



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Vol. 24 No. 4

April 2009

Baskerville Will Speak This Month

Our April meeting will feature Navy archaeologist Mike Baskerville talking about recent archaeological happenings at China Lake. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m. at the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. The program was originally scheduled for January.

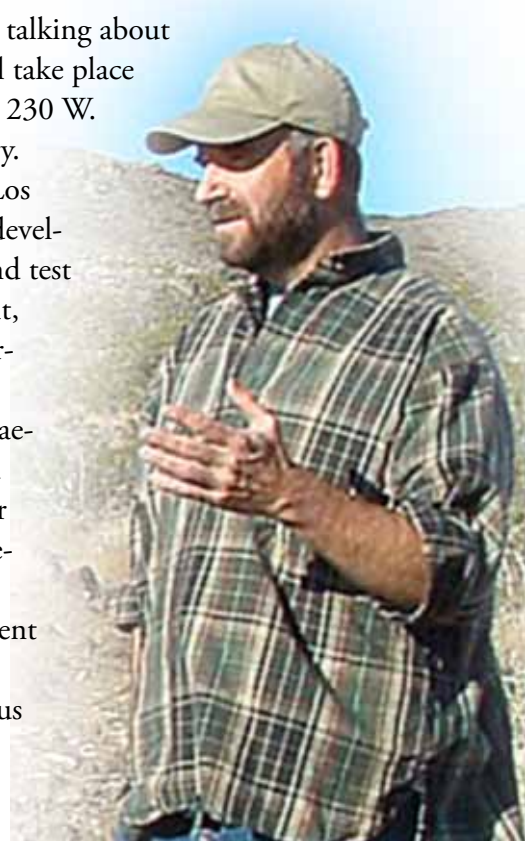
Mike's presentation will touch on a project conducted last fall by Cal State Los Angeles in which three rock shelters were excavated. Another topic will be the development of a Geographic Information System database that will help develop and test theories relating to prehistoric habitation and subsistence, resource procurement, and other issues. A final subject will be the development of a historic roads overview.

After Mike graduated from the University of Arizona, he worked as an archaeologist for the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, including a stint as the archaeologist for the BLM Ridgecrest field office. He has worked for the Navy since 2005 and recently returned to the area as the China Lake archaeologist.

A few years ago, Mike led a team of HSUMD volunteers in a trip to document a retaining wall along an old road connecting to the historic Nadeau road in Panamint Valley. The wall had been partially washed away and the current status needed to be recorded before restoration work could begin. Mike, at that time the local BLM archaeologist, instructed our team in methods of recording the wall, which involved measuring its height, width, and other physical attributes.

HSUMD meets on the third Tuesday of the month. All are welcome. We hope to see you there.

— Andrew Sound



Mike Baskerville on China Lake rangeland. From a photo by Andrew Sound



April 25 Field Trip — History Galore, Beautiful Views in Argus Range

For our field trip this month, we'll go to the Panamint Valley and up in the Argus Range to the ghost town of Lookout City and the Minnietta Cabin and the Minnietta Belle Mine. There's a lot to explore and a lot of history in this area. This will be a true four-wheel-drive run as there is some slow climbing and maneuvering to get up there.

Bring lunch, snacks, lots of water, and the usual layering and camera. You'll see some beautiful views of Panamint Valley, and there is still snow on Telescope Peak (3/28)! Meet at 8 a.m., Saturday, April 25, at the USO Building. If you have questions or concerns, call me at 760-371-2458.

— Jim Kenney

Remnants of tramway at Minnietta Belle Mine

Photo by Liz Babcock

President's Message *Help Restore Life to Our Beautiful Building!*



I'm pleased to report that Carol Porter is hard at work on sorting out recent donations to our HSUMD collection and working on the necessary documentation. This is an area of inter-

est which has not seen a great deal of activity lately, and I hope this will signal a resurgence of activity on other aspects of HSUMD. We have been so involved with the completion of the renovation of the historic USO Building that other aspects of the Society have not received the attention they deserve.

The upstairs area of the USO Building is almost completely renovated. Some of the oak flooring has been sanded and varnished and looks great. The three bedrooms have been carpeted and the venetian blinds were installed for the whole upstairs. About all that needs to be done is paint the stairwell and work over the old kitchen area. We will then start moving some of our things from our Station Street building.

— Bruce Wertenberger

ANNUAL MEETING

Our annual dinner meeting will be held on Tuesday evening, May 19, at the USO Building. Details of the meeting and biographical sketches of the nominees will be sent in a separate newsletter within the next several weeks. In the meantime, please mark your calendars for this annual event. It is planned that tickets will be on sale at our general meeting on April 21.

— Bruce Wertenberger

Now that Roger McEntee and other dedicated workers have made our USO Building something to be proud of, we need to show it off in the best way possible — by bringing club events, weddings, graduations, and other community get-togethers into its beautiful spaces.

You can help by encouraging others to rent our spaces. Here are some facts about building rental:

The main auditorium has a maximum seating capacity of 211 seated or 98 for dining. The facility includes use of the PA system, five-foot-diameter round tables, chairs, auditorium, stage, restrooms, lobby, small meeting room, and breakroom (an area that has cleanup and refrigeration facilities but no cooking facility.)

A deposit of \$150 is required to hold the room and to provide for cleaning and damage. The deposit is due at the time the reservation is made, and HSUMD will pay any refund due within 15 days after the event is held. All or part of the deposit may be retained by HSUMD if any facilities or furnishings are left unclean or damaged after the event or if other parts of the rental policies are violated.

Reservations are on a first come-first served basis. If a renter cancels a reservation 48 hours or more before the opening time, 20 percent of the deposit will be forfeited. A no-show or someone who cancels a reservation with less than 48 hours notice will forfeit the entire deposit.

The renter must communicate any needs for caterers or other third parties to the HSUMD staff, but our staff will not make arrangements with third parties.

The renter is responsible for the conduct and control of everyone associated with the activity. A member of HSUMD will be present at all times when the building is open.

No animals are permitted in the building except seeing-eye dogs, except by prior arrangement.

Decorations require prior approval, and the serving or sales of food and beverage must be pre-approved.

Restrictions on the use of alcoholic beverages must be in accordance with state law. ALL alcoholic beverages are to be provided and served by a licensed caterer.

HSUMD must be named as Additional Insured for a minimum of \$300,000, and smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building.

The building rental rates are as follows:

- Monday Through Thursday:
 - All Day: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$175
 - Evening: 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$150
- Friday:
 - All Day: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$200
 - Evening: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$175
- Saturday:
 - All Day: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$250
 - Evening: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$200
- Sunday:
 - All Day: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 p.m.) — \$200
 - Half Day: 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Cleanup by 11:30 pm) — \$150
 - Morning: 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Cleanup by 1:30 pm) — \$125
- Small Meeting Room Only:
 - 20 People Maximum for three hours — \$25

Big Band & Jazz Concert Featuring Swing N Easy



performing the sounds
of the big band era.

**ANOTHER FUNDRAISING EVENT FOR
THE HISTORIC USO BUILDING!**

**FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY
ADMISSION: \$5.00 AT THE DOOR**

Saturday, April 25

**DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 p.m.
CONCERT STARTS AT 6:30 p.m.**

HISTORIC USO BUILDING • 230 W. RIDGECREST BLVD.

CONCERT INFO: 382-3390

— Mike Leming

Help Us Collect Gifts for Heroes

Chris Cane/Prosser, the HSUMD boardmember who is in charge of our giftshop, sends word that the shop will be open only at events until we can get enough volunteers to staff it on a daily basis.

In the meantime, Chris is heading up a very appropriate effort to use our USO Building as a collection point to collect items and donations to help make things a bit easier for our troops. "To learn more or to arrange to deliver items, call me at 793-0741 between 10-2 anytime," said Chris.

She has been in touch with Lorraine A. Leacock, founder of "Gifts for Heroes," an organization that's dedicated to obtaining comfort items for servicemembers who are fighting the war against terrorism and those who are recovering from battle injuries. Lorraine encouraged us to collect

items at our site, then send them periodically to her for distribution where they will do the most good.

"Anything that is donated by friends, family, neighbors, schools, scout troops, medical professionals, veterinarians, churches, grocery stores, and businesses will be greatly appreciated," said Lorraine.

"Gifts For Heroes will arrange the most expeditious method of getting those donations shipped to our human and canine servicemembers."

Gifts for Heroes is now preparing summer care packages for shipment, and Lorraine listed especially desirable items as JanTana Greaseless Sunscreen, lip balm, "ZipFizz," and other similar items for our human troops, plus hydration kits, paw protectors, flea collars, etc., for our canine soldiers.

"I recently received a request from

a female soldier requesting facial cream, hand lotion, eye cream, etc., for herself and the other ladies in her location," Lorraine added. "I'm currently working on several hundred 'lady' care packages to fulfill those types of requests.

"The past few years it seems that many people prefer to give gift cards (Cosco, Sam's, K-Mart, Best Buy, etc.) and ask that I do the shopping for whatever items we're short of at any given time. I certainly don't mind and go shopping for the troops almost every week."

Monetary donations are also gratefully received, since the cost of shipping the care packages is significant.

To learn more about the organization, check out www.GiftsForHeroes.net. Chris is also waiting for your call at 793-0741 any day 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

The NOTS Railroad

By John Di Pol

Attention “Monopoly” players (if there are any left)! You may recall that there were four railroad properties on the board: Reading, Pennsylvania, B & O and Short Line.

As a young teenager, your writer was a “Monopoly” aficionado. He knew that the first three were real railroads, but never figured out if “Short Line” was a proper name or simply a generic category. When he came to work at China Lake, then called the Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS), in 1950, he found out. There *was* a railroad line 10 miles long from Inyokern to the China Lake main base. Short enough.

Later he learned that the line extended seven miles further into the testing area, but it was still short compared to “Monopoly”’s three other lines.

Why Inyokern? In 1910 the Southern Pacific Railroad completed a standard-gauge line (called the Jawbone) from Mojave up to the Owens Valley to support the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

The connection at Mojave gave access to the main transcontinental lines of both Southern Pacific and Santa Fe RRs. The Jawbone ran up the west side of the Indian Wells Valley, with a siding at Inyokern, and served not only the aqueduct but also public passenger and freight trade.

When the Navy came in 1943 to build the temporary and permanent research, development, and test facilities, together with all of the supporting infrastructure for its rocket program, one of the early actions was to build the spurline from Inyokern to the site of China Lake, i.e., the



Engines and cars of the NOTS Railroad, circa 1950. The engine at left is labeled Macco Construction Company, the name of the company that built the railroad.

U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Maturango Museum

“NOTS Railroad.”

The interchange and switching complex at the connection near Inyokern was built by the Southern Pacific. The railroad line was built by the Macco Construction Company, the first of several major construction contractors the Navy used for all of its technical and infrastructure facilities.

When completed, the NOTS Railroad was operated not by the Southern Pacific but by civilian employees of NOTS.

Originally three steam locomotives were used, but they were quickly replaced by several diesel-electric units obtained from other government sources. In later years four new units with greater capacity were built specifically for NOTS. The rolling stock included boxcars, flat cars, two locomotive cranes (very important), and various other cars.

The main warehouse complex for storage of the construction material was in an area to the west of the present location of Michelson Laboratory. The rail line, however, continued out to the test range area for two main purposes, the first as a way to get

materials to a transfer dock where ammunition and energetic materials were loaded onto trucks for transfer to the main magazine storage area behind B Mountain (“Lone Butte” on official maps). The other role was to deliver very heavy steelplate material that served as targets for testing the performance of rocket warheads and contact fuzes impacting hard targets under high-impact-velocity conditions (K-2 Range).

In the early to mid 1950s the rail line was used to obtain flight ballistic data for the rocket-propelled depth charge called Weapon A. This weapon was to be fired from a fast-moving surface ship when it attacked an enemy submarine.

In order to determine the aiming parameters to hit the desired impact point for the depth charge, the designers had to obtain the flight characteristics of the weapon under crosswind conditions.

How was this critical data to be obtained? As so often happens, creative China Lake project and range personnel came up with the solution. A 2.8-mile section of the NOTS railroad

Continued on p. 5

NOTS RR*From p. 4*

line between the transfer dock and K-2 Range was improved by slightly superelevating some curves. A locomotive was specially constructed with a 160-hp Buick engine and automatic transmission (the most powerful combination available), with a very-low-profile flatbed trailer from the mining industry used as the crosswind launching platform.

The locomotive was intended to reach operating speeds of up to 60 knots and to operate NOLO (with no live operator), a system of trip wires to send the firing signal and to bring the locomotive to a coasting stop, a full coverage range instrumentation array to cover the firing point area. After much shakedown, the system worked well and was used in subsequent years for crosswind test launching of other weapons systems (K-3 Range).

A final item. On October 23, 1954, a frantic call was received by NOTS Security from an official in Inyokern: "A run-away boxcar is rolling your way!" A strong westerly wind and the slight downslope from Inyokern to China Lake were pushing the car along at a pretty good clip. Intercept efforts were to no avail, but the warehouse area was cleared.

Fortunately, the switching was set to enter the engine house. The run-away car rammed in. A switch engine inside was damaged at both ends, as was the engine house. No comments from Southern Pacific.

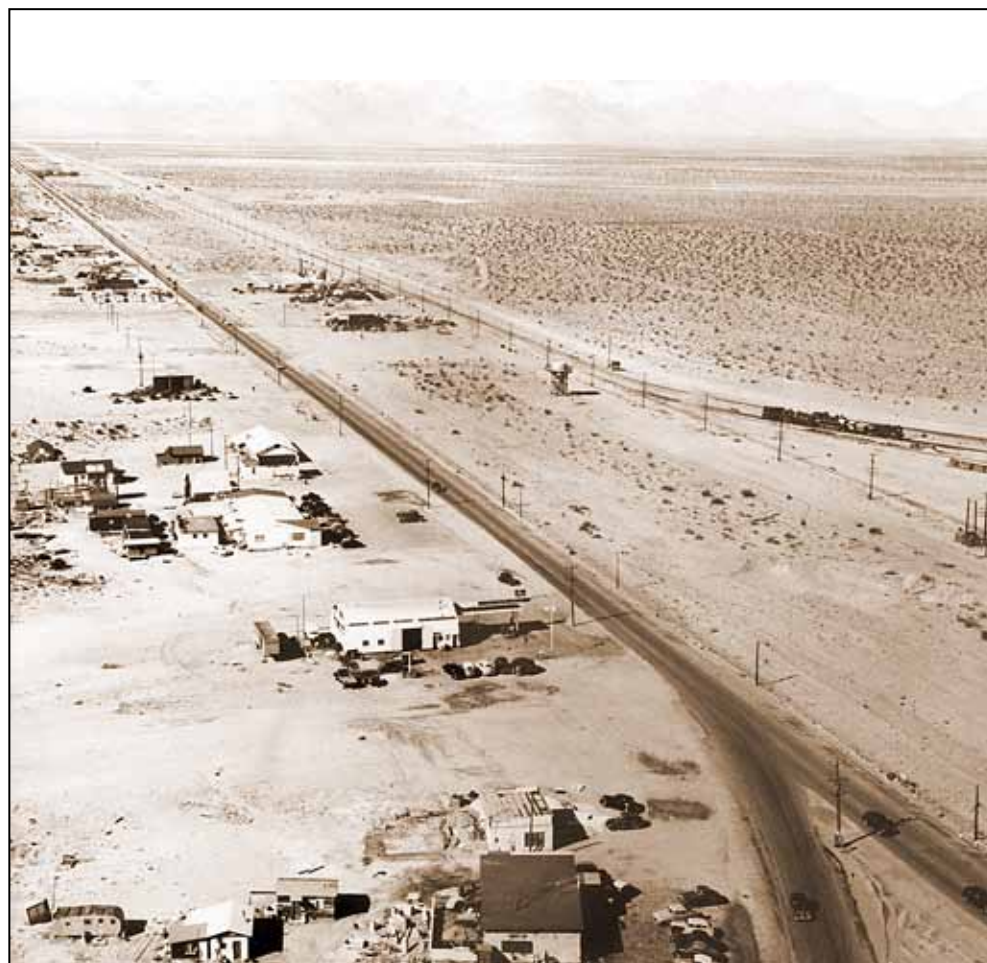
Ref: JAWBONE, by Phil Serpico, 2006.

MAGNIFICENT MAVERICKS, China Lake History, Vol.3, by Elizabeth Babcock, 2008.

Our Business Members — *please patronize them!*

Allen County Public Library,
Genealogy Department
AltaOne Federal Credit Union
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor
Baxendale's Antiques
BevLen Haus – Bed & Breakfast
DeathValley.com
The Flower Shoppe
TJ Frisbee Bicycles, Inc.
George Import Service
H & R Block
L. R. Haugen, Realtor
High Sierra Auto & Truck
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney
Hockett's Building Supply
IWV Insurance

JRP Historical Consulting
Dick Lewis Domestic Water Systems
Jack & Dana Lyons, Realtors
Netzer-Russell Consulting, LLC
Nevins Tech. Consultants
The News Review (Farris)
The Pleistocene Foundation
Kenneth G. Pritchard, Attorney
Ridgecrest Automotive, LLC
Ridgecrest Moving & Storage
Sierra Odyssey, LLC
Sierra Wave Tank Sales
Southern Sierra Medical Clinic
Spectrum Graphics
Gary P. Staab & Assoc., Inc.
The Swap Sheet



In this 1945 photo, the tracks of the NOTS Railroad can be seen paralleling Inyokern Road. At bottom is Smokey's Garage where the Econo Lodge stands today, and at center right is a train hauling materials to the construction area at China Lake.

U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Maturango Museum

DIRECTORS

Bruce Wertenberger, President
375-2369, brucew@ridgenet.net.

Doug Lueck, Vice President
375-8202, racvb@filmdesert.com

Joan Chartier, Secretary
499-9119, bevjoan1@verizon.net

Andrew Sound, Treasurer, Publicist
371-1795, afsound@verizon.net



Liz Babcock, Newsletter Editor
375-7900, lizbab@iwvisp.com

Chris Cane/Prosser, Giftshop
793-0741, christinecane@msn.com

Chuck Cordell, Building
cordell.construction@yahoo.com

Martha Jauregui
mrthjrg@yahoo.com

Jim Kenney, Field Trips & Programs
371-2458, rubiblue@verizon.net

Mike Leming, Accessions/Events
371-7270,
inspirationalcountry@hotmail.com

Louis Renner, Membership
375-4379, linkrenn@verizon.net

Wes Staples, Audiovisual
371-4214, wcstaples@verizon.net,
wes.staples@navy.mil

COMMITTEE LEADERS

Roger McEntee, Building Manager
poppamac@verizon.net

Kathy Armstrong, Fundraising
375-2643

Carol Porter, Accessions
porter@ridgenet.net

Janet Westbrook, Webmistress
jwest@ridgenet.net

**You could be seeing this
newsletter in color!**

Check out our website, www.maturango.org/Hist.html, for an archive of our newsletters. Thanks to our gracious webmistress, all the recent issues are included in the archive as color PDFs.

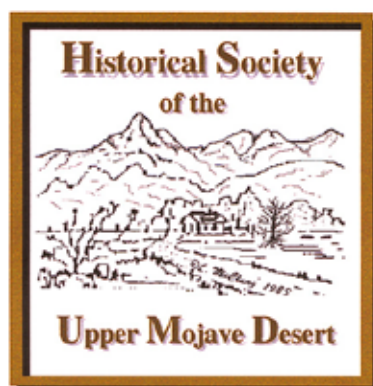
Important Reminders

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

Historical Society of the
Upper Mojave Desert
P. O. Box 2001
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 9
RIDGECREST, CA



APRIL 2009 MEETING

Tuesday, April 21, 2009, 7:30 p.m., Historic USO Building