



FRIENDS OF THE EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

Preserving Inyo County's Past for the Future

FECM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

UPDATES: WHAT'S NEW

Museum Update:

The Museum is open. Hours are daily, 10 a.m. through 5 p.m. Museum staff have worked hard through this past year and there are several new and rearranged exhibits to explore and enjoy. There is also an updated online photo gallery at <https://ecmuseum.pastperfectonline.com>. Come visit in person or online!

At this time, we also share the news that Jon Klusmire retired on June 30. Jon was the Museum's Administrator for the past 13 years. We wish Jon the best of luck in his future endeavors.

In this issue:

The Museum recently received a donation of a hand-written manuscript of memories written by John Schober (1903–1995). A volunteer for the Museum typed the manuscript which, coupled with related photographs in the Museum collection, gives a fascinating insight into early 20th Century life in the Eastern Sierra. The typewritten document includes some corrections and notations for clarity and ease of database searchability. *Here, we publish it as it was hand-written so you, the reader, can get a sense of Mr. Schober's delightful voice.* This entire issue is dedicated to sharing selected excerpts we thought would be of interest, as the entire document is very long. Let us know if you would like to hear more of Mr. Schober's stories! Our thanks to Kim Walker for donating this precious document.

The Museum has excellent resources if you want to explore this topic further. If you want to hike (and fish), check out the Bishop Pass – North Lake to South Lake Loop map in the map rack. The Museum also has John Schober's and Art Schober's oral histories and additional documents.

In Memoriam: Kathy White

In the last issue we announced the passing of Kathy White. FECM dedicated a paving stone in her honor at the main entrance of the Museum that says "Kathy White – FECM – Cookie Lady."

Moving forward:

We are adjusting to our revised Covid circumstances. Since this newsletter comes out only four times a year, we will email updates to those of you who have provided your address. In order for us to be in legal compliance, please let us know if you do not wish us to communicate via email (and if we don't have your email and want us to let you know, contact us at info@fecm.org). We will also post updates on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsoftheeasterncaliforniamuseum/>.

The Big Circle by John Schober

All materials courtesy of the Eastern California Museum, Accession No. 2021.19

Being that I am just a young fellow who is still in this valley today although I do date back to the year 1903. And its nice to state that Mother was born close to Bishop in our valley just a short distance East of Red Hill. Her name was Lizzie Harger in those younger days and at times I have heard her say that her folks had so many relatives in this valley that we was just plain known as the Big Circle. ...

I won't go too far back on the Father's side but I will say that his father and mother lived in Switzerland during the Early 1800s. They migrated to Wisconsin where Sophie the only daughter was born Feb. 10, 1862. My Father R.J. also born there Sept. 16, 1863.

Two more boys were born in Minnesota – Edd 1864. Then Jacob the youngest was born in Rochester, Minnesota 1867.

It wasn't long then till their folks brought the little family to Owens Valley and soon acquired land a couple miles south and west of Bishop. Here the young offspring grew up – and at the same time had the pleasure of seeing their parents grow old.

... Old Grandpa Schober shure did give his family the finest breakes ever to be and I will say I think he was a wonder. Anyway as soon as the family became established Grandpa John devided all his land giving each his own part of ground and watter. Then as soon as any one of them was to get married the old fellow with the help of the whole was to make the new home for the bride. Grandpa kept out only five acres including a small orchard and garden spot pluss the family headquarters – his home.



RJ and Lizzie and Family
1926 (left photo)
1934 (right photo)



The oldest son known as R.J. Schober decided to become a mule skinner or teamster and so did. And took to hauling produce from Owens Valley to L.A., then returning with orders of furnature or what may be. R.J. becomes very fond of a young lady by name of Lizzie Harger who lived in West Bishop. They later was married ...

Of coarse that new house went up rapidly and for a wedding present Mother's dad gave her the finest milk cow he had – Old Ronnie was her name. Of coarse old Grandpa wasn't to be outdone so he gave Mother the old horse and buggie. The horse was known as Moldy Bread Dick. Grandpa used to haul apples and products from the ranch to Bodie with this horse and an old buckboard. The miners there loved to feed the old horse moldy bread, hence the name.

I was the third child to be raised at the new home. Anyway a lot of time has lapsed since then and my hair has greyed. But I still think back to those good old days, the terrific amount of hard work pluss the swet that I will never regret. Still yet I have the grand feeling that I could do it over again but a lot of the younger fellers probably think not. So anyway this time I won't argue or make a bet that I could do my life's work over again because then for shure would hafta prove it. As a matter of fact a lots of my strength was poared into hard tasks that seemed to be too great for the rest to tackle. Then my big mouth always got me in trouble, usually just by

saying – sam hill I can fix that in so many days. All it took to get me going instantly night and day if needed was just three words – bet you can’t. Not bragging but I never was known to overstep my ability. ...

... Gosh I just had everything all at once. Brothers, sisters, a couple of them that was ready for playmates to and all their junk. Of coarse there was always someone getting the best deal – and to my way of thinking the one that holed up in that great dureable heigh wheeled baby buggy was for shure the queen while it lasted. ... It seemed as though everything was just about perfect although my ingunity to make my own things to play with was begining to sprout.

That’s the time that my eyes got the best of me for I had spotted a pair of hard wood parts of the good old buggy that was just perfect for me to perfect the best bobsled ever. O boy they were already bent and everything. Anyway I thought hard for a way to crack something up on that thing so that maby Mother or Father would junk it. Then of coarse I would have clear sailing so when no one was around I would slip in and try to undermine the thing but there wasn’t even a chance because Father was just to handy with his bailenwire. Pluss that young whippersnapper was going to use it forever. ... No one could guess but I will say that all of a sudden things happened again. As the young whippersnap was dumped out of her nest to find out that she was no better than the rest for she was forced up in the upper deck. ... But also that was the time that the good old baby buggy had to get outside and when it did you might know it was finished cause that slay just had to be made because I new snow would soon fly. Heck I knew it was rong to attack that wonderful old buggy but nevertheless I downed it, and of coarse got caught right in the act and to this day I can almost hear Father say Gee wrouchelems¹ boy what are you trying to do. Then instead of kicking pants as he should have, all he said was why didn’t you tell me sooner and I would have helped you. So when he walked away did I get buisy. And of coarse found out mighty quick that my task was far greater than I had visioned. But Father usually in those early days had a couple of the best blacksmiths hired to keep his freight wagons in repair and so on. ... The old blacksmith shop stood close to the house to so it was a natural thing for me to take over the shop when no one was using it. Of coarse I had access to plenty of fine tools and all but even so I was lacking just a little bit of know-how. Finally I was caught right in the middle of the hardest task calling for skill – by Uncle Edd and Old Mib Hall, real blacksmiths they wer – and as busy as they was supposed to be, they instead helped me first to build that slay and let me say there never was a finer one ever made. Of coarse I got all the credit and honors for makeing the thing but I shure was glad when they came to my rescue and no doubt just at the right time cause what they did was what it took so I guess I had some help.



This is an old photo of the blacksmith shop behind the Museum. And to the right, the shop in use as it appears today. Be sure to peek in the windows when you next stop in to get a sense of what these looked like “in the old days.”



1 A request from the editor: we think this might be what a pronunciation of “gee whillikers” sounded like. If any of you readers can enlighten us, please let us know!

Finally the Father had hauled the tramway and all that stuff into Saline Valley² and was about to retire. Then the great day came as down the road came the big team pulling heavy wagons loaded to the gills with junk of all kinds. And believe it or not, the prettiest sight my eyes ever saw in all their time took place right then and their. Without a bobble of any kind the whole mess crossed over a narrow bridge then made another left hand turn parking all in front of the house. This was worth seeing for I with all my great driving ability couldn't have even put two horses and a hay wagon across that bridge and then go in between two fence posts to end up where he did stop.



RJ and his mule team



Schober Family haying

... I will say stacking hay like we used to do it when there was three to four wagon men in the field. Rushing back and forth from field to derrick was the hardest sweatiest job I ever undertook aspecially with Jake the father's brother in the field as one of the pitchers and Art one of my younger brothers as wagon man. Art shure had the world beat with that Jackson Fork. Man, what a forker he was! Even the good old derrick horse was wise to him and in order to do the horse a favor Father and me would holler "dump her" as soon as the loads reached the center of the stack.



... No matter how much work there was to do at home Father had become a fiend for going fishing or hunting and that was all that he lived for the rest of his life.

Father would come out in the field to say you boys get those potatoes hoed or weeded and we will go fishing. Those words always took effect and it wasn't long till we went fishing, you can bet on that.

[Photo: RJ Fishing]

... It shure would be nice to mention our occupations or operations carried on in this Valley as well as elsewhere. But it is beyond my writing ability for this would range from farming, stock razing, darying, hog razing, operating a sheep outfit, pluss operating a resort, running a pack outfit while operating a sheep outfit pluss range cattle. Also the rider of this artical indulged in mineing and prospecting. Pluss I and my wife Florence have now indulged in bee keeping mostly as a hobby for we may be getting older.



... Being that I like fishing, horses, and the mts. of which I have always prowled for many years before, and after, we Schobers bought a pack outfit from Mr. Tobe Way. Of coarse this type of buisness was right down my alley and I knew I would enjoy it. So I am about to rite some on this new venture as I will now call it.



[Photos: Dad Schober in the mountains, Schober brother on horseback]

2 See FECM's Spring 2021 newsletter, www.fecm.org, Newsletters tab, for our article about the Salt Tram.

Well it was kind of comical. The packing season opened before we had time to think. We then thought fast but not thorough. It ended up that the oldest brother Walt that possibly could have run the pack outfit couldn't be with us, for Schober brothers' sheep would more than keep him busy. Harold the youngest would manage Schober Mountain Lodge and Grade A Dairy. So Art and I were elected to handle that pack outfit. You can imagine for neither of us hardly knew how to put a box hitch on a burrow that was common in sheep camp. The only thing that was in our favor was that we had plenty experience with work horses. Pluss saddle horses. Another thing that was mighty helpful was prier lessons from Father's brother, Edd Schober in the shoeing of horses, a professional was he. This I took pride and figured I was pretty good.

Seemed as though Art depended on my ways pretty mutch even though I didn't know a thing about packing tourists or dudes as we call them.

The only thing that saved our bacon and kep the outfit from ruin was a young boy, George Wilson, who spent his life with Tobe Way, the original owner. This kid was verry valuable to us for he had worked with Tobe, so naturally knew all names of the horses, mules, and borrows. ... You might wander why I didn't mention another packer working with us by the name of Steve Sanford. Steve the oldest and most experienced in this game and had worked for Tobe for a long time. But I don't think either one of us could gain anything from Steve's ways due mostly that Steve loved excitement and reckage so in order to do so Steve knew the horses that would do just that. He finally got so overworked by the hardships he caused for himself and others that he automatically quit the buiseness. But not until he had a lake named to suit his taste. While I am on this subject I might explain. In those days their was many lakes that wer barron of fish pluss no trails to them. ... So when the Fish Hatchery came up to the pack station with a truckload of fish I decided that was the place to take them. Steve was the only one that had been to one of those lakes by horse. So George Wilson, Steve Sanford and myself took off with the fish. ... So Steve brings up the subject about always being hungry and a lake should be named Hungry Packer Lake for him. George and I decided to follow Steve's wishes. We went back the two of us, made a nice monument of stone, placed the name of the lake in a tobacco can. This became the general practice for other lakes. ... The monuments and original names still stand so later these names apear on the aeria maps.³

... Now let's get back to the unnaimed lakes. Usally these are off-trail and in verry rough and trickery terain. So it was always my practice to get the horse to the lake or place in question and once there, my part is done and it is the horse's responsibility to take me back and over the exact path night, day or snowing. Some horses are better than others but verry seldom one will fail. I soon got wise to one horse and the only one I ever road that crossed me up every time, especially at dark. The horse's name was Midnight.

But after a number of times this horse failed to get me back at night causing me plenty of hardship. In the places I took a horse in those days they either went back the way they came whether they liked it or not or else they didn't get back at all. So as I said this horse was impossible and after trapping me again at midnight in a snow storm on the shore of a nameless lake I knew the way to get out but it was to dark to walk and lead the horse. And let me tell the world that if a horse refuses to go at dark of his own will, never force him. If you do you are a

3 Other lakes mentioned in the original document, named by John Schober and with a story for each, are Blue Heaven, Hell Diver, Drunken Sailor, Topsyterby, Moonlight, Bottle Neck, Emerald Lakes, Fish Gut Lakes, Schober Holes, Baboon Lake, and Lake Payne.

gawner goose. The next morning at daylight I built a nice monument and I placed a can with the name Midnight Lake. Even in daylight I had to correct that horse's rout. I was so provoked that I never rode that horse again.

I decided to pick the best night horse in the outfit for I knew I was going to be caught at night many times. I didn't miss judge that horse. This horse's name was Pinkey, was bought with the pack outfit but originally owned by Steve Sanford. So it is natural that this horse had plenty of fire. This horse and myself took a great likeing to each other so I used him plenty. For some time I was skepticle as to whether I was man enough to handle this horse but when leading a string, that horse regardless of his spirited ways had perfect commen sense. There was no better and in case of a fracas among your pack string or outfit that horse would do just the opposit from what you would expect. Seemed as through this horse was always on the right and helpful side.

Next there was a nice little lake just about the center of this group of lakes. It was in need of a name so I took of one morning to name the lake. All the way up I racked my brain for a suitable name but for some reason my mind was bothered and kept me thinking about what an old sheep herder had told me the day before. Broshay wanted to make me a verry rich man quick for he claimed to be an expert Dindle Bagger as well as a sheep herder. The only thing lacking was a forked Dindleberry rute and if I could find one he by his skill could find oil for me.

When I arrived at the lake all I could think of was Old Brochay and his Dindleberry rute. So I spotted a peculiar bush that had intresting forked rutes hanging in the watter. I decided to take it because it could be a Dindleberry rute, couldn't it. Then and there this lake was named Dindleberry Lake.

... Now its getting late and I will find some way to bring this scribbleing to an end. So I will say that nobody can really tell when a poor hand at the packing game may end up the best ever. True it was with the Schober outfit. And after manny years working alongside of old and new men at the game one is shure to become more skilled. In other words when I quit packing I was good enough. Brother Art stayed at the pack station manny years after I gave up and probably is the oldest packer in buisness to. I am willing to say that Art is a professional packer and not an ammature.

... But all and all Florence my wife and I in later years have had a lot of pleasures. No more prospecting, farming, mineing, or hard labor. Just a few bees to keep us intrested.

We both enjoy what we are doing. Maby it isn't much but ...

We are satisfied.

And we have both lived our life of wanders.



Schober Brothers
4th of July, 1934



Schober Grandparents
and older siblings

Join the Friends of the Eastern California Museum

The Friends of the Eastern California Museum work to promote, preserve and protect the important collections and memories that make up Inyo County's only regional museum. The Friends raise funds and contribute time and work to help maintain and improve the Museum's buildings and grounds. We support special exhibits and arrange for speakers, field trips, and programs that inform and entertain Inyo County residents and visitors who come from far and near. We have partnered with the Carson and Colorado group to display and promote the restored Slim Princess steam engine. We also provide funds to maintain the Museum's collections and enhance its permanent exhibits. Every March we hold our Annual Meeting, with a potluck dinner, silent auction and guest speaker. We invite you to join with us to support the Museum. FECM is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Members receive a newsletter, email invitations to special events, programs and field trips, and a 10% discount at the Museum Bookstore.

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