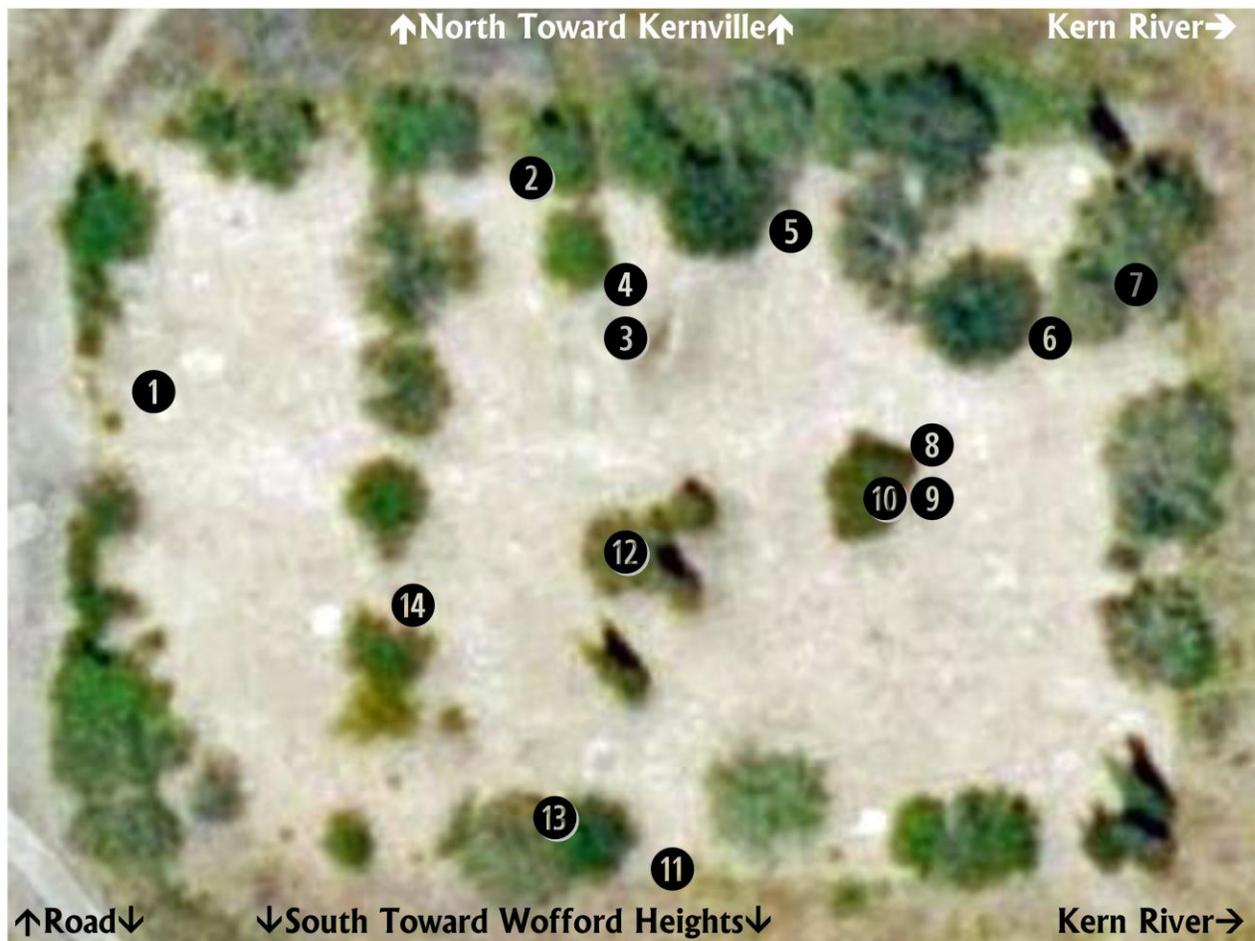


Kern River Valley Historical Society & Saturday & Sunday, May 15 & 16, 2010

# Old Kernville Historic Cemetery Tour



## **Introduction:**

---

This brochure was produced for the **Old Kernville Cemetery Tour** held on Saturday & Sunday, May 15 & 16, 2010 as part of the **Kern River Valley Historical Society's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual History Days**, celebrating the history of the Kern River Valley.

The purpose of the tour is to help make Kern River Valley residents more aware of our rich local History by taking a look at the Old Kernville Historic Cemetery and a few of the pioneer families memorialized within it. Of the maybe 1,000 people buried there, we've selected 14 individuals to remember, giving a glimpse at our history, the cemetery and difficulties of preserving history for future generations. For some of those we feature, we have a lot of information, for others, very little.

*History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of antiquity.*

—Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC), Pro Publio Sestio

This brochure was researched and created by **Kern River Valley Historical Society** members **Jenny Hanley** and **Richard Rowe** who also led the related tours during History Days in 2010. This was done in cooperation with the **Kern River Valley Public Cemetery District** with input from many sources (noted in **Credits & Acknowledgements** pg. 12).

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte said: *"History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon."* Though we strive for historical accuracy, our research found many more questions than answers and several disputes amidst the scores of stories. Historical records are often incomplete or were lost. Published history books and Internet sources frequently contradict each other and don't agree with family stories passed down through the generations.

What this represents is our best efforts at a snapshot of the historical information available at the time of the tour. This is a work in progress. Our hope is that this brochure and the tours will ferret out additional information and factual sources. We hope this will be the first in a series of tours and tour brochures for many of Kern River Valley historic cemeteries.

## **The Cemetery:**

---

The **Old Kernville Historic Cemetery** (also known as Kern River Valley Historical Cemetery) with known burials dating back to the early 1870's.

According to one of the historic markers in front of the cemetery, Kernville was founded in 1860 when **Adam Hamilton**, whiskey dealer, moved shop here from more temperate Quartzburg, founded earlier that year and later obliterated during construction of County Route J-16 (Bear Valley-Hornitos Road).

Both mining camps resulted from the discovery of the Big Blue Ledge above the cemetery by **"Lovely" Rogers** while tracking a stray mule from the earlier camp of Keyesville. Kernville was called Whiskey Flat until 1864.

Kernville was designated as California Registered Historical Landmark No.132 on January 31, 1934. That marker was moved to the front of the Old Kernville Cemetery and rededicated on May 3, 1953, just after the completion of Isabella Dam. Otherwise, it would have been inundated by the waters of the reservoir now known as Lake Isabella. By that time, most of Old Kernville had been moved to its current site upriver, becoming what we know today as Kernville.

The cemetery is maintained by the **Kern River Valley Public Cemetery District** established by the Kern County Board of Supervisors on November 27, 1950. Tour leader **Jenny Hanley** is now one of the 5 Cemetery District Board Members.

The **Old Kernville Historic Cemetery** is located about 3.2 miles S of the Kern Valley Museum on the North Fork of the Kern River between current-day Kernville and Wofford Heights. It is about ½ mile N of the site of Old Kernville (now often under the waters of Lake Isabella).

**If you have additional information or would like to comment**, please contact **Jenny Hanley** (760) 376-4384 [jhanley999@msn.com](mailto:jhanley999@msn.com) or **Richard Rowe** [eworinkrv@mchsi.com](mailto:eworinkrv@mchsi.com), or write to us c/o the **Kern River Valley Historical Society** Post Office Box PO Box 651, Kernville, CA 93238-0651.

The numbers ①, ② or ③ refer to the front page map and show approximate locations of the each burial or marker for the 14 people featured on this tour.

---



### ① **Francisco Apalatea** (1850 - 1928)

Francisco was born on the Yaqui Indian Reservation east of Tucson, Arizona in 1850. He was educated at the San Xavier Mission nearby. Reportedly at age 14, he came west and obtained a Land grant in what is now Los Angeles. When gold was discovered in the Sierras he sold the property and came to Porterville area and married his 1<sup>st</sup> wife, a Chumash lady named **Catherine Franco**.

In 1873, **Francisco Apalatea** moved to Kern County, where he chiefly engaged in mining, mostly on Piute Mountain. He discovered and developed the Bryan mine, which he afterwards sold for \$5,000. Over the years, he continued his mining interests and had several good claims

In 1902, he and his family lived on a 160-acre ranch, 3 miles north of Old Kernville. In 1915, he sold the ranch to his son-in-law **Matt Burlando** for \$30. Later the ranch became the center of new Kernville.



The **Alapatea-Burlando House** (above) was moved to Bodfish and is now part of the **Silver City Ghost Town Museum** and film location. Silver City claims that the Apalatea-Burlando House, reportedly built in 1868, is the oldest house still standing in the Kern River Valley. It also is reported to be one of the most haunted.

**Franciso Apalatea** married at least 3 times. His 2<sup>nd</sup> wife was **Mary** (Butterbredt) **Reich**. Together they had 8 children and this 3<sup>rd</sup> wife was **Rosa Reich**, a native of the South Fork area. Their union produced an additional 5 children. That is a total of 16 children. It is not surprising that he has many relatives in the Kern River Valley to this day.

---

### ② **Bert Dewey James** (1898 - 1980)

Son of **Billie & Ava James** was born in Keysville. Story has it that Billie had rushed to fetch the doctor when Ava was about to deliver their first born, but the baby would not wait. **Mrs. William Walker** was called to assist. By the time Billie & the doctor arrived, the new arrival was doing just fine.

Billie and Ava had decided to name the boy **Burton** but Mrs. Walker threw a fit. It seems the memory of the infamous **Burton-Walker Feud** was still alive. So the name of **Bert** was given to the new addition to the James family instead.

**Bert James** ranched until age 31, 1929 and then he bought the grocery business from long time store owner **Jim Bechtel**. It's said that he, like the previous owner, ran the store giving credit to many of the locals. Many debts were never paid; not a great means to make money but Bert sure made a lot of friends. The store was then called "Bert's Store" and later called James Store, as it is often referred to today.

In 1944, Bert lost his wife and was left to run the



store and raise his young 13 year old son, **Clint James**. About a year later a young Kansan named **Helen Ramsey** came to the valley to teach at the high school. She had Clint in her classes for 2 years. Helen & Bert married in 1944. Clint always joked that his dad married her to have a built in tutor.

In 1949, during the construction of Lake Isabella, they moved their home to the east side of the river and in 1953 moved the store to what would be the new Kernville. He later turned the business over to his son Clint but remained active in the community in many ways. **Bert James** died on May 7, 1980.



## ③ William Henry Scodie

(1825 - 1898)



He was born **Wilhelm Heinrich Schodda** on June 18, 1825 in the Duchy of Hanover in Germany.

**Wilhelm** left Bremen, Germany as a teenager, worked as a ship's cabin boy, then in Santiago, Chile as a cook. After going to Australia, he arrived in San Francisco in 1855. In 1856, he was in the mining town of Keyesville here in Kern County. In the 1860 Census, he was listed as a "merchant" aged 33. He ran a small hotel and changed his name to **Scodie** (easier for the Americans to pronounce he thought). He saved his money and looked for land to buy. In 1861, he bought a ranch in the South Fork Valley. **J V. Roberts** and his Indian wife **Ellen** on the Bloomfield Ranch were his only neighbors.

**Will Scodie** operated the stage stop known as **Scodie Station** for travelers which included a hotel, store, bank and blacksmith shop in an existing adobe ranch house. All was not peaceful for the store keeper. He survived several robberies and at one time was robbed by the infamous outlaw

**Tiburcio Vasquez's** gang. Will was relieved of \$800, a string of horses, and a change of clothes.

In the early 1870s, at about age 48, he married a young Indian woman, a Tubatulabal named **White Blanket** (noted below). **William** and **White Blanket Scodie** had one child, a daughter, **Sophia**. It was **Sophia** who named the station Onyx. When the postal department needed a name for the post office, Will left it to **Sophia**. She thought Scodie sounded too much like Scotia, and while thumbing through a dictionary found "ONYX". She liked the sound and so it was to be.

After **White Blanket** died, Will married **Elise Stahlecker Marx** and they had a child named **Willma**. **William Scodie** died November 4, 1898.

#### ④ **White Blanket Scodie**

(1850 – 1879?)

**White Blanket** is listed as the 1<sup>st</sup> wife of **William Henry Scodie** with whom she had a daughter circa 1874, **Sophia** (both noted above). There is some



confusion about her burial or if she is the **White Blanket** in the photo at left (from Bob Powers' 1981 book, Indian Country of the Tubatulabal).

But the confusion is likely because there were more than one **White Blankets** – the other probably her mother or grandmother. That could have been

**Maria White Blanket**, aged 80 in 1880, when she was living with a son-in-law, **Tom Bobb**.

Unfortunately, **White Blanket Scodie** died before **Sophia** was six, conceivably in 1879: Will listed himself a widower in the 1880 census.

**White Blanket Scodie** is buried in the Old Kernville cemetery with the Scodie family. Her



grave was not marked until 1992, when relatives in the Hays family, installed this simple flat marker at the urging of **Bob Powers**, according to historian & Scodie family descendent **Lynn Hay Rudy**.

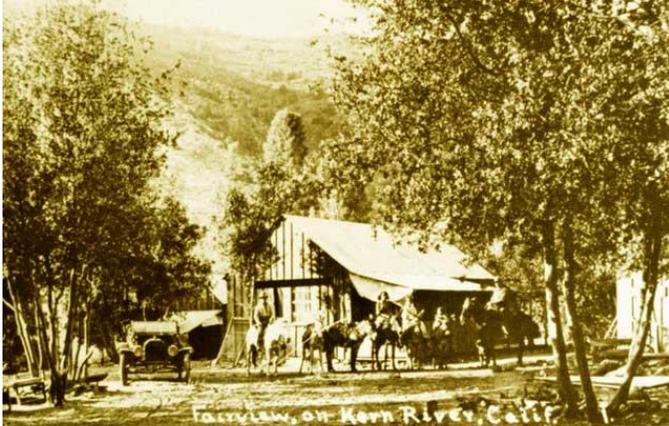
#### ⑤ **Matt Burlando** (1886 - 1930)



**Matt Burlando** was born in Torino (Turin), Italy in 1886. He came to California and married **Lupie Apalatea**, who was the daughter of **Francisco Apalatea** (noted above). After their marriage, they moved up the Kern River to one of the Edison Camps and Matt worked as a blacksmith there. They had 4 children: **Isabell Blanche "Betsy"**, **Johnny**, **Billy**, **Claud** (aka '*Skeeziks*').

After the birth of their 1<sup>st</sup> child, Betsy, Matt decided he wanted to go into business for himself. He started what was later known as Fairview Lodge in the 1920s. After living in a tent for some time they built their first house. This served as a house, dining hall, and store. Lupie would serve meals to

Edison workers as well as tourists that had discovered the riches of the area. Matt also started burro packing business, taking people into the back country. A part of their house would later be used for the now famous McNally's Steak House.



Fairview-on-the-Kern River—taken in 1915. Small girl on burro, second from right, is Betsy Burlando.

In 1915, they sold the Lodge and purchased his father-in-law's, **Francisco Apalatea's** 160-acre ranch, 3 miles north of Old Kernville. Matt Burlando died in 1930 and Lupie followed in 1955. Their son, **Bill Burlando** still resides on Burlando Road in Kernville.

## 6 Cora Nettie Hight Yarbrough (1868 - 1956)

Historian **Ardis Manly Walker** recalls in his The Rough and The Righteous of the Kern River Diggins that Nettie lived a pattern of pioneer times. On October 3, 1868, during a storm in the Greenhorn Mountains, Nettie was born to **Charles & Sarah Hight** in the hurried shelter of a deserted cabin with the help of Glennville midwife **Grandma Allen**. Nettie spent her childhood in the log home on the family's mountain homestead, watching her father make furniture and her mother make soap and candles using lye made from oak ashes in an ash hopper. In 1879 (about the time this photo was taken), the family moved down the mountain to Kernville where all 6 Hight children attended school.



Nettie later married **David W. Yarbrough**, described by **Ardis Walker** as "a wild and wooly cowpuncher." She and Dave shared the challenges of cow camp and cattle ranching until both Nettie and Dave slowed their lives a bit. They set up a wayside station (gas station) in Red Rock Canyon. Due to Dave's suffering a series of strokes, they returned to Kernville where she cared for him.



In October 1950, **The Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus** convened to commemorate the old town of Kernville before it was lost to Lake Isabella, placing a plaque just outside the Old Kernville Cemetery (noted on Page 2). Nettie & husband David are shown above at that time just outside this historic cemetery fence.

The Clampers selected Nettie as the epitome of the pioneer spirit of the old town. As shown above, and conferred upon her the distinction of becoming an **Honorary Clamp Widow**. Nettie took great pleasure in the recognition and in writing friends; she would add "**Nettie Hight Yarbrough, Grand Honorary Widow No. 1 of Whiskey Flat**" to the letterhead and sign it "*Your old E Clampus Vitus Gal, Nettie.*"

**Cora Nettie Hight Yarbrough** died in 1956.

## ⑦ Harold 'Bill' M. Calkins

(1870 - 1945)



**Harold "Bill" M. Calkins** was born on October 1, 1870. His mother's maiden name was Mead. Per Robert Powers' 1974 book North Fork Country, Harold resembled an actor of the times by the name of **Bill Neigh**. Because of this he was nicknamed "Bill". Harold was also a stand in stuntman for some of movies made in the valley.

Bill and his wife had been running the Mountain Inn in Kernville but he felt the area was getting to civilized for them. They moved 15 miles upriver and started Camp Durrwood. Historian Bob Powers notes that Durrwood is a misspelled place name. It should have been Durwood, recording the fleeting presence of Billy Durwood, foreman of the A. Brown Ranch in 1879. But Durrwood is on all the official maps and lists of place names now.

Bill Calkins had an unusual pet, a mountain lion named Tim. Bill of course had several tales to tell about Tim. Bill was another of the very colorful characters of the Kern River Valley. In 1944, Bill sold Camp Durrwood. Bill died on January 4, 1945.

## ⑧ Virgil Frances Liebel

(1927 - 2010)

**Virgil Frances Liebel** (known as 'Virgie') was born in Colefax, Calif., on April 1, 1927 to **Edward & Evalina Leshner**. She was raised in Big Creek Calif., with her 2 brothers **Albert** and **Harold**. There she met the love of her life, **Frank Liebel**, through her father's Edison Co.

When she was 18 years old they married and moved to various places in California and Nevada. Eventually they settled in at The Liebel Ranch in Lake Isabella. There they enjoyed life together raising their children. Virgie loved life and put her



heart and soul into everyone and everything. Virgie loved and dedicated great time and energy to the Nuui Cunni Native American Cultural Center where she established lifelong friends. She was gifted in many areas, from her wonderful food, quilted blankets, embroidery work to her handcrafted weaving projects that she shared with all of her family and friends.

**Virgil Frances Liebel** passed away at the age of 82 on Wednesday, March 17, 2010 at the Bakersfield Heart Hospital. Virgie was preceded in death by her husband *Frank* Liebel and son **Randy Liebel**. She is survived by her son **Dane Liebel**; son **Bernie Liebel** and wife **Sherril**; son **Marvis Liebel** and wife **Karen**; son **Terry Liebel** and wife **Susan**; daughter **Rodena Liebel (Mannatt)** and husband **Mark Mannatt**; brother, **Harold Leshner** and wife **Della**. She had 19 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild.

This is the last burial to date in the Old Kernville Historic Cemetery, having taken place March 26, 2010. As of the time we produced this brochure, Virgie's marker hasn't been placed yet.

## ⑨ Michael Otto Liebel

(1850 - 1948)



Born in Kandel, Germany on April 5, 1850, **Michael Otto Leibel** was a miner of one of the richest claims in the Paiutes. He had a good mine but needed a wife. He selected **Emma Reich**, step-daughter to **Fredrick Butterbredt**. It is said that he lent Fred \$500 with no date to repay. And so the wedding came and legend has it that Otto and his friends were celebrating pretty hard. After about ten hours of drunkenness Emma took flight. She fled to her Aunt **Mary Butterbredt** up in the St. John Mine. It took Otto four days to find her and convince her to return with him.

Otto and Emma bought a ranch in Erskine Creek Canyon near the Bodfish area where they had as many as 11 children. Otto spent most of his time on the ranch but if not there it is sure he was out looking for another big strike for he never lost the "Gold Fever." 8,009' Leibel peak 6.9 miles from Bodfish was named for him.

**Liebel**, lē'-bēl: **Peak** [Kern]. The mountain was named in the 1930's for Michael Otto **Liebel**, a prospector of German descent who came into the Paiute Mountain country in 1876. He married an Indian girl, settled at the foot of the mountain, and brought up a large family. All eleven children and their parents were still living in 1947.

## ⑩ Joseph Caldwell

(1806 - 1871)

Born in Harrison Co., KY on February 7, 1806, **Joseph Caldwell** is buried here with his wife, **Mary B. Caldwell** (1806 - 1870) and perhaps son **Joseph S. Caldwell** (1843 - 1868). This may be the oldest burial marker still standing in this cemetery.



**Joseph Caldwell** is one of the true founding fathers of Kern County. He was a member of a committee that helped draft appropriate resolutions and petitions to aid in the creation of a new county. When approved by the 9<sup>th</sup> California Governor (1863-1867), **Fredrick Low**, Kern County was established with Havilah being designated as the county seat. It remained so until 1874 when county government was moved to Bakersfield.

Mr. Caldwell, and **Judge Joseph Warren Sumner** had a stamp mill operation and it was pretty profitable. **Joseph Caldwell** built the first house in Kernville. Shortly after, a gentleman, **Adam Hamilton** set up a saloon across the street from the Caldwell residence. Mr. Caldwell and Judge Sumner promptly instructed Mr. Hamilton that their mine was a temperate camp and instructed him to set-up down river about a mile. Whiskey Flat was born and the rest is history.

Mr. Caldwell holds another place in the history of the valley. He was Justice of the Peace in 1863. It was to **Joseph Caldwell's** house that Judge Sumner had instructed the Indians of the valley to take their guns for safe keeping. When the Army requested

the weapons both Judge Sumner and Caldwell refused. The ambitious, if misguided **Captain Moses McLaughlin** removed the guns. The result was the Tilley Creek Massacre of 1863, detailed under **Steban Miranda** on page 11 below).

### ⑩ **Alex G. Silicz** (1877 - 1936)



**Alex Silicz** was born in the Kern River Valley in the 1<sup>st</sup> house built on the Kern River, the home of founding pioneer **Joseph Caldwell** (noted above). Alex's father was shot in a bar in Kernville and his family moved to Bakersfield where Alex spent his time working the prominent pioneer ranches of the county. In 1908, he married **Dora Neill** and they went into business with Dora's father, **John Neill**. The Neill-Silicz cattle ranch covered an area from what is now Lake Isabella to just this side of Bakersfield. There were no fences so the cattle wandered the open range. Dora was an accomplished horsewoman and she assisted in the range work with the men. Dora and Alex had 3 boys and 3 girls and all were expected to pull their weight with the ranch. Alex loved his horses and dogs as well as his family. When on the trail his dogs shared his bed and his grub. Alex was known to butcher his own beef and deliver beef to isolated cabins in the mountain communities. Upon hearing of his terminal illness, Alex had but one last request – that the hearse bearing his body to the Methodist Church in Old Kernville should pause opposite his ranch where his favorite horse grazed.

In 1989, Alex & Dora's 1890 Victorian home on the Neill-Silicz ranch was moved to the corner of Scodie Road and Tobias Street in Kernville where it

went through an award-winning restoration, operated as a bed and breakfast for 11 years, and is now a private residence.

### ⑪ **Robert L. Robinson**

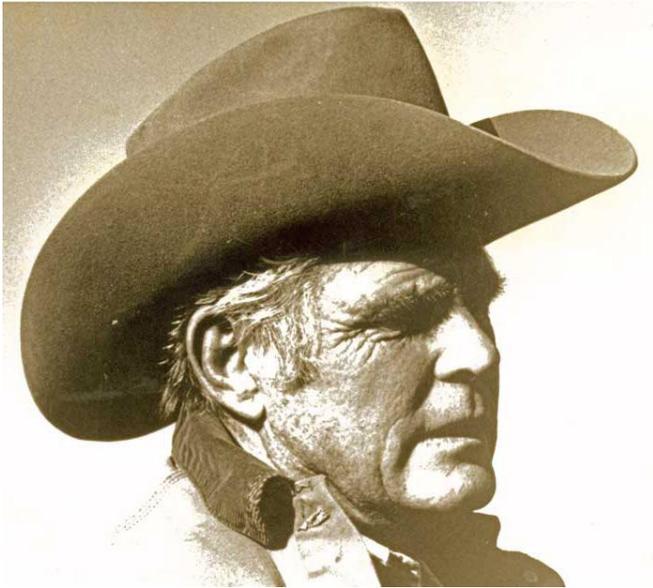
(1866 - 1902)



**Robert Erwin (Lee) Robinson** was born in Havilah. His father was **Jeremiah W. Robinson** who was shot and killed in Claraville on Paiute Mountain in 1868. His mother, **May Ann McKenzie Robinson**, moved her 3 small boys, **Beverly, Jerry, and Robert** to Havilah. When she was threatened with having the boys taken away, she moved to Kernville. Her sons found a large deposit of placer gold up Tillie Creek and bought the Robinson Ranch at what is now Robinson Cove on Sierra Way SE of Kernville.

**Robert Erwin L. Robinson** married **Linda Gann** from Woody. They had 2 children. He died in 1902 at age 36 when his team ran away and the wagon overturned near Paul's Place in Weldon. His wife Linda died in 1929.

## ③ Robert 'Bob' LeeRoy Powers (1924 - 2002)



**Bob Powers**, son of **Marvin & Isabel Powers**, came into the world in Old Kernville on June 7, 1924. He grew up living and working near the land homesteaded by his great grandparents, **Thomas & Sophia Smith**, in 1861 on the heels of the Kern River Gold Rush of 1855. As a young man Powers continued ranching and cowboying with a stint in the Navy during WWII. In 1951, he wooed and wed a Kern Valley girl named **Margie Martin** and they started raising a family and running the family ranch. In the late 1950's, he joined the U.S. Forest Service and his territory was the same region of the Southern Sierras where he and his father and his father before him had always worked and lived.

As a 5<sup>th</sup> generation descendent of some of the hardest pioneers of the Kern River Valley he knew its history needed to be written, or an important part of California history would be forever lost. In the late 1960's his desire to see it done led him to make introductions around the Kern River Valley for a writer who, in exchange for a fee, would write a history of the area and its people. After the writer disappeared with everyone's money, Bob Powers decided to do it himself because, as he said, "*it needed to be done.*" Bob Powers made no pretensions about being a great writer.

The decision to write one book led this cowboy, cattleman, ranger, historian to write a total of 9 books detailing the work, lives and loves of the

pioneers of the Kern River Basin and the Southern California High Desert region east of the Sierras; including the Death and Owens Valleys and Mojave. His written work details the development of these farming, ranching and mining communities from the 1850's onward -- and the people who gave them life. More than just broad stroke descriptions of the Greenhorn Mountain Gold rush, the establishment of the big cattle ranches, Powers was also intent on focusing on the small details of everyday living for the pioneer folk: the cowboys, the ranchers, the merchants and moonshiners; the preachers, the outlaws, the mountain men and sheriffs, that settled Kern and the High Desert. Powers' description of the harnessing of the Kern River for energy production, including the flooding of Old Isabella to create the lake that now lies over it, remains amongst his best work.

Bob Powers was deeply committed to the Kern River Valley Historical Society and Museum, serving as its director-curator and donating much of his lifetime collection of photographs and artifacts to the museum. Without his hard work and dedication much of this important history would have been lost forever.

In June 2006, Cinematographer **Charles L. "Chuck" Barbee** began production of an 'Old West' history documentary series about California's Southern Sierra Nevada region called "Wild West Country" based the Powers books. (Books and the 1<sup>st</sup> "Wild West Country" DVD are available at the KRV History Museum gift shop in Kernville.

On Aug. 14, 2008, the United States Board on Geographic Names named a 5,778' mountain peak 1.7 mile NNE of Kernville (where the historic Harley mine site is located) as "**Powers Peak.**" This is an exceptional honor for Bob Powers, his family and many friends. His unique legacy warrants such recognition.



## 14 **Steban (?) Miranda** *disputed*

(1860 – 1942?)



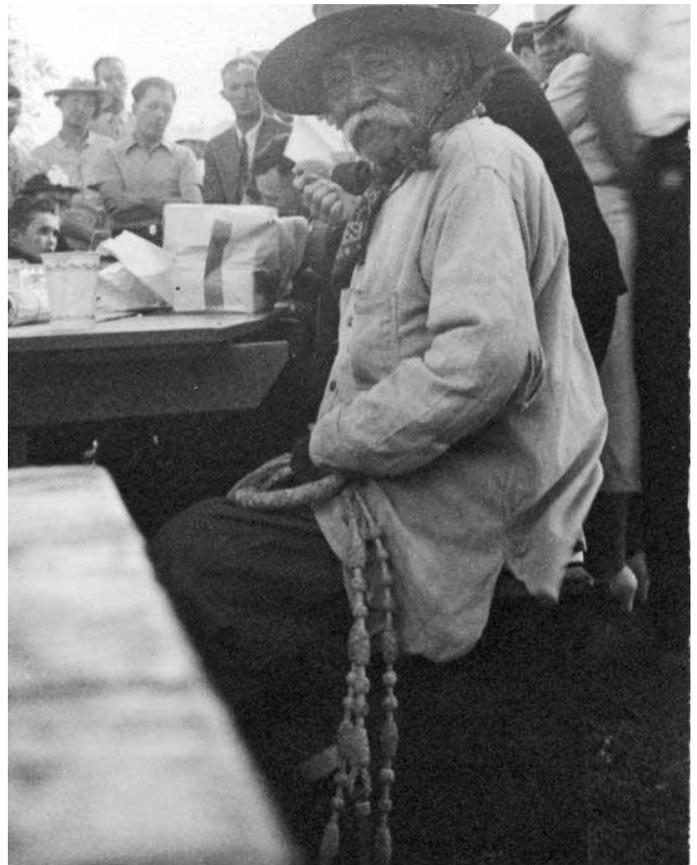
From our research for this tour, there is a dispute whether this is truly the final burial place for the last Chief of the Tubatulabal Tribe, **Steban Miranda**. His descendants don't think so. Some descendants think it might be the grave of a **Steven Miranda** instead. The seemingly authoritative website [www.FindAGrave.com](http://www.FindAGrave.com) says "This is probably the grave of Steban Miranda. Birth and death dates from CA death index. Born in the area of Tejon Pass, CA." **Ardis Manly Walker** recalls in his [The Rough and The Righteous of the Kern River Diggings](#) (page 13) "*As I paid my last respects to him in the little cemetery of old Whiskey Flat, it occurred to me that I never heard him utter a bitter word against any man.*" **Steban Miranda** is too important a figure in Kern Valley's history to leave out, even if he isn't buried here.

The birth/date dates shown on [www.FindAGrave.com](http://www.FindAGrave.com) [Birth: 1860 Death: Oct. 13, 1942] can't be right either. That would have him 3 years old in 1860, but **Ardis Walker** wrote in his book noted above that as a boy of 13, **Steban Miranda**, was a survivor of the April 19, 1863 massacre at the Indian village of Pallawan near old Whiskey Flat. Companies D and E of the California Calvary Volunteers under the leadership of **Captain Moses McLaughlin** surrounded the village, gathered 35 braves then shot and "sabered" them.

Steban watched as his father, his grandfather, and 2 of his uncles were killed. Steban, along with the women and other children had to gather the bodies and bury the dead. He years later watched again as the burial place was disturbed by excavation for water diversion canal for the Borel Power plant constructed by the Kern River Company circa 1904. The canal is visible when Lake Isabella is very low (like in December).

**Steban Miranda** worked as a farmhand and vaquero and was well respected by all who knew him. **Steban Miranda** was a true Chief to a gentle people. He had many living relatives in/near the Kern River Valley.

The photo below shows **Steban Miranda** (we think) at a Kern Historical Society picnic in Kernville May 1938 (photo by **David Anderson**).



## Where are the Chinese?

**Why are there apparently no Chinese in the Old Kernville Cemetery?** The 14-page list of burials by 1980 doesn't list a single Chinese name. But several long-time residents say they've heard there were Chinese burials on the east (river) side of the cemetery (the foreground in the October 1950 view of the Old Kernville Cemetery at the bottom of this page).

By 1880, the Chinese constituted 22% of California's mining population making them the largest single nationality engaged in mining. So, you might expect to find some Chinese names on markers in the Old Kernville Cemetery, but there are none, probably for several reasons. First, it is likely few if any were buried there in the first place. Secondly, up until the 1936 invasion of China by the Japanese, Chinese remains were usually disinterred and sent back to their home village in China.

The typical Chinese gold seeker was in his late teens or early twenties, male, single, and uneducated. His purpose was to return to China as soon as he had accumulated his wealth. He did not intend to assimilate into the California community and he assiduously protected his traditional life style. Customs, clothing, language, food, and burial practices set him far apart from his fellow miners.

Then as now, when times got tough, immigrants were blamed for many things. Because of cultural differences, appearance, and speech; they were generally regarded with suspicion and resentment. In 1882, Congress passed the **Chinese Exclusion Act**, which suspended the immigration of "laborers" and prohibited naturalization of the Chinese. Californians began adopting laws designed to further restrict traditional burial practices. Calling the Chinese hazardous to public health, many towns forced them to bury their dead away from the common burying ground. There are Chinese burials in Onyx, which may be featured on a future Cemetery Tour.

## Credits & Acknowledgements:

This brochure was produced for the **Old Kernville Cemetery Tour** held on Saturday & Sunday, May 15 & 16, 2010 as part of the **KRV Historical Society's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual History Days**, celebrating the history of the Kern River Valley.

### Kern River Valley Historical Society

49 Big Blue Road, Post Office Box 651 Kernville, CA 93238

(760) 376-6683 [www.kernvalleymuseum.org](http://www.kernvalleymuseum.org)

Museum & Gift Shop open 10 am to 4 pm, Thursday - Sunday

The information in the brochure was researched by **Jenny Hanley** and **Richard Rowe** and will no doubt be revised as people with more information read this and comment, making it a better document. Most of the modern day photographs were taken by **Richard Rowe** who laid out this brochure.

Many individuals helped in putting this together:

**Chuck Barbee, Ron Bolyard, Cheryl Borthick, Peg Greenberg, KRV Branch Library Supervisor Peggy Hickey, Dawn Jordan, Laura & Randy Kyt, Vicki Middleworth, Sylvia Sun Minnick, Tribal Chairwoman Donna Miranda-Begay, Harvey A. Malone, Joyce Norris, Marge Powers, Samantha C. Riding-Red-Horse, Bob Robinson, Jeanette Rogers, Lynn Hay Rudy, Mike Thomas, Charles Topping, Ellen Ward Miller, Ron Wermuth**, and others, including the late **William Harland Boyd, Bob Powers** and **Ardis Many Walker**.

**Special thanks for reproducing this brochure to**

**THOMAS**  
*Refuse Service*

Sponsor of Kern Valley Pride Day 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in September  
[www.thomasrefuse.us/prideday.htm](http://www.thomasrefuse.us/prideday.htm)

