

# THE MOHAHVE MUSE

Mohahve Historical Society

P.O. Box 21

Victorville, Ca 92393



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## Happy New Year!! Welcome 2021

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### Hello 2021!

Most of us are not sorry to see an end to 2020. What a year! Since COVID-19 restrictions are still in place, we will continue with our outdoor adventures the next few months, and hope for the best weather-wise. (Be glad we don't live in the Northeast.)

As you know, the holiday dinner at the Lone Wolf Colony has been rescheduled to Jan. 7, same time, same place. Doors open at 5:00, dinner at 6:00, installation at 7:00. Refer to the Dec. Muse for details about the five displays you can enjoy before and after. Unclaimed membership directories will be available for pick-up. Remember to wear your mask and follow the LWC's guidelines. All prior paid reservations are good, and there are still 4 seats available for \$15. Call (760) 985-1918 if you want to join us.

The Santa Fe Trading Company Crafts Fairs Dec. 5 and 19 were both successful, resulting in several book sales and a new membership. Thanks to MHS members Roger Morgan, Bryan Taylor, Carol Wiley, and Patty Hedges for volunteering their time to work the booth and staff the Victor Valley Legacy Museum. The newly refurbished 1952 Santa House was a big hit, with Brent Gaddis playing the part of the honorable Mr. Claus.

The first order of Candacy Taylor's "Overground Railroad" books arrived, and all 10 copies were quickly claimed. A second order of 10 has been placed, with 7 still available for \$35. The Murray's Overall Wearing Dude Ranch is included, and our Apple Valley artifacts are a part of the Smithsonian's Traveling Greenbook exhibit, now in Memphis. I highly recommend this book, as it gives an honest view of the times and circumstances, and the Victor Valley's important role.

Our first membership meeting of the year is a fieldtrip to Camp Cajon, Sat. Jan. 23. Meet at the Camp Cajon monument at 12:00 noon, dressed for the weather. Wear your mask and bring a lawn chair, as the tour will start and end at the same location. After check-in, announcements, and introductions, our four tour guides will take over.

#### Intro-Mark Landis

**Part 1-** Nick Cataldo- Crowder Canyon tour

**Part 2-** Gary Smith- Camp Cajon Facilities

**Part 3-** John Lenau- History of the two monuments

**Wrap-up-** Mark Landis.

**Restroom:** McDonalds or the CHP truck scales.

**Directions** from the Victor Valley: Take I-15 south to Hwy 138 east. Cross the freeway and turn right on Wagon Train Rd. Meeting spot is past the McDonalds down the hill.

Call Marcy at **760-985-1918** to  
reserve your spot on this trip!

Rescheduled  
Christmas Dinner  
Lone Wolf Colony  
Thurs. Jan, 7, 2021 @ 5:00pm

Call 760-985-1918  
For the  
4 remaining seats  
\$15.00 each

#### Future meetings / fieldtrips:

**Feb. 27-** Lone Wolf Colony- tour of grounds and telephone museum

**Mar. 27-** Hesperia Museum (Harrison Exhibit Center) hosted by Griz Drylie

**Apr. 22-** Lucerne Valley Desert Zen Center hosted by Ven. Thich Tam Mung

**May 27-** Apple Valley Curiosities- presented by Marcy Taylor

Call **760-985-1918** to reserve your spot for  
each future meeting/field trip!

*Marcy*



## Mistletoe and Santa's House



What should you do with a yard full of mistletoe weighting down your tree branches? Why not donate it to a worthy cause, for example, the non-profit booth at the Santa Fe Trading Company's December 5th and 19th Crafts Fairs, operated by volunteers from the Victor Valley Legacy Museum, Apple Valley Legacy Museum, and Mohave Historical Society? What a great idea! Maybe they can sell it to festive shoppers, all in the Christmas spirit and anxious to steal a kiss (through a mask, of course.) That's exactly what MHS member Mary Ruth Hughes decided to do. Thanks for your generosity and lifting our spirits with your genuine homegrown Apple Valley mistletoe.



In 1952, when Victorville was still a small town, and Seventh Street, also known as Route 66, was the main drag, a family holiday tradition was attending the annual Christmas Parade and paying a visit to Santa Claus. Santa's "headquarters" was in Forrest Park on D Street near the railroad tracks, in his own little house on wheels, built by the industrious workers of the Southwest Portland Cement Company. Santa could be seen, sitting on the porch beside the sign announcing to the neighborhood kids that they had arrived at the "North Pole." A handy mailbox made it easy for youngsters to mail their gift lists early.



*Santa's 'office'*

The Victorville "headquarters" for Santa Claus is all spic and span as the valley awaits his arrival. Sprucing up things at the little building in the city park near the railway station is Ken Hollenbeck of Southwest Cement Company, who provided the facility for Santa.

Apple Valley old-timer, Ken Hollenbeck, is pictured in a 1952 newspaper photo, with hammer in hand, getting ready for Santa's first appearance. In the seven decades since, Santa's little house has gotten plenty of activity. During the holiday season, adorned with bows, wreaths, and mistletoe, it could be seen parked at various locations around town spreading Christmas cheer. Some long-time residents remember watching it rolling proudly down Seventh Street carrying Santa, Mrs. Claus, and an assortment of townsfolk dressed as elves or reindeer. What a sight to behold!

Since 2002 its home has been the Santa Fe Trading Company's back lot, parked near the stage, and surrounded by vendors during the Crafts Fairs. Recently, owner Dr. Steve Blech decided the Old Town Victorville artifact needed some sprucing up for two upcoming December events.



So Marcy Taylor, of the Victor Valley Legacy Museum, took the job. Why?

Because that's our mission-- **to preserve and share the history of the Victor Valley.**

Thank you Steve, for sharing this piece of memorabilia and keeping the spirit of the holidays alive.





## A Day on the Mojave Road By Rick Schmidt

Being a member of the Mohave Historical Society can sure have its perks. I originally joined as an invitation from a good friend (actually my favorite aunt though no blood relation) to join a few years ago. During this time I met John Marnell who has become a good friend and is one of the leading authorities on the Mojave Road. John had given a presentation on the Mojave Road at one of our MHS meetings a couple of years ago and afterwards I had the opportunity to discuss the Mojave Road with him. He saw my interest and gave me a copy of the Mojave Road Guide written by Dennis G. Casebier. Since then he has invited me on several trips to the Mojave Road and this month I finally accepted. John invited me to join him on a trip to what is called "The Mailbox" on the Mojave Road to do some maintenance and clean up and then for a trip following the Mojave Road back to Afton Canyon. This is what this article is about.

Local history has become a fascinating subject to me and we can all learn lessons from people who have endured hardships to better themselves and taken great risks we of modern times can't really imagine. People were hardy and tough back in the days of the early expansion in the United States. They would set out in covered wagons, horseback or even on foot to relocate to areas that promised great prosperity whether real or imagined to better themselves. Not only was the environment harsh but also there were local tribes of Indians that were hostile and always a present danger.

In 1776 Friar Francisco Garces was the first new world explorer to go among the Mojave Indians who showed him a route to California. When Fort Mojave on the Colorado River was established in 1859 this turned into the Mojave Road which was the main route from the Colorado River (Avi Casino and Hotel) to Afton Canyon then on to terminate at Camp Cady (Southeast of Harvard Road off the I-15 freeway) until 1871 at which point Camp Cady was abandoned permanently by the Army. Trade wagons, Settlers, Prospectors, Army Brigades all used the Mojave Road

I left early in the morning and met up with John at a picnic area on Afton Road off the I-15 just north of the Afton Canyon Campground. After a quick breakfast we proceeded to Baker on the I-15 and headed South on Kelbaker Rd. driving approximately seven miles to the Mojave Road crossing. We headed East and drove the Mojave Road for 5 miles till we reached the mailbox. The road was very passable although narrow and very wash boarded. You could tell this area has been traveled extensively as the deep tracks worn into the ground testified. This is a beautiful area and Joshua Trees were condensed and a lot of vegetation made you really pay attention to your driving so you wouldn't inadvertently clip a Joshua tree branch by accident. I really enjoyed following John in his pickup as his knowledge of the Mojave Road and surrounding areas are vast. It was great having my own personal tour guide. One important item he pointed out was the use of Cairns, pronounced "Karens" to navigate the Mojave Road. These are small rock piles made to mark the Road. We had radio communication so John would enthusiastically point out areas of interest as we traveled. He did this for the entire trip.

The Mailbox is a medium size metal box that was erected on the north side of the Mojave Road at mile 74 (west of the Colorado

River) and was erected around the same time the Mojave Road was opened as a recreational trail. Also there is an American flag on a pole next to it. Here travelers of the Mojave Road can sign in (which is almost mandatory) on a notebook kept inside the Mailbox and many people leave items as mementoes to their travels. (picture of Mailbox, or John and Rick or both) The area around the Mailbox also has several locations where visitors have left interesting items.

One area has 100's of Frogs. No, not

real frogs but all kind of ceramic, plastic, stuffed and any representation of a frog you can imagine. Also another area has Gnomes which are piled the same way. Another thing that was of interest is a headstone for a person named Robinson. (Tombstone at Mailbox) It looks like a Father had left this for his deceased son although only the people involved in placing it know for sure. This is just another one of many mysteries along the Mojave Road.





## A day on the Mojave Road (Cont'd)

After doing some clean up and repair on the flag we traveled back west toward Kelbaker Rd.

We crossed Kelbaker Rd. just south of 17 mile point and met up with one of John's acquaintances named Bill who lives in Henderson Nevada. John and Bill plan several trips a year to the Mojave Road and are responsible to patrol the area looking for and picking up any trash and checking the condition of the trail. Bill does a lot of desert camping and exploring with his two Dachshunds and is very knowledgeable of the Mojave Desert.

Continuing on we followed the Mojave Road down toward Soda Dry Lake which is the termination point of the Mojave River southwest of Baker. This is also the location of Zzyzx which was established by Dr. Curtiss Howe Springer in 1944 and was known originally as Soda Springs on the west bank. The Mojave Road runs about a mile or so south of Zzyzx. After crossing the majority of the lake we came to a place called Travelers Point. This is interesting as it started out to be where a traveler of the Road could

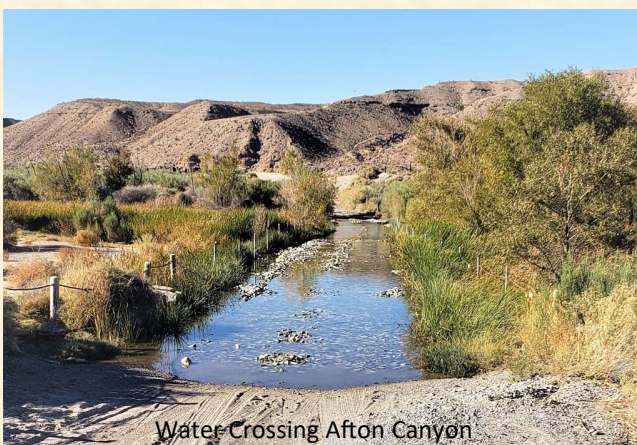
leave a memento, this case being a rock either found along the road or one that may have been a keepsake at one time or another. Either way over the years this has turned into a very large pile of rocks carefully piled and stacked. Looking northwest from here you can see Zzyzx in the background. (Travelers monument pic). There's a lot of history at Zzyzx when it was still called Soda Springs. It was at one time an Army Settlement and was used as a stopping point by the now abandoned Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad which



Travelers Point Monument

started hauling Borate ore in 1907. But that is another story. If you make a trip to Las Vegas in the future, plan on taking a little extra time to stop at Zzyzx as it is now a Desert Study Education Center for college students and is open to visitors.

Leaving Travelers Point we continued on west toward Afton Canyon and crossed what little remains of the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad entering an area of small sand dunes. Here it would be pretty easy to get lost as the blowing sands change the road constantly. Luckily John had in the past with his wife Barbara buried vertically 3 foot long pieces of railroad ties about every quarter mile along the side of the Mojave Road which works well as markers. The sand doesn't cover the ties like it would piled stones. (sand dunes pic) Soon we passed Cave Canyon Iron Mine and entered into Afton Canyon. This has been described as the mini Grand Canyon of the Mojave and that description is well deserved. It is a beautiful trek thru this area which is actually the Mojave River wash. Driving thru this area and seeing the majestic shear canyon walls in different colors is amazing. High clearance four wheel drive vehicles are recommended as there is a lot of deep sand and small boulders. After driving for awhile and enjoying the beautiful scenery we came upon the Union Pacific railroad tracks which paralleled the Mojave Road and lead us to the Mojave River crossing at Afton Canyon. This crossing point goes under the bridge of the Union Pacific Railroad and can be hazardous as the



Water Crossing Afton Canyon

water here is sometimes deep. Luckily for us the railroad had just spread medium sized rock across the crossing point on the Mojave Road. (Water crossing at Afton Canyon pic) Crossing the river at this point was uneventful and we drove by the Afton Canyon Campground and continued on to where we had met earlier in the morning, so ending our day.

I'd like to thank John for a very memorable day and I would recommend it to anybody with a trail worthy vehicle. A little preparation is required though as the terrain changes from season to season. It would be wise to check local conditions. Anyone interested in more information should purchase the book "Mojave Road Guide; An Adventure thru time," by Dennis G. Casebier.