



# Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Vol. 24 No. 8

October 2009

## ***One Aviator on Another — Barbara Schultz To Speak of Pancho Barnes***

The Society's regular October meeting will feature a presentation on Florence "Pancho" Barnes by her biographer and fellow aviator Barbara Schultz. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the Maturango Museum, 100 E. Las Flores Ave.

**Note that for this month only the meeting will not be held at the Historic USO Building, as that will be filled with spook-house preparations.**

You may know people in Ridgecrest who remember the charismatic Pancho Barnes — she evidently spent a lot of time in the Ridgecrest court in her later years. In the 1920s, Pancho barnstormed her way through the skies to become a Hollywood stunt pilot, then went on to capture the women's speed record in 1930.

Pancho made many famous friends, notably Chuck Yeager, Amelia Earhart and Jimmy Doolittle. During off-duty hours, the test pilots of Muroc Army Air Field (now Edwards Air Force Base) designated Pancho's "Happy Bottom Riding Club" their unofficial debriefing room in the late 1940s through the 1950s.

Happy Bottom had a restaurant, dance hall, coffee shop, bar, horseback riding and a swimming pool, the only one in the Antelope Valley in those days.

In its heyday, the club had as many as 400 guests for Wednesday night dances. Over her bar, Pancho posted a "Notice of Non-Responsibility" that read, "We're not responsible for the bustling and hustling that may go on here. Lots of people bustle, and some hustle — But that's their business, and a very old one."

Schultz became interested in Pancho while living in the Antelope Valley and learning to fly at Barnes Aviation at Fox Airport. Schultz's husband Phil was a longtime friend of Pancho and her son Bill.

When the Valerie Bertinelli TV movie about Pancho came out, Schultz concluded that Pancho needed her story told accurately. So Schultz researched and wrote Pancho's story over the

*Continued on p. 3*



Barbara Schultz

*Photo by Liz Babcock*

### **Field Trip to Darwin Oct. 24**

The Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert is sponsoring a field trip on Saturday, Oct. 24, to the historic mining town of Darwin.

Resident historians Hank and Connie Jones will share their research and pictures and give participants a guided tour of the town and its history. The trip will finish at China Garden Spring.

Vehicles will need clearance and good tires but four-wheel drive is not necessary unless you want to follow Darwin Wash past Darwin Falls to Panamint Springs.

Dress in layers as weather might be almost anything. Bring lots of water, lunch, comfortable shoes and of course your camera. Advance sign-up is required as the trip is limited to 10 vehicles, but not how many can go, so buddy up as much as possible.

To sign up and/or to ask questions, call Jim Kenney at 760-371-2458.

— Jim Kenney

# A Great Big Thank You to Our Outstanding Helpers

As I walked through the Historic USO Building the other day, I marveled at the progress we have made in the past three years.

What was once a building bound for destruction has become a facility that we can all be very proud of.

Of course this accomplishment could not have been achieved without the help of a small army of volunteers, hundreds of man hours and community financial sup-

port.

There has also been a host of contractors throughout the valley that without their support understanding patience and generosity this project could not have been completed. These folks really support our community, and we hope in return you will use their names as your "shopping list" when you need their types of expertise.

The Board of Directors says a big thank you to the following:

Kim Parks  
MEC INC (Asbestos Removal)  
Devore Insulation  
L&M Lumber  
Pegasus Electric  
Cardinal Plumbing  
Bill Dottery Painting  
Windows Walls 'n Floors  
Century Glass

Kern Valley Glass and Screen  
Home Depot  
Desert Glass  
Davis Drywall  
Earth Landscaping  
Gentry Air Conditioning  
Michael Js Painting  
Larry Mosby — The Boiler Guy  
Ron Eubanks Concrete

Security Engineering  
Dale Howard  
Desert Garage Door  
Carol Electric  
Hawks Plumbing  
Copper Roofing  
5 Star Insulation  
Cordell Construction

— Roger McEntee



Irene Porter is shown as she sang gospel and patriotic songs in our USO Building on Oct. 6. We hope Irene will perform there again! *Photo by Andrew Sound*

We're sorry to have to report that Mike Leming has had to resign from our board. Mike did a great job with staging several shows in the building; he also had started working with Carol Porter to make some much-needed accessioning decisions. We will miss you, Mike! We are relieved to say that we have found a very able new board member — Carol Porter herself, shown here doing one of the things she does very well, — volunteering!

*Photo by Liz*



Another fun activity in our Historic USO Building last month was a program for our Sister City visitors from Tepetitlan. At left the Suzuki Strings, led by Carol Sue McKenzie, play a tuneful greeting for the delegates and their local hosts.

*Photo by Andrew Sound*

## IWVWD Workshop To Present Cable TV Landscaper Plus Local Artist



Renée Günter

**O**n Saturday, Nov. 7, the Indian Wells Valley Water District will present its Fall 2009 Xeriscape Workshop at the Historic USO Building.

If you are looking for a way to add flair and focus to a garden while using no water at all, come and listen to outdoor artist and former Desert Artists' League President Mike Mumford.

He will discuss his metal sculpture inspiration and process beginning at 10 a.m.

Then Landscape Architect Renée Günter, recently featured on Home and Garden TV and the KABC Channel 7 news as well as in the *Los Angeles*

*Times* Garden Section, will talk about the certified wildlife habitat she created on the grounds of her South Los Angeles home.

Oasis Garden Club and the Desert Planters will both hold plant and garden sales that day on the east side of the building.

And many thanks to Oasis for hosting the workshop.

This fun and informative morning is FREE. Seating is limited and reservations are required. For more information, contact Lucinda Sue at (760) 384-5518.

— Lucinda Sue Crosby, IWVWD

## October Meeting

From p. 1

next seven years. Schultz was fortunately able to interview many individuals from the 1920s and 1930s, such as Barnes' social secretary from 1928-1932 as well as the gentleman who assisted her in moving out to the desert in 1934.

The result, *Pancho, The Biography of Florence Lowe Barnes*, was published in 1996 and is now in a third printing. Schultz has one other published aviation history, *The Wedell-Williams Air Service*, and is working on a third book, this one about Moye Stephens, Flying Wing and Flying Carpet pilot.

Barbara and Phil Schultz have two sons, also pilots. The Schultzes live at their own airport — Little Buttes Antique Airport, five miles northwest of Fox Field.

HSUMD meets on the third Tuesday of the month, and all are welcome. For more information about this or future meetings, call President Bruce Wertenberger at 375-2369.

— Andrew Sound

## Noted Lovers of Local History Die

We're sorry to have to report the Sept. 24 death of Mike Patterson, who, with his wife, Jody Stewart, did so much to preserve Cerro Gordo and its rich cultural history. Mike and Jody visited our Society several times to give programs, notably an overview of Cerro Gordo they presented at one of our Annual Meetings.

With assistance from Mike and Jody, we also put together an exhibit about Cerro Gordo that appeared in the Maturango Museum.

After Jody's death, Mike and a team of volunteers, many of them Ridgecrest residents, continued restoring the old town. And the work goes on today in memory of both Mike and Jody.

Sympathy cards or letters may be addressed to the Patterson Family, 618 Pine Street, Bakersfield, CA 93304-1851, or to the Patterson



Mike Patterson

Sons, 5611 Windward Bay, Bakersfield, CA 93312.

Another supporter of local history was Richard H. "Dick" Hart, who died on Oct. 3. Dick was a longtime member of the Society, and HSUMD is listed in his obituary as an organization the family would like people to donate to in his memory.

### COMING ATTRACTIONS AT HISTORIC USO BUILDING

★ CLOTA Spookhouse Fundraiser: Oct. 23 & 24, Oct. 30 & 31, evening shows 6-11 p.m., kids' matinee on Halloween, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

★ Short Plays Festival, Ridgecrest Theatrical Troupe: Nov. 6, 7, 13, 14. Doors open 6:30 p.m., plays start 7 p.m.

# Old Fort Coso

By John Di Pol

No, the Naval Ordnance Test Station was not the first military establishment on what is now the China Lake North Range area. That appellation belongs to an outpost of the U.S. Army's Camp Independence that dates back to the 1862-77 time frame and is located in the Coso Mountains in Coso Canyon one mile northeast of Coso Village,

Before we describe the specifics of Old Fort Coso, let us review some background.

With the 1859 discovery of the Comstock Lode in Nevada, many more prospectors were streaming into Eastern California. These included stockmen and settlers who first arrived in the Owens Valley in 1861.

The hard winter of 1861-62 gave rise to conflicts between the native inhabitants and the settlers. By early 1862, the violence increased to the point where the settlers asked for protection by U.S. Army troops. Camp Independence was established in the Owens Valley on July 4, 1862, manned by companies from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, California Volunteers.

By 1867 the conflict subsided, but the cavalry continued to patrol in the valley and outlying regions until 1877, when Camp Independence was closed.

Back to Old Fort Coso. The site is located at Coso Springs (also called Darwin Springs) in Coso Canyon and consists of ruins of three main building structures and several minor features.

The building ruins are of sufficient integrity, however, that their functions and the original floor plans have been reconstructed (on paper, of course).

The barracks building is located adjacent to the springs, the redoubt is on a ridge in the canyon wall high above the barracks, and the third structure is an explosive magazine/storage facility separately located between the first two.

The barracks is built of cut and



Remains of the barracks at Old Fort Coso. Up the hill behind the barracks may be glimpsed the fort's explosive storage facility. *Photo by John Di Pol*

dressed granite blocks and mud mortar. The overall dimensions are 67 x 21 ft., a space that enclosed four rooms. The northern portion is an extension 13 x 12 ft. with a fireplace and may have been a kitchen. There is a fireplace in the furthestmost of the other three rooms. One window and several doors between rooms and to the exterior are evident. The building most likely had a gabled roof.

The magazine/storage facility is cut into the hill at an elevation slightly higher than the barracks. It is square in shape made out of crudely stacked and unmortared rock. The front wall is 19 ft. in width, the wing walls are 17 ft and 14 ft. in length and a granite outcrop makes up the rear wall. The center of the structure is cut into the hill to form a level floor. The original height was probably 4 ft.

The redoubt is a trapezoidal structure built of natural rock, unmortared and crudely stacked. There is no obvious entrance, but two of the walls have intact sections low enough to climb over, and one of them has an access ramp created with rock and earth fill. There is a steep drop on three of the

sides. The walls are four to five feet high.

Spaces left between the rocks provide loopholes or gunports. These openings — 13 in all — allow for a full view of the surrounding area and approaches to the fort.

The water springs at the site of the old fort in Coso Canyon are, and continue to be, the primary source of water for the mining town of Darwin, 8 miles distant.

The mining discoveries in Darwin were made in 1874. The mining camp boomed. Victor Beaudry of Cerro Gordo fame quickly claimed or acquired the rights to water at several springs in the Coso area. The most plentiful of these was a spring most commonly called in later years "Darwin Springs."

Beaudry formed the Darwin Water Works in early 1875, installed an 8-mile water line and first delivered water to Darwin in July 1875. For over 130 years this system, through many owners, much maintenance and repair and full replacements, has been in operation to this day.

*Continued on p. 5*

# Our Business Members — *please patronize them!*

Allen County Public Library,  
Genealogy Department  
AltaOne Federal Credit Union  
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor  
Baxendale's Antiques

## Fort Coso

From p. 4

The most recent and most intensive field work, research and analysis effort for the origins and history of the old fort was undertaken jointly by the firms of PAR Environmental Services, Inc., of Sacramento and JRP Historical Consulting Services of Davis.

Primary documents at libraries, archives and record groups in both California and Washington, D.C., depositories were accessed. Contacts were made with historians and archaeologists working on western military-related sites to gain comparative information.

This effort was accomplished under contract to the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, and reported in the joint PAR and JRP report, "National Register Evaluation for the Coso Old Fort and Darwin Springs Water System, China Lake, Inyo County, California," dated January 2000.

The report concluded that the old fort site was associated with U.S. Army activities based at Camp Independence and served as an outpost for patrolling troops, most probably during the 1862-66 period of the Indian Wars, and that the site is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The existence of an old military outpost on the China Lake North Ranges has been known since the very beginning of the NOTS facility. However, the rarity and historical significance of the Fort Coso site has been recognized only in very recent years.

The PAR/JRP research team emphasized this recognition in their joint report:

BevLen Haus – Bed & Breakfast  
Cal-Sun Pools  
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*

John Di Pol (kneeling in the foreground) is one of the volunteers who participated in National Public Lands Day, Sept. 30, 2006, by working to clean up and stabilize old Fort Coso. Here John cleans out debris at the site of the fort's barracks.

*U.S. Navy photo*



Within the context of a local military theme, the stone buildings at the site are representative of a type, period, and method of construction that is rare in the region.

The overall preservation of the site is excellent, and the site has a high potential to yield comparative information valuable in a study of outposts in the west during the Civil War era.

Compared to other posts that have been recorded in the Mojave, this site is remarkably intact.

The relationship between the various buildings is evident, the barracks

and redoubt retain their original configuration, and there is a strong sense of time and place while standing at the barracks or crouching in the redoubt.

What other surprises might be hidden in China Lake's million acres? Any ideas??

Postscript: A note of appreciation is due Russ Kaldenberg, former NAWS command archeologist, for the information he provided and for the loan of the PAR/JRP Project Report, which was an important source for this article.

## DIRECTORS

Bruce Wertenberger, President  
375-2369, brucew@ridgenet.net.  
Doug Lueck, Vice President  
375-8202, racvb@filmdesert.com  
Joan Chartier, Secretary  
499-9119, joan1@mchsi.com  
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  
Jim Kenney, Field Trips & Programs  
371-2458, rubiblue@verizon.net  
Roger McEntee, Building Manager  
poppamac@verizon.net  
Carol Porter, Accessions  
446-3400, porter@ridgenet.net

Louis Renner, Membership  
375-4379, linkrenn@verizon.net  
Pete Smith, Exhibits  
joe.bear4@verizon.net

## COMMITTEE LEADERS

Kathy Armstrong, Fundraising  
375-2643  
Janet Westbrook, Webmistress  
jwest@ridgenet.net

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

Check out our website, [www.maturango.org/Hist.html](http://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.

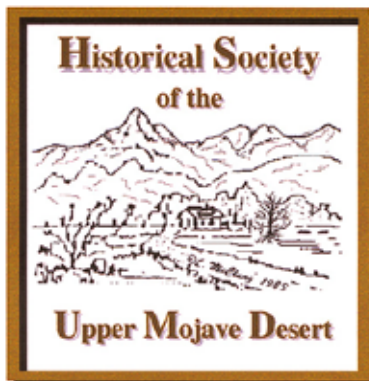
## Important Reminders

- ★ 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



## OCTOBER 2009 MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 7:30 p.m., Maturango Museum