



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Vol. 24 No. 1

January 2009

Learn About Latest Archaeology Projects



During a 2005 HSUMD trip, Mike Baskerville (right) discusses rock shelters with members (from left) Bill Nevins, John Di Pol, and Jim Kenney.

Photo by Andrew Sound

The January meeting of the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert will feature Navy archaeologist Mike Baskerville telling us about recent archaeological happenings at China Lake. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.

Mike's presentation will touch on a project conducted last fall by CalState Los Angeles in which three rock shelters were excavated on the range areas of China Lake.

Another topic will be the 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 he graduated from the University of Arizona, Mike 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.

HSUMD meets on the third Tuesday of the month. All are welcome to attend. For more information on this or future meetings, call our president, Bruce Wertenberger at 375-2369. — *Andrew Sound*

Searles Valley Field Trip — Jan. 24

On Saturday, Jan. 24, we'll leave the USO Building at 8 a.m. and travel to Searles Valley, where we will continue exploring old mine sites, tin can camps and roads proposed to be closed by a new wilderness bill.

Four-wheel drive will be helpful but not totally necessary; there will be some sand and rocks, so good tires and a little clearance will be O.K.

Bring water and lunch, good shoes, layered clothing for weather changes, cameras and such.

We plan to get up on the Slate Range ridge, where vistas of both Panamint and Searles Valleys can be spectacular. — *Jim Kenney*



There's always something going on our Historic

USO Building! Check out page 3 to see details about the concert at the USO Building on Jan. 31. Come join us for an evening of easy swing, refreshments, dancing and good companionship! All this for only a \$5 cover charge! HSUMD Boardmember Mike Leming is arranging the event as a fund-raiser to help keep our building up and running and give YOU a good time.

President's Message – Thank You to Volunteers



Taking a look at the activities of the past year or so, I'd like to recognize and thank again a number of people who have done so much to advance the work of the HSUMD.

★ First, **Bill Nevins** for his foresight and tremendous drive to get us where we are in the acquisition and restoration of the old USO Building.

★ **Roger McEntee** for his hours of volunteer labor in the restoration work and the continuing maintenance and managing of the use of the building.

★ **Kathy Armstrong** and her committee members for the many fund-raising activities and the planning and execution of the rededication of the building last September.

★ **Doug Lueck**, new board member and vice president, for all the work during the summer while I was out of state, to get the remainder of the windows restored and all the myriad details associated with that activity.

★ **Chuck Cordell** for his construction expertise and contacts which enabled him to find a business capable of restoring those old windows.

★ Thanks and appreciation also to **Liz Babcock** for

being the editor of our newsletter and creating a much more professional and lively appearance for it, **Chris Cane/Prosser** for starting up our gift shop and **Janet Westbrook** for her fine work in continuing to be the "Webmistress" for our website.

★ **Jim Kenney** for finding all the interesting speakers and developing and conducting our tours.

★ **John Di Pol** for his long-term contributions as our main writer of historical articles and grants, as well as for his contributions as the HSUMD coordinator and primary contributor to the Sand Canyon Environmental Education program (see the article below).

★ **Mike Leming** for starting up our concert efforts to promote use of the old USO Building as well as entertain our members and the community.

★ Last but not least **Jim Lamb** for attending to the hospitality aspects of our general meeting.

Backing up the leadership of some of the above activities are a number of volunteers whose whose active participation is most welcome and appreciated. I hope I have not omitted anyone in the writing of this. If so, my apologies.

Happy New Year!

— Bruce Wertenberger

HELP WANTED!

Historical Society Needs SEEP Coordinator

A tremendous number of dedicated volunteers have helped keep the Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program — SEEP — an educational and entertaining experience for our youngsters over the 16+ years the Bureau of Land Management, the IWV Water District and other organizations including HSUMD have conducted the program in historic Sand Canyon each spring.

During SEEP's early years, we had the advantage of being able to use people who had actually lived in Sand Canyon as guides on the History Walk. But most of those people are no longer with us. Other early tour guides have moved on to other pursuits.

Over the last few seasons, HSUMD's part in the program has dwindled to just John Di Pol and a few other people he can scrounge up from time to time. Several months ago, John notified the HSUMD Board that we need to replace him.

It would be a shame if HSUMD's part in this worthwhile program were to disappear. *Please help us* — we're seeking people who enjoy sharing history with active young minds in a beautiful outdoor setting. In particular, we need someone willing to run the program. Please do step forward — this has to be one of our most worthwhile endeavors! Call Bruce at 375-2369 to learn more.



LEARNING HISTORY WHERE IT HAPPENED — John Di Pol, assisted by Charlotte Ostermann, discusses Sand Canyon's history with a rapt audience of Gateway School fifth graders.

Photo by Holly Farris

Historic  Building
Fundraising Event

Featuring the *Jazz Quartet*
Swing n Easy
Performing the sounds of the Big Band era.



*\$5.00
cover charge*



*Food,
Beverages
Fun, Dancing*

Sat. Jan. 31 @6:30 PM

Doors Open @5:30 PM

Historic USO Building

230 West Ridgecrest Blvd.

Coso Hot Springs — The Resorts

By John Di Pol



Renowned desert photographer Burton Frasher took this photo of his wife and son at Coso Hot Springs in the 1920s.

Frasher Foto, U.S. Navy collection, courtesy of Maturango Museum

The Coso Mountains of California are located in Inyo County within the reservation boundary of the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station. The western portion of these mountains was formed by extensive volcanic action eons ago. Peaks, domes, craters, lava flows galore — all are now dead.

A striking exhibit can be seen as you travel north on Hwy. 395 and enter the Little Lake Gap. On the east side of the highway, and close by, is the face of a large lava flow, a mile wide and 300-400 feet high — a massive black rock glacier frozen in time.

But the dead volcanos and lava flows have left a living legacy in a basin high up in the Cosos, 12 or so miles east of the 395 highway.

Coso Hot Springs they are called — hot mud pots and mud ponds, steam vents, fumaroles and hot water along a fault line that permits Mother Earth to show a bit of the heat energy still in her core.

The research described in the referenced report by the Iroquois Research Institute clearly established that the springs were used for cultural and medical purposes by regional Piute/Shosone Native Americans prior to the arrival of the Euro-Americans. Such use continued well into the 20th

century.

The first “Euros” to come into the Cosos were prospectors and miners, followed by ranchers who settled in the Owens Valley but used suitable areas (including the hot springs) of the Cosos as winter range for their stock. Although the recorded history is very scarce, information spread about the medical and other benefits of the springs. (Some prospectors needed a bath occasionally!)

In 1893 Dr. I. J. Woodin of Independence, Inyo County, filed a 160-acre mining claim at the hot springs. Two years later Woodin deeded William Grant of Inyo county a 1/4 interest in a partnership. There are no records of subsequent activities until 1905 when a land patent was issued to Grant for the 160 acres.

In 1909 Woodin and Grant advertised that a grand plan for a sanitarium at Coso Hot Springs was being prepared. Large ads were placed in the Owens Valley newspapers, but there is no evidence than any such development was ever undertaken.

By 1914 Frank Adams, as manager for Woodin and Grant, built the first commercial enterprise as a resort for hot baths and cures for various ailments. Adams Resort had basic facili-

ties, and transportation was arranged by stage from Little Lake Station.

In 1916 Ed and May Schober investigated an area a mile or so northeast of Adams Resort. Steam vents were drilled and steam houses, guest cabins, a store, etc., were constructed. This development became known as Schober’s Resort.

By 1920 Coso Hot Springs mud and water had developed a growing reputation for medical and curative properties. But 1920 was also a period of transition. A court suit by the U.S. Government citing irregularities in Woodin’s and Grant’s original mining and land grants resulted in F. J. Sanders’ purchase at public auction of the 160 acres of the hot springs and adjoining land.

Sanders wasted no time. He embarked on a high-powered advertising program. The Watterson brothers, bankers in the Owens Valley, joined him. In 1924 the “Coso Hot Springs, Inc.” company was formed to develop and produce mud and water products.

Adams Resort had been put out of business and was replaced with expanded facilities in the 1922-1928 time frame.

During this period two large stone buildings were built that are still standing (hopefully!) — one for guest quarters and the other for office, lounge, restaurant and bottling plant.

Marketing of the commercial products in Los Angeles and operations at the hot springs continued through the 1920s. However, the Watterson brothers left in 1927 because of the failure of their bank.

Total control of the Coso Hot Springs Resort and commercial products passed into Sanders’ hands. Operations continued to 1932 when the Coso Hot Springs Corporation went into bankruptcy and its assets were sold.

A rapid sequence of owners acquired the properties and the Coso

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Our Business Members — *please patronize them!*

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The Swap Sheet

Coso Hot Springs — the Resorts

From p. 4

trademark. In 1938 U. M. Dailey restored continuity when he purchased a total of 240 acres involving all of the Coso Hot Springs facilities. He operated the resort and continued to produce and sell mud and water.

Through all these years Schober's Resort, a separate and independent property, stayed in business and actually expanded and improved its facilities.

By the 1930s a new route and road had been developed between the new Coso Junction a few miles north of Little Lake on the present Hwy 395 and the hot springs area.

With the improvement of transportation in the late '20s and early '30s business actually picked up at both resorts, averaging about 20-30 guests at any time at the Coso Hot Springs Resort alone.

With the advent of World War II and its gas rationing, patronage at both resorts declined, but they both stayed in operation until 1943 when the U.S. Government purchased both resorts as part of the land acquisition required for the then newly established Naval Ordnance Test Station at China Lake.

Were the Coso waters really effective in curing ailments? Some old-timers who were users claim "Yes." Others had a different opinion.



Native American workers at Coso Hot Springs bottle volcanic mineral water. This undated photo probably dates from the 1920s or early 1930s.

Tom Chapman collection, Maturango Museum

Were the mud baths effective? You have only to ask the many modern spas, some very pricey. They may have an answer.

Ref: A LAND USE HISTORY OF COSO HOT SPRINGS, Iroquois Research Institute, 1979 (a reprint, *Coso Hot Springs*, is available for \$19.95 as a 2008 publication of the Maturango Museum)

COSO HOT SPRINGS, Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert, manuscript, 1994.

Coincidentally, I have recently installed a new exhibit about Coso Hot Springs in the main gallery of the Maturango Museum. Many more pictures,

plus maps and artifacts from the resorts, are on display. Please visit! — ed.

Due\$ Are Due

Here's to a Happy New Year of support for HSUMD and our Historic USO Building! Your 2009 dues are now due — please send your check (\$20 family membership or \$30 business membership) to Treasurer, HSUMD, P.O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556. Remember — we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and your dues are tax-deductible.

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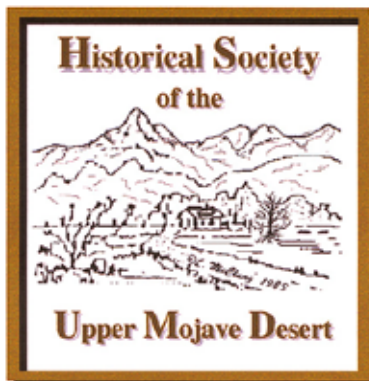
Important Reminders

- ★ 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
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JANUARY 2009 MEETING

Mike Baskerville, "Recent Archaeological Happenings,"
Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2009, 7:30 p.m., Historic USO Building