

MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

JANUARY 2024

LINN TWINS / TWO DALES / HOMESTEAD MANSION



BOARD AND COMMITTEES

PRESIDENT

Claudia Spotts

VICE PRESIDENT

Justin Merino

SECRETARY

Valarie Carlomagno

TREASURER

Jim Spotts

SITE CHAIR

Steve Hanson

CURATORIAL CO-CHAIR

Jon Delouz

Irina Delouz

JAN 2024 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Hanson

Thomas Crochetiere

Evelyn Conklin



**MORONGO BASIN
HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

632 Landers Lane
Landers, CA 92284

www.mbhistoricalmuseum.org
hello@mbhistoricalmuseum.org
[@mbhistoricalmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/mbhistoricalmuseum)



Visit Us

FRIDAYS &
SATURDAYS
11A-4P

January



To our members and friends of Morongo Basin Historical Museum:

December was a period for reflection on our collective achievements. In October 2022, Justin Merino, the Vice President, proposed a bold initiative - the temporary closure of the museum for a comprehensive renovation. Initially perceived as a radical move, this idea, in hindsight, proved to be a transformative decision. Thanks to the unwavering commitment of our volunteers, the museum triumphantly reopened its doors on June 2. Over the course of six months, an impressive total of 475 history enthusiasts rallied in support of our museum, marking a significant milestone in our journey. Here's what's hot on the iron:

- New Opening Hours in 2024: Fridays and Saturdays 11:00-4:00.
- Saturdays in the Sands: Unearthing Morongo Basin's Histories at the Museum: talks, demonstrations, and family-friendly events. Next up, January 20 at 11:00 am longtime resident, historian, and author Tom Crochetiere opens the New Year with a talk: "The Two Dales" the historic mining district east of Twentynine Palms.
- Volunteers are Vital to our Future: Volunteer for a one-day event, become a docent, organize the archives, digitize our records, take inventory, catalog the collection, and help with historical research. Meet like-minded people. Sign up for MB Historical Museum's Volunteer Orientation Day 10 to 12: Tuesday, January 23 & Saturday, January 27.
- Donations Matter! As an all-volunteer-operated non-profit, we depend on donations of historical artifacts, letters, and printed materials to build our collections and preserve local history. Donate or we can scan photos or printed material. Keep local history alive.

Intro to “A Tale of the Two Dales”

by Thomas Crochetiere



Saturdays in the Sands: Unearthing Morongo Basin's Histories at the Museum

Join us on January 20th at 11:00 AM for a captivating talk by Tom Crochetiere at the Museum, as he delves into the intriguing history of Old Dale and New Dale. Discover the past of these ghost towns in the Morongo Basin. RSVP on our website to secure your spot for this fascinating journey through time!

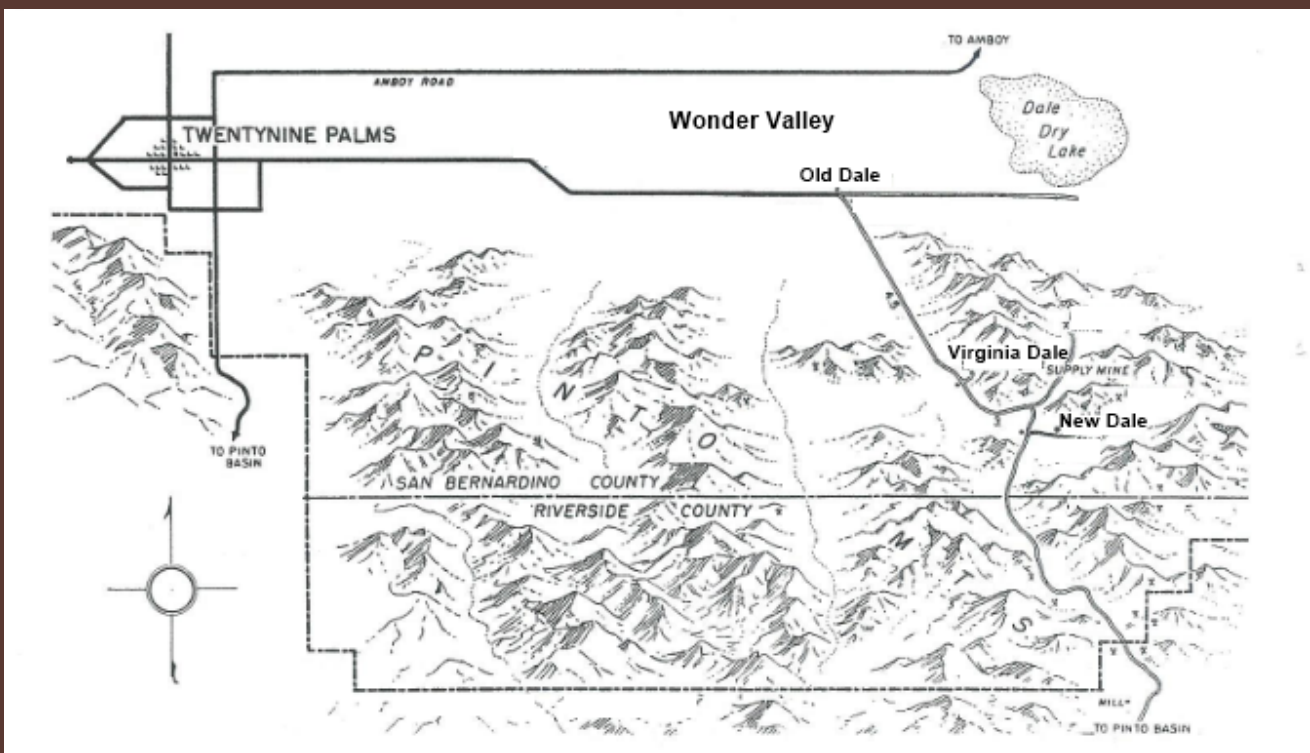
Long before the present-day communities of Morongo Valley, Twentynine Palms, Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, Pioneertown, Landers, Johnson Valley, and Wonder Valley came into prominence, the towns of “Old Dale” and “New Dale” were well established in the present-day Morongo Basin. These towns were located south of present-day Wonder Valley.

After the discovery of gold at the Virginia Dale Mine, a town was created, called “Virginia Dale,” (more commonly called “Dale”). Dale quickly took root and grew to an estimated 1,000 people. The location of this new town was on present-day Twentynine Palms Hwy at Gold Crown Road. This was the first organized non-Indigenous community in the area, which also included saloons, gambling and dance halls, mercantile businesses, and various other businesses.

A post office was soon opened in Dale and the “Star Mail Route” was started (at the time, it was the longest Star Mail Route in Southern California). The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors then created “The Dale Judicial Township.” The Wells Fargo Stage line began operating there, running west to Twenty-Nine Palms then onto Banning, and from Dale to Amboy along the route created by earlier cattle drives.

By 1898, mining began to diminish around Dale. As new mines were discovered south of the Virginia Dale Mine, a new town sprang up called “New Dale,” and people started to move there. This new town was located about 4.5 miles south of Dale, off of present-day Gold Crown Road. New Dale consisted of residences, two saloons, a store, a barbershop, a blacksmith, a corral, and a “red-light district.” The post office in Dale moved to New Dale around 1900.

By the mid-1910s, gold prices started to fall and the mines around New Dale began to close. As the years proceeded, people left the area and the town was no more. Nothing is left of the towns of Dale and New Dale today. The area today is known as the “Old Dale Mining District.”



Pioneer Spirit

Here are rewards for desert living that compensate for the hardships. In spite of muscular hands and a tanned complexion something is born in one that he would not be without. It isn't entirely self-reliance or helpfulness, and for lack of a better definition I call it Pioneer Spirit.

Homesteaders are bound together by strong ties that do not seem to exist in towns where things are made easy. I suppose the reason we labored so industriously for the common good was that we were so isolated we needed each other, and we knew it.

Elizabeth W. Crozer Campbell

Homestead Mansion

My Early Years on Yucca Mesa 1948 to 1960

By Steve Hanson Site Chair MB Historical Museum



East side of "Our Desert House" drawn by my cousin, Richard Babin in 1955.

Our First Desert Visits

My mother, Pauline Hanson, first visited Yucca Valley, California, in 1938 at age nineteen and fell in love with it at first sight. It was then called Lone Star, named after the Lone Star Ranch. My first visit was in 1948 at age six. Mom and Dad had filed on a 5-acre homestead being

offered to anyone willing to invest \$600 and build a small cabin within five years.

Dad had maps and wanted to find where our property was. We were on an old two-track road that led to the Landers and Goat Mountain area. Our 5 acres was located on the north side of Scandia Lane just east of Gemini Trail.

Dad and Mom decided they wanted to build a nice home here for retirement. We would need a vehicle to transport supplies from Santa Ana, California, up to our property, so in 1949 Dad bought a 1949 Plymouth Woody. A friend sold us a utility trailer that was probably built in the 1930s. We were set.

We were to use the trailer to haul tools and materials for our house. Later Dad planned to haul lots of firewood for our fireplace, which we did, and stacked it behind the generator house, later the garage. At this time there were lots of orange trees in Orange County that were being removed to make room for new homes.

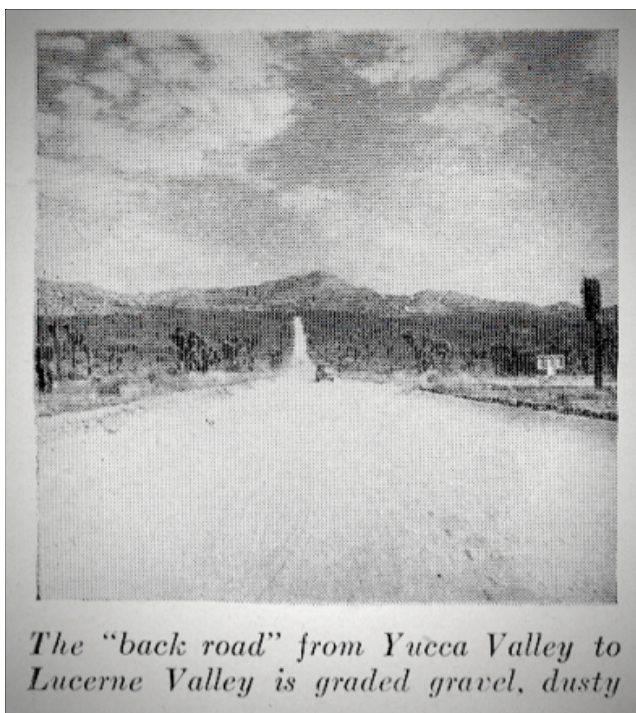
They were free to anyone who could haul them away. Being in construction Dad knew where all the orange trees were being removed. I remember those early trips to our 5-acre homestead on Yucca Mesa. We lived in Santa Ana, Orange County, California, and it was a 120-mile trip to our five acres, which took us three hours.

I remember on one trip after passing Banning we stopped at the Hadley's Store on the old US 99 and I saw a fifty-five-gallon steel drum with a sign on it that said, "Be careful, baby rattlers." I sneaked up really carefully so I could peek over the lid. I was only six or eight at the time so had to stand on my tip toes to look in. Would you guess? It was plastic baby rattles. Oh well...

At Whitewater about a mile farther east there was a big cement building that housed the main telephone switching facility. Telephone operators worked there 24 hours a day. After leaving Whitewater we crossed the Whitewater River on a large cement bridge that had been built in 1925 (This bridge was heavily damaged and collapsed during Hurricane Hilary and is scheduled to be demolished). After leaving the bridge we traveled three more miles and turned left on the 29 Palms Highway (later Hwy 62).

Now we were in the real desert. Traveling up 29 Palms Highway you go through Devils Playground, then the Morongo Pass (sometimes called Devils Canyon or Dry Morongo Canyon), Morongo Valley, and finally into Yucca Valley and Victorville Road (now known as Hwy 247 or Old Woman Springs Road). In 1954 Victorville Road was paved for only about two miles to the top of the grade from Hwy 62, but the following year paving was extended another 6 or 7 miles to Pipes Wash.

The turn-off to our property was a two-track road that meandered east along today's Aberdeen Road. Our homestead was 1/2 mile off Victorville Road the highway on this desert track (Scandia Ln. & Gemini) that ran right through our property, eventually ending at Goat Mountain.



The "back road" from Yucca Valley to Lucerne Valley is graded gravel, dusty



Victorville Road at Highway 62 1948.

1947 AAA Map.

First Building in Section 2 Yucca Mesa

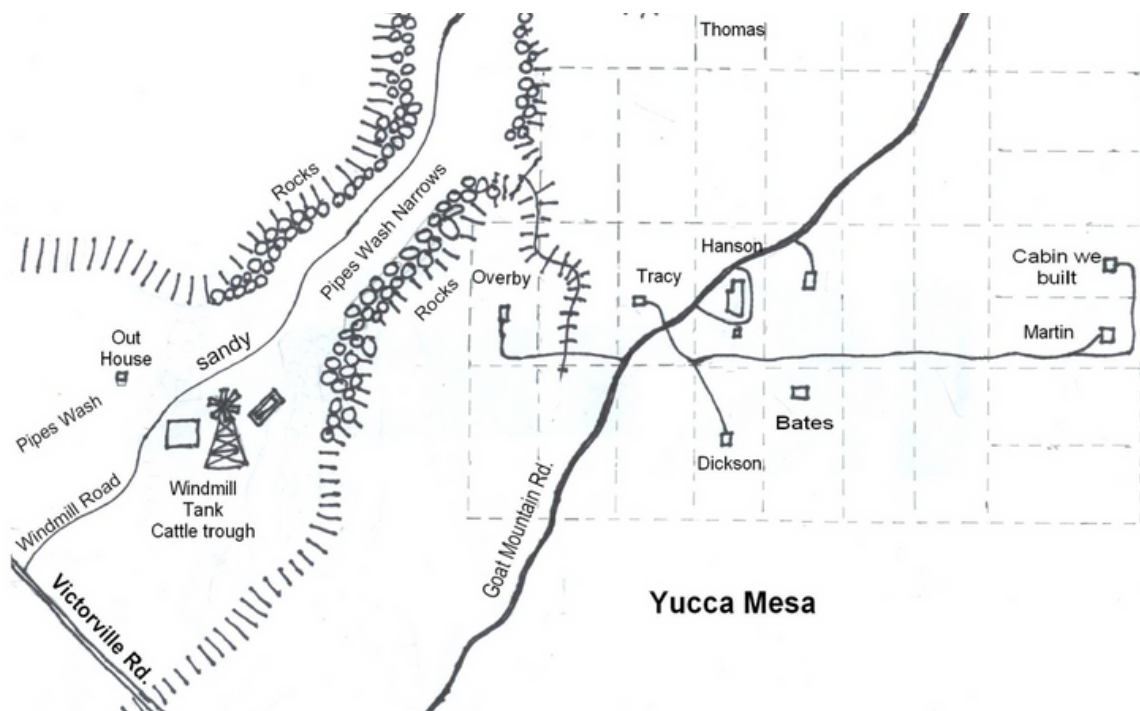


Generator and tool room foundation start.

Our first structure was a five by eight-foot cement brick building that dad planned to use for a tool and electric generator room. When the building was finished dad installed a two-cylinder gasoline powered generator on a heavy-duty two by six-foot wood bench that was three foot high.

Later in 1950 dad helped a couple of his friends start their cabins and we became what some called weekenders.

About the same time another weekender named Bob Thomas homesteaded five acres just north of us and down the hill almost in the Pipes Wash. He built his house about thirty feet above the wash on a pad he leveled off. He and his family came out most weekends like us. He was an electrical contractor from Santa Ana, California, and owned Thomas Electric. He had tractors and all the tools he needed to do his own work. At first, he came to his property from Victorville Road on the Old Windmill Track in Pipes Wash. It was real sandy along that track and was a challenge even with his tractors. Later he made a passable road now named Breeze Trail that leads up to the Mesa and connects to Sage Avenue then Aberdeen Drive.



Building Our House

We started building our main house in late 1950 and finished the first two rooms in 1951. We called it our "Desert House." I remember going out almost every weekend from then on. Dad first started to lay out the foundation and put in the cement forms. The front room was 22' x 32' and the kitchen was 20' x 20'. Mom and Dad wanted a view from our front room looking up Pipes Canyon so the whole west wall was to have lots of windows. It was going to be a big house.

The next phase was pouring the foundation. There was a cement company in Yucca Valley and I remember we visited with the cement company's owner at the restaurant run by his wife at the old Rexall Drug Store (Water Canyon Coffee) in old downtown Yucca Valley. They talked and the next weekend we poured the foundation.

We wanted a big efficient fireplace, so dad asked around and was told that a Heatilator steel fireplace built right into the cement block construction was the best so that's what he did and it worked great.

Dad had a big, polished copper hood built specially to hang over the stove. It was beautiful and was always talked about when we had visitors. Dad built the kitchen cabinets from knotty pine wood, and they were still in the house the last time I visited in 2009. We bought a kerosene refrigerator because there was no electricity to the property back then and we couldn't have the generator running all the time. It worked well until we eventually got power from the local power company around 1964.



Front room and fireplace drawn by my cousin Dick Babin, in 1953.



Our Kitchen, looking Northwest, drawn by Dick Babin in 1953.



West side of our Desert House under construction fall 1950.

Dad wired our house for 110/220 just like he would have in Orange County. He installed light fixtures at all four outside corners of the house and put big spotlights in them. At night we would start the generator then turn on those outside lights and it lit up about 100 feet of the area around the house. It was awesome. People told us they could see our house lit up at night as far away as Flamingo Heights about five miles away. That tickled dad.

Next, we built the roof framework and finished the roof. More hard work. I remember on Christmas Eve of 1950 we put tarps on all the windows in the front room and had a fire in the fireplace and slept for the first time in our new home. It was windy, raining and very cold but we were so happy it didn't bother us all that much. We slept in Jimmy Dixon's cabin until our house was ready. In the next six months of weekends, we finished the first portion of our house that would eventually be 2,400 square feet.

My Grandfather Jacobs & Grandfather Hanson helped us work on the house at different times. Grandpa and Grandma Jacobs fell in love with Yucca Valley and around 1953 they moved there. Grandpa and Grandma Hanson had a weekend house in Desert Hot Springs.



West side of our finished Desert House about spring 1951. To the left is Grandpa Hanson's 1950 Desoto.

The west side of our Desert House circa 1953. New construction on right side was to be our new bathroom.





Mother and Grandmother Jacobs

In 1955 we built a patio on the east side of the living room.

In 1960 Dad added another two-car garage on the west end of the existing garage and installed two electric garage door openers. He built two cement brick posts about four feet high in front of each garage door and mounted key switches to operate the openers. You can see one of those posts in the second picture above on the right. It's in the middle of the picture a little to the right. These switch posts were placed so you could open the garage door without getting out of the car. Mom worked late so it was safer for her plus she could stay out of bad weather.

About 1957 we were robbed. We lost about \$1,200 worth of tools and supplies and miscellaneous household stuff. I still have the typed list we gave the Sheriff of every item taken and its value. There were quite a few reports of robbery here then. The local Sheriff organized stakeouts, but the robbers were never caught. The Sheriff would drive out here and drop off a deputy who would stake out the area for a whole night. It was a local problem for a long time.

Dad installed an alarm system with a loud horn on top of the garage that could be heard a couple of miles away. It was turned on and off by a key switch mounted on the outside of the garage wall next to the exit door. We were never robbed after that.

In a recent excursion, the Desert Institute teamed up with the Joshua Tree National Park education team for a visit to our own Morongo Basin Historical Museum. Nestled in the scenic Homestead Valley area of Yucca Valley/Landers, the museum offers a wealth of experiences with both indoor and outdoor displays. Our visitors explored the rich history of the Morongo Basin, examining everything from our extensive research archives to the original Landers Post Office and Mercantile Shop. Our doors are always open to the public, with no admission fee, though donations are warmly welcomed. A special thanks to Claudia and Jim Spotts, Tom Crochetiere, and the JTNP Education team for their engaging tour. We eagerly anticipate hosting more events and field trips in collaboration with them. Discover more about the museum and our upcoming activities on our website!

Desert Institute Explores History:

A SPECIAL VISIT TO THE MORONGO
BASIN HISTORICAL MUSEUM



WHITE RAVEN

“The Linn twins—a bit of royalty here on the desert—in one of their frequent visits to the museum had another interesting story to relate. Their deep love of the desert often takes them far afield. Such trips usually are not without a reward and have netted the twins some unique discoveries. This time a pair of ravens held the spotlight. What’s unusual about ravens? Well hear this! One was the conventional black, the other snow white. Are ravens color blind? We don’t know but such pairing is proof that color is not a prerequisite of species recognition. The twins quickly took a photograph as the pair flew off. Denied time for preliminaries, the picture is fuzzy, but the contrast is very discernable.

Albinos make their spontaneous appearance among all biological subjects. A recent article told of a white kangaroo in Australia. It reminded me of a white pocket gopher trapped in the Santa Anita golf course in Arcadia when my father was in charge of the facility. He was instrumental in having it mounted and placed on display in the L.A. County Museum of Natural History.

Just last spring, Dad and I discovered a white (albino) flower, member of the common desert Rose Sage. This is not the white sage of the textbook (*Salvia vaseyi*) which is quite different genetically and structurally.”

Evelyn Conklin: (Bulletin of the Morongo Basin Hi-Desert Nature Museum Association, July & August 1979, Volume V, No. 4.)



The Linn Twins

Spotting an unusual white raven would have been just another day's work for the Linn twins, Traverse Raymond Linn and Carroll Forest Linn, who first came to the desert in the early 1950s. After a few moves, they eventually settled on a home on 20 acres at the corner of Linn Road and Belfield in Landers. The desert fascinated them. "We learned to love the desert by what the desert gave to us." Throughout their days in the high desert, the two brothers never lost their fascination for exploring. They were also avid prospectors and had multiple claims throughout the area, some as far as 90 miles away.

White Ravens

In an internet article "Fun Facts About White Ravens." by Carrie D Miller, author of a book entitled "The White Raven," she states that "White ravens are not albino. Albinism is the absence of the pigment melanin which leaves the animal white and makes the eyes red and legs pink. White ravens have leucism which results in only partial loss of this pigment and their eyes are typically blue. Plus, they really aren't white, more of a cream color but Cream-Colored Raven doesn't sound nearly as cool. Any animal can have leucism, it's not exclusive to ravens."

Are Birds Color Blind?

Much more is known now about whether or not birds are color blind, and they are definitely not. In fact, their ability to see color is far superior to humans' color vision in several ways. While humans have three color-detecting cones in their eyes – to see red, green and blue shades – birds have a fourth cone that enables them to see ultraviolet (UV) light.

In Native American Mandan Indian Legend:

"In the beginning, during creation, the Great Spirit sent his Raven. As the raven soared from cloud to cloud, he began to take the color of the snow crystals in the clouds. And that is how he became a white raven."



by Evelyn Conklin
founder and first
curator of the
Hi-Desert Nature
Museum

LANDERS FIRST REAL ESTATE OFFICE

Elliott's Hi-Desert Properties Office and home. 1960s
Car seen is a 1957 Chevy.



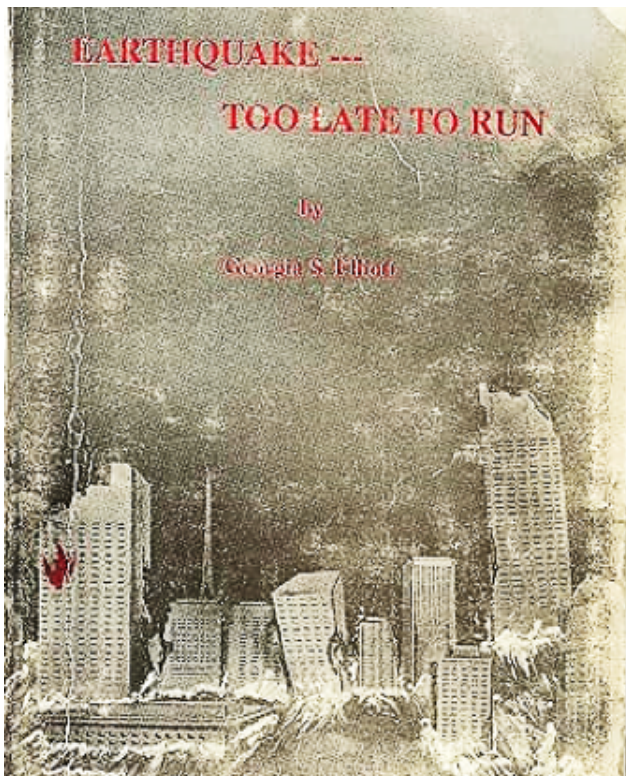
Bill and Georgia Elliott were the first realtors in Landers. They became brokers and realtors in 1967 and received their D.B.A. the same year. They have their real-estate office in their split-level home. They built their cabin in 1960 and added on to it in 1963. They also have Branch Office No. 1 of their Hi Desert Properties operated by Neva Wesson. (1988 By Joan Wilson and Charleen Grubb, Hi Desert Dreaming, Volume 3, Page 45).

In the end notes to Georgia S. Elliott's 1989 novel Earthquake—Too Late To Run, Elliott wrote about moving to the desert with her husband Bill and getting into real estate:

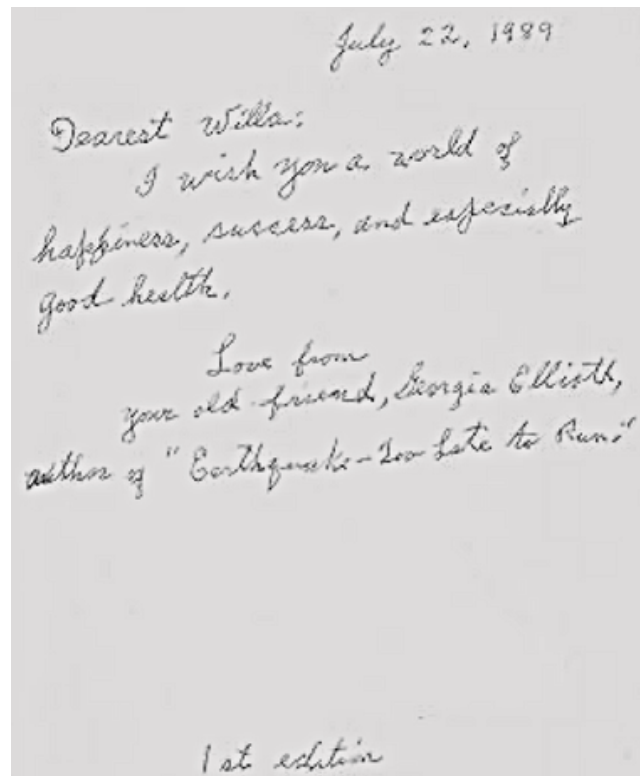
"I moved to the Hi-Desert, twelve miles north of Yucca Valley into a little community of Landers. At this my husband and I went into real estate, both of us getting our broker's licenses. We had such freedom out here in the desert country air with sagebrush, cactus, and little ground-squirrels all around us. Our real estate sales were mostly small recreational cabins on two and one half to five-acre homestead tracts. What fun it was walking around those parcels hunting for survey stakes, and thinking how delightful it would be to move into one of those cabins and be pioneers. Alas, it could not last forever. My husband died seven years ago, and I have turned to my first love, story-writing, in this case, a novel. "

Georgia Aline Simpson was born on November 1, 1901, in Texas. She married William Harcourt Elliott in 1945. She died on July 3, 1992, in San Bernardino, California, at the age of 90, and was buried in Joshua Tree, California.

William Harcourt Elliott was born on April 24, 1905, in El Paso, He married Georgia Aline Simpson in 1945. He died on January 30, 1981, in Yucca Valley, California, at the age of 75, and was buried in Joshua Tree, California.



Front Cover of Book



Note Inside of Book Cover

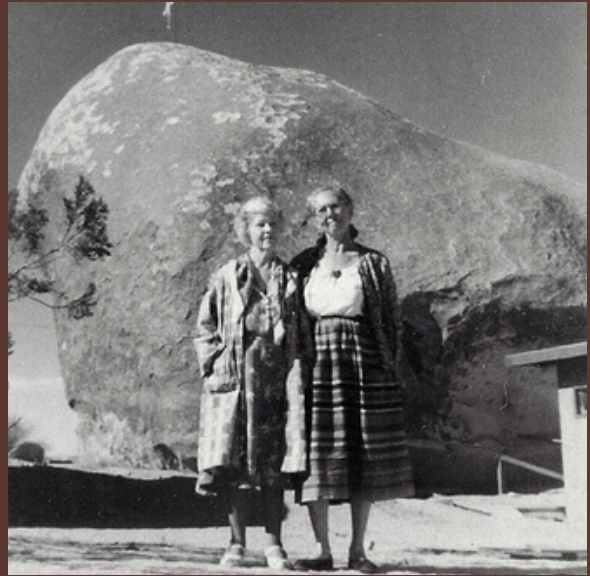
Exhibit Sneak Peaks



Exhibit Sneak Peaks



PLEASE SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE BUSINESSES THAT GENEROUSLY SUPPORT OUR MUSEUM.



- 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians
- Big Morongo Canyon Preserve
- Crossroads Café
- Desert Christ Park – A Museum of Sculptures
- Desert Region Fire Safe
- Greenspot Market
- Gubler Orchids
- Hi-Desert Air – Lance & Kari Cody
- Hi-Desert Water District
- High Desert Emergency Action Alliance
- Homestead Modern
- Jim Bagley – Realtor
- Johnson Valley Improvement Association
- Landers Homestead Valley Association
- Phillip Brown Home Realtor
- ProVideo – Bob Stephenson
- Rainbow Stew – Stacey Clayton, Valerie Meyer & Michelle Nemechek
- SVN - Mark Spohn
- The Integratron – Nancy, Joanne & Patty Karl
- Tortoise Rock Casino
- Tri-Valley Realty – Linda Paino
- Twentynine Palms Historical Society
- VisitPioneertown.com – Kenneth Gentry
- Yucca Valley Realty – Art Miller



Join or Renew @
mbhistoricalmuseum.org/join

Donate @
mbhistoricalmuseum.org/support