

# ARTI-FACTS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

January 2007

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Neighboring Communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

## ALL ROADS LEAD TO IDYLLWILD

By Ben Killingsworth

Well, maybe not quite, but there are four distinctly different roads – three of them taking travelers eager to find Idyllwild as far up as Mountain Center, from where they cover the last 5 scenic miles of their journey up Highway 243, wind around the last gentle curve, and there it is – Idyllwild.

The other route, also over 243, is even less complicated, especially if you're eager to see Beaumont and Banning on your way to paradise. It winds up right in the heart of the village, after coasting downhill for a few miles from Pine Cove.

But that's today. Imagine, if you can, traveling up from Banning over a dirt "wagon road" with stretches featuring grades of about 20 percent – that's a one foot rise every five feet! And, instead of a 150 horsepower engine doing the job, you would have been content with two, or

maybe even up to twenty horsepower. That's using real horses, of course, or real cattle as was often the case.

Then, to add insult to injury, you would have been charged a toll fee.

That pretty well describes the first San Jacinto Mountain road.

road was built to enable horse drawn wagons to haul lumber down the mountain for use in constructing the Southern Pacific Railroad. Colonel Milton Sanders Hall had the contract with Southern Pacific, but he hired E. Y. Buchanan to build the roadway.



The Hemet-Idyllwild Stage  
The stage began daily journeys in summer 1902 and took 1/2 days to get up the old road  
Photo from Museum Archives

It was built in 1875, and came up through a series of switchbacks from the vicinity of Cabazon to a sawmill near what is now Lake Fulmor. The

They called it Hall's San Jacinto Wagon Road, or simply, Hall's Grade.

*(Continued on page 2)*  
See **ROADS**

**\*\*\*BE A HERO \*\*\***  
**VOLUNTEER TO BE A MUSEUM DOCENT**  
You may or may not remember the poster of Uncle Sam, his right index finger pointing at the reader. "I want YOU," he was saying. Of course he was talking about joining the US Army.

Now, picture, if you will, a poster showing the face of Mary Austin, her finger pointing directly at you, and she too, saying, "I want YOU."

Of course Mary would be referring to our need for more volunteers to be museum docents.

In addition to being a docent herself, Mary has the unenviable job of recruiting and assigning our docents.

You can sign up for as little as one half day a month. And believe it or not, it's fun. You meet lots of interesting people and get the chance to brag about Idyllwild.

Try it, you'll like it. And you'll make Mary a darned sight happier, too.

Give her a call at 659-2250

## IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

President	Marcia Donnell
Vice President	Carolyn Levitski
Secretary	Adele Voell
Treasurer	Bob Smith

### DIRECTORS

Corrinne Brown	Sue Miller
Nancy Fletcher	Shirl Reid
Joe Hart	Lynn Voorheis
Nanci Killingsworth	Kay Wanner

### ADVISORY BOARD

Harry Bubb	Walter Parks
Kay Cenicerros	Kent Steele
Craig Coopersmith	

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Museum Collection  
Shirl Reid, Assistant Curator

Home Tour—Co-Chairs  
Corrinne Brown, Nancy Killingsworth

Hospitality  
Linda and Larry Turner

Website  
Francoise Frigola

Newsletter  
Ben Killingsworth  
Adele Smith

### MUSEUM VISITOR COUNT WAY UP

Last year saw an all time record of 4685 visitors to our museum. That represents a 30 percent increase over the first two years we were open. Wow - we must be doing something right!

### RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERVISOR JEFF STONE HELPS OUT

After touring our museum, Supervisor Stone expressed his enthusiastic support, and backed it up with a \$10,000 grant. It will be spent as part of the construction costs for the museum annex, which will allow us to preserve our treasures under proper environmental conditions.

## ROADS

*(Continued from page 1)*

It was an extremely dangerous road, with lumber wagons frequently tumbling into steep canyons, killing both men and horses. It was also a toll road, but not many were brave enough to use it. For one reason or another, Hall went bankrupt and abandoned the road, which led San Diego County Supervisors to pass a resolution in 1879 taking it over and declaring it a free public roadway.

In case you're wondering about the above reference to "San Diego County", Riverside County did not exist at that time. In fact it was only after a long battle between those who championed a San Jacinto County, and those representing San Bernardino County who fought to keep the City of Riverside within its territory, that Riverside County was finally officially formed in 1893.

The main reason for the battle was that the City of Riverside, formed in 1883, had become one of the wealthiest cities, per capita, in the country, primarily due to its highly successful citrus industry. They also had a railroad passing through their city.

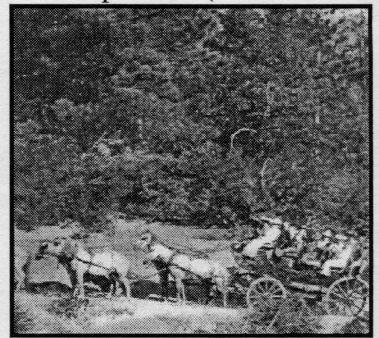
As a result of their financial success the amount of taxes they contributed to county govern-

ment was very substantial, and San Bernardino County was loath to give it up.

But long before all that took place another road into the mountains was built by Joseph Crawford. It ran from San Jacinto to Strawberry Valley and was built by Crawford purely as an investment after he noticed the large number of people riding horses into the mountains over old mining trails. The road was finished in May, 1876.

Using Indian laborers, construction of the road cost Crawford \$3000, but by making it a toll road he expected to recoup construction costs and make a handsome profit to boot. Wagons were charged 75 cents and horseback riders were required to pay 10 cents, which Crawford soon raised to 25 cents

It was a horrible road with grades as steep as 30 percent (a one foot



"Hang on, everybody!"

rise every three feet),  
*(Continued on page 4)*

**See ROADS  
ROADS**

*(Continued from page 4)*

THE IDYLLWILD COMMUNITY  
RECREATION COUNCIL  
PRESENTS A FREE LECTURE

As part of ICRC's Speaker Series, Dr. Larry Burgess, Executive Director of the A.K. Smiley Library, will give a lecture entitled,  
"Abraham Lincoln: Bicentennial and Relevance Today"

The event will be held at the Caine Learning Center on Pine Crest Ave.

On February 21 at 6:00 PM

Following the lecture attendees are invited to have dinner with the speaker at

Silver Pines Lodge

Cost of the dinner is \$20.00

Seating is limited to 30 persons

Call for reservations at 659- 4335

Proceeds will benefit the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM LOG

If you've had the pleasant experience of acting as a docent in our museum, you know first hand how much our visitors enjoy what they see and hear when they're checking us out. Most of them leave with a newfound appreciation for our community and its history. Here are a few comments some of our visitors wrote in the log as they were leaving:

*"Great exhibits and care of the museum."*

*"Loved the Cahuilla history."*

*"Great photo displays."*

*"The furniture was fabulous."*

*"Fascinating town, fascinating history."*

*"Really brought back terrific memories."*

*"How great to see so much from my childhood."*

*"This place smells wonderful."*

*"Wonderful; Charlotte's awesome!"*

*"Great hospitality; took time to explain things."*

*"Wonderful, and Marcia was great!"*

*"Nanci was great! Very much info."*

*"Interesting, and very informative treasurer."*

*"Want to move here."*

FUN AND GAMES IN 1937

Back in 1937 there were no TV sets, Nintendo games, iPods, cell phones, CD players, or even portable radios. So what the heck did people, especially young people, do for fun, anyway?

Well, there was always hide and seek, or kick the can, or tag, or Chinese Checkers, —even Monopoly, which, incidentally, was invented in 1934. But few grownups indulged in these activities, so they had to invent even crazier things to do for excitement. One of them was "scavenger hunts," a game where the host couple made up a list of items, then sent their the guests out into the neighborhood to find and bring back. The first one to return with all of the items was the winner.

Well, according to an article in a 1937 issue of an Indio newspaper that Donna and Carson Struthers found in their old Idyllwild cabin, a highly successful scavenger hunt was held right here in Idyllwild that year. It was hosted by Miss Francilla Abbot and Clarence Bosworth, and their list included: one pair of men's garters, a yeast cake, corn cob pipe, a square ice cube, a clear glass ash tray, a sprig of mistletoe, an ice cream freezer, a bow tie, a green apple growing on a three foot branch, and a live cat. The article didn't say who won, but for weeks afterward no one allowed their cats to leave the house.

Membership Update

Ten new members joined the Historical Society between August 9, 2006 and January 9, 2007.

Individual

Mark Johnson, Long Beach, CA  
Deidre Vail, Walnut, CA

Family

David Kobosa, Los Angeles, CA  
Frank Maurer, Los Angeles, CA  
David and Mary Carroll, Idyllwild, CA  
The Pomer Family, Los Angeles, CA

Sponsor

Patricia Brosterhous, Chicago, IL  
Carl Gronning, Chicago, IL

## RAFFLED TABLE FINDS A HOME

The lucky winner of our 2006 raffle was Eric Bland. The wonderful pine and manzanita coffee table, created by local artist Jeffrey Abbott, will find its home right here in Idyllwild where Eric and his wife plan to build a bed and breakfast inn just up the road from the museum. Congratulations, Eric, and many thanks to all of you who purchased drawing tickets. The raffle was a big success, thanks to your generosity and high hopes. Just ask Eric!



county declared it to be, "Most unsuitable and totally unfit for a toll road," cancelled the franchise, and made it a free public roadway.

In spite of a few county improvements, little changed afterward in terms of safety and ease of travel. It was still one horrible roadway.

Three years later, in 1991, the Hemet Land and Water Company needed a road to haul equipment and material from San Jacinto Valley to the present site of Hemet Lake where they planned to construct the Hemet

called Fresno Scrapers, used to gouge a path through the mountains, moving tons of dirt and rocks before them.

When finished the road followed a series of switchbacks and hairpin turns to a point where it crossed the present Highway 74 just east of the McCall Horse Ranch. It continued from there up over Keen Camp Summit, down through Garner Valley and on to where the dam was to be constructed.

In addition to being used to build the dam, Garner Valley cattle

## ROADS

*(Continued from page 2)* and some stretches of just over 2 miles took 5 hours to traverse. However, it provided lumbermen like Anton Scherman and Amasa Saunders a way to bring their lumber down to San Jacinto where a building boom needed all the lumber they could supply.

But the toll, charged both going up

and coming down the mountain, was expensive in those days, which made it difficult for them to make a profit.

The problem was that Crawford had a 50 year franchise with the county to maintain and operate the roadway. But Scherman, who must have had some clout, petitioned the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to cancel Crawford's contract, and in 1888 the



Dam.

Under the direction of Edward Mayberry, who also developed the plans for the roadway, a local contractor built the road. It was first named Mayberry Road, but later dubbed Keen Camp Road after a nearby campground established in 1905 by John and Mary Keen. The work was completed using manual labor along with teams of horses pulling special plows

ranchers, miners and eventually people on their way to Keen Camp for a short vacation also used it. By horseback or horse drawn wagon, mind you.

Another significant road, built in 1900, connected the present McCall Park to Strawberry Valley.

This was followed in 1908 by a new road constructed by Riverside

*(Continued on page 5)*  
See ROADS



County and the US Forest Service, replacing portions of the old Crawford Road. This latter road also ended up in Strawberry Valley close to the

starting with one completed on May 28, 1929, from San Jacinto to Idyllwild, basically following what are now Highways 74 and 243. Now motor-

## Memories of Wild Rides to Idyllwild

By Ben Killingsworth

We've got a little space to fill here, so I thought you might like to join me in reminiscing about the frequent trips I used to take from Riverside to Idyllwild in my 1928 Model A roadster. All in all I had three Model A's during the mid 1940s, but this was the one I enjoyed driving up here the most. Not that it was anything fancy, or even a very safe car, for that matter, but it made driving on a mountain road a bigger thrill than did the other two. It had no fenders, no running boards, and no windshield, as well as unreliable brakes.

I'll also never forget the day I drove my newly purchased \$135 treasure home. On the way I happened to drive by a friend's house, and thought it would be neat to make the engine backfire by turning the key off and on. It backfired, all right, then quit running. I got my dad to push me home (it was only a block or two) and, with his help, set about fixing it so it would run again.

To make a long story short, we soon realized that backfiring the engine had burned the valves. So, after taking it to a garage for a valve job we brought it home, and, with high hopes I turned on the key and pressed on the starter. Well, it wouldn't start.

Finally, in pure desperation, we towed it to a mechanic out in Sunnymead (now called Moreno Valley). The mechanic fiddled with it for a few minutes, then said, "Just a minute," and went in his garage and brought out huge axe. He walked up to the side of my car, and took a mighty swing at the big cast iron muffler that was exposed just under the side of the car. I was speechless, but he said, "Now try it," and we did, and it ran like a top.

Most of the time when I drove it to Idyllwild my mother and sister came along so we could all visit my grandparents who lived in a house my grandfather built on the corner of Pine Crest and Alderwood. To say the trip up here was exciting is an understatement. We took highway 60 to what was then highway 79, drove south past Gilman Hot Springs, through San Jacinto, then on up the hill. My mother would wrap herself in sweaters and scarves and hang on for dear life. I, meanwhile, concentrated on keeping the exposed left front wheel on my side of the road, hoping the recapped tire wouldn't blow out at the wrong time. My sister kept yelling, "slow down," but, what with the wind streaming past my ears, she was difficult to hear. I still don't know how my mother got up enough nerve to make the trip more than once, but she did, and in doing so provided me with some of my fondest memories.



**A Model T driver stops on his way up the hill to enjoy the view. Or could be his radiator was boiling over.**

Idyllwild Inn.

Coincidentally, Henry Ford introduced the Model T to America in 1908, which began to change things forever.

Now it was horses, horse and cattle drawn wagons and coaches, bicycles, and automobiles.

Alas, perhaps foretelling highway conditions to come, the roadways were soon so heavily traveled during the day that by 1921 it became necessary to put controls in place between May and October, whereby traffic was regulated on an hourly basis, allowing uphill traffic for an hour, then downhill traffic for an hour. But it wasn't long before more modern highways were built,

ists could make the 23 mile trip in 45 minutes while encountering grades of a mere 7 percent. Compare that to the 8 to 10 hours it once took to negotiate the old Crawford Road, which featured grades of 30 percent.

Obviously, this wasn't the last roadway to be built or improved, and so today, maybe all roads do lead to Idyllwild.

*Most of the information and photographs used in this article were found in the book, **The San Jacintos**, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. Portions were also gleaned from the book, **Along The Roads**, by Steve Lech. Both of these wonderful books may be purchased at the Museum*

# MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

## Benefits of Membership

- Quarterly Newsletter
- Field Trips
- Gatherings
- Volunteer Activities
- Support of local historical research and preservation
- Support of Museum
- 10% discount in Museum Shop

### Membership Application

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Membership is for: (Check) Self  A gift

If a gift, your name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership categories:

- \$15 Individual
- \$25 Family
- \$35 Contributing
- \$35 Business
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$750 Corporate
- \$1000 Founder's Circle—Qualifies donor for lifetime membership with name on plaque in museum. May also be achieved by contributing \$100 per year for 10 years

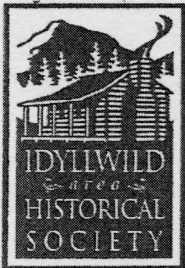
After completing membership application cut out along dotted lines and mail along with your check to:

**Idyllwild Area Historical Society, PO Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549**

**The Museum is located at 54470 North Circle Dr, Idyllwild Tel: (951) 659-2717**

**We're also on the web at [www.Idyllwildareahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.Idyllwildareahistoricalsociety.org)**

**PO Box 3320  
Idyllwild, CA 92549**



Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Idyllwild, CA  
Permit No. 3320