with walnut or pecans halves and roll in dough. This can be done with a fork. When well covered, drop onto cookie sheet which has been well-buttered. Bake in 400 degree oven for about 10 minute. If you wish to have daintier cookies, you may cut dates in half with sharp knife before rolling in dough. If desired, these may be iced with a powdered sugar icing.

Sonora Holiday

Continued from page 30

quined red roses. There was an unbroken duplicate to be awarded the winner. So I shouted and cheered just like everyone else. But we didn't win.

On our late drive back to Navajoa, our headlights surprised a family of deer among the ghost trees. It's said they obtain enough water from the blossoms of this tree to sustain them entirely.

The following morning we returned to take photos of Alamos. The Frank Klines stopped to visit with us in the plaza and when they learned we were from DESERT Magazine, invited us to visit their house, which is the one John Hilton lived in when he wrote *Sonora Sketchbook* some 20 years ago. It has now been restored and divided into two separate residences, but the Klines have the patio with the famous sausage tree Hilton described. Great purple, tubular flowers hang from it, just like salami in an Italian market. This is one of the most intimate and lovely patios in Alamos.

There was great activity in the plaza in front of the church on this Christmas morning. Children dressed in their best seemed forever on the run and adults scurried from house to house carrying trays of rolls on their heads. A Posada procession had formed in the plaza the

evening before, while we participated in our private one, and Americans we talked to said the public one was similarly moving—and the voices just as sweet.

There are a number of rock shops in Alamos where you can find peanut rock, a rare brown and red conglomerate distinctive to these parts. It polishes beautifully and is used for jewelry. Then something you'll want, to go with your polished peanut rock, is a braided horsehair *barbicachos*, or bolo tie. These are made by prisoners up on the hill who work in the prison patio while they receive guests. This is a very social place. It boasts the most beautiful view in town and each criminal has something to sell. Sometimes it's garnet crystals or other gems, but most usually it's the long rope of horsehair with tassels on the ends which they braid by nailing one end to the tree. Their usual offense is drunkenness, but it's our impression that they have such a good thing going in peddling their wares to tourists that when their time is up they hurry out to get arrested again so they can get back on the job.

To know this wild and charming country of Sonora more than superficially would take much longer than a Christmas holiday. We left reluctantly, but there will be another time. We want to see those ghost trees again. □

White blossoms of the ghost tree silhouette against the sky.



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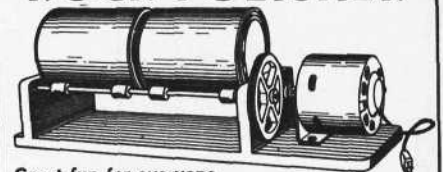
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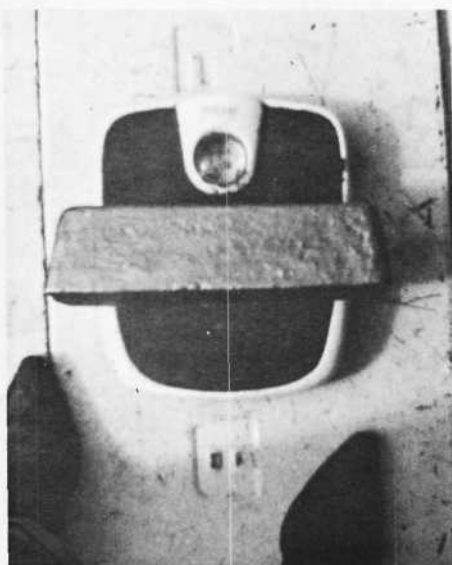
LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Letters requesting answers must include stamped self-addressed envelope

Anyone Lose a Gold Bar? . . .

To the Editor: I have been told stories about how the Spanish conquerors of Mexico took all the gold they could find, melted it into bars, and sent it to Spain. Much of this gold reputedly never reached Spain. I cannot find information on how large the bars were, how many were not accounted for, or the route used in shipment. I believe this would make a fine story for your magazine. Would it be possible that any of these ended up in the area around Salton Sea? I am enclosing two pictures. The color is bad, but desert heat doesn't do color film any good. I prefer to remain anonymous, and will be looking for this information in your magazine.

ANONYMOUS FROM,
Bellflower, California



Editor's comment: We accuse DESERT's publisher, Jack Pepper, of taking everything in the book when he goes camping, but even he doesn't take the bathroom scales! In considering the authenticity of this gold bar, we are inclined to consider the authenticity of the anonymous writer. The only sometime desert prospector we know who wears hard soled Western boots to tread slippery rock terrain is Sam Hicks, and he can't help it. He was born in them.

But just in case the natty desert wanderer

who, no doubt, is on a diet, happened to digress from the highway and discover a genuine gold brick lying on the sand, here are a few relative points to consider. The Spanish usually numbered their gold bricks in order to insure the King's allotment. The King got every fifth brick. Spaniards traveling by boat did prefer their gold melted into beads or bars, which



made for easy loading and unloading, but it's doubtful that a fleet ever reached the Salton Sea. It's also doubtful that de Anza and those who passed this way on exploratory missions bothered to lug along gold bricks.

A standard gold bar such as is buried in the U.S. mint today is 4" wide, 2" high, weighs 35 pounds and is worth about \$20,000. To ascertain the value of yours, you should drill a hole in it and have a sample assayed.

The color in the photo is not bright enough for gold, although it could be dusty. The bread-pan shape is a natural one for the extraction of gold as well as bread. It could be possible that your brick was smuggled from one of the gold mines near Yuma, like the old Fortuna, perhaps, and the culprit lost his life as well as his gold in making an escape through the desert. That is, providing your gold brick is a real one.

Frank Knight, director of the Department of Mineral Resources in Phoenix, has proffered a bit of advice. It would be wise for you to apply to the Office of Domestic Gold and Silver Operations in the Treasury Department at Washington to obtain a license to hold or sell your gold brick. Penalties can be stiff. You should also advise the agency if it was found on public land. It is likely the land owner has as much right to the treasure as has the finder.

But anyway, we hope your gold brick is pure gold and we do sympathize with all finders of gold bricks who have to bother with all the red tape. It quite takes the fun out of gold bricking, doesn't it? C.P.

The Straight Dope . . .

To the Editor: Re: *Between the Horns* by Kenneth Marquess in the October issue of DESERT Magazine. (Love that mag). I can readily understand why the author did not find the treasure. His information was not quite correct. The daughter of Owen Cazier, who bought the Hayden property in 1913, resides in Ely, Nev. now, and this is the way she remembers the story:

When Mr. Cazier bought the ranch from Mr. Hayden the house sat in a field somewhat to the west of the present Highway 6. When Hayden moved from this house he moved to a house located at the site of the "Cove." The old stage station was not involved. It being a fair distance from the Cove, Hayden did die at the Cove, however, he had not been to the stage station previous to this but had, instead, been to Ely. Any actual hidden treasure was purely speculation and many, many hunters combed the site of the Cove for years after with metal detectors, witches wands, plain shovels, you name it and they tried it. Nothing was ever found. However, a trusted friend of Haydens living in Ely became quite affluent shortly after his death. I certainly do not want to discourage any future treasure hunters from coming to this area. We need all the tourists we can get. If they don't find treasure at least they leave a little.

MRS. LLOYD PHILLIPS,
Ely, Nevada

Right Photo, Wrong Town . . .

To the Editor: I just received my November DESERT and was surprised to see my Mogollon story headed Cooney, New Mexico. The mistake isn't horribly serious as Mogollon is the latter camp described in the second and third columns of the story, having grown from discoveries near Cooney when that community began to fail. The photo was taken in Mogollon, however. I hope we don't get too many letters protesting this one.

LAMBERT FLORIN,
Portland, Oregon

Editor's Comment: Nope, not a one. But the mistake was ours, not the authors. C.P.

A Carob Grows in Upland . . .

To the Editor: The story about the Carob tree in the November issue was interesting. The Cajalco Valley is not the only place it is found. In Upland there are many Carob trees in the parkways. In Ontario there is a health store which sells the meal, also candy bars, made of Carob meal. I was told that the meal used in these foods was imported from Spain, however. I have seen the trees in Spain. The meal resembles cocoa, both in appearance and in taste.

FLORENCE TARLETON,
Upland, California

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