

THE BODIE TIMES

PROTECTING BODIE'S FUTURE BY PRESERVING ITS PAST

THE NEWS OF BODIE, MONO LAKE & GROVER HOT SPRINGS
www.BodieFoundation.org

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NUMBER 2

FOB Day Celebrates Bodie's Heritage

By Dave James

Saturday, August 14, dawned bright and calm. A few scattered clouds passed by. A slight breeze felt good on your face. It was a delightful day and about to get more so. There was a subdued excitement in the air as activities started early around Bodie State Historic Park. After all, it was the annual Friends of Bodie Day (affectionately called FOB Day) and there was much to do.

Park staff and volunteers alike got an early start in preparation for the day. There were buildings to be opened and prepared, event tables and shade covers to be set up, food service preparations, skits to be rehearsed, period apparel to be donned, museum to be straightened, bookstore to be restocked and restrooms to be cleaned.

The membership check-in process needed to be reviewed and arriving vendors had to be shown to their areas. By the time the park opened, there were several cars waiting at the gate to claim precious parking spots.

As the activities and events of the day unfolded, a sense of calm settled across the staff. Everything was flowing smoothly. People were enjoying themselves – visitors and staff alike. The numerous historical interpretations attracted much attention. There were undertakers at the church to greet visitors and take them on special cemetery tours. The sheriff was at the county jail and the schoolteacher talked about what going to school was like a century ago.

The Bodie stage rolled in and was greeted by citizenry of yesteryear. Saloon girls, dressed in their flashy garb, along with

other town strollers, roamed Bodie's dusty streets posing for photographs and answering questions. Medical practices and techniques from the 1800's were explained. The ever-present Faro dealer was ready to teach newcomers the game and remove

Please see FOB DAY page 3



Ed and Joanne Allen (above) as the Quinvillees share gossip with Cecile Vargo as undertaker Mrs. Friend. A pair of youngsters also finds something to talk about (below).



Costumed visitors relive Bodie's heritage on FOB Day.

The True **Depth** of Mono Lake

By Dave Marquart

Next year marks the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve. The State Natural Reserve includes landscapes ranging from alkali flats to meadows, wetlands, and renowned limestone tufa groves. Some of these lands are frequented by large numbers of visitors, while other more remote portions of the Reserve are seldom walked upon.

The State Public Resources Code affirms that "State Reserves consist of

areas embracing outstanding natural or scenic characteristics of statewide significance." One of the greatest successes of the Reserve is that we've never lost sight of our goal of maintaining its natural beauty and wildness.

Nearly a quarter million people visit the Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve every year. It can be challenging trying to balance the recreational needs of visitors with the mission of a State Reserve. Visitor comments left at several of the

Please see MONO LAKE page 4

In Historic Alpine County

Discover Grover Hot Springs

You are likely already a fan of the historic mining town Bodie, and have probably seen firsthand the many cultural treasures it holds. Another nearby state park that you may not have visited, which is about an hour-long drive north-west of Bridgeport, is Grover Hot Springs. Grover is best known for its hot springs pool and beautiful mountain scenery. Grover has its own history to tell, as well as surrounding Alpine County with its mining history waiting for you to discover!

The scenic mountain valley that cradles the park, long ago shaped by glaciers, was once a summer home of Native Americans - the Washoes. Capt. John Fremont forged through the valley's snow covered meadows and forest during his winter traverse of the Sierras in 1844. Ten years later cattle rancher John Hawkins settled here. During the 1870's Alvin Grover, a Markleeville businessman, took ownership of this area and further developed the hot springs as an attraction for patrons of his hotel. The rich Comstock mining district at Virginia City had huge demands for lumber. Forests around Lake Tahoe and Alpine County were clear-cut to supply wood to the mining bonanza. The Hot Springs Valley was also stripped of its trees during the 1870's to be used in the Comstock mines. Remnants of the old logging camps still exist.

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&
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Alpine County developed in the early 1860's as silver ore was discovered in the area. As the mining in Alpine County dwindled during the 1870's, it is likely that several of the County's residents ended up in Bodie.

Two people that left Alpine County to apply their trade in Bodie were the Folger brothers. Journalists Robert and Alexander Folger started the Alpine Chronicle during the 1860's then moved to Bodie in 1878 to publish the Bodie Chronicle.

Markleeville became the county seat in 1875 with a population of only 172. Gradually, the county's scenic quality and outdoor recreation opportunities spurred an economic shift to tourism.

During the early 1900's the people of Markleeville became concerned about the area's natural resources, including the Hot Springs Valley. Ownership of the valley changed hands over

the years to outside investors and the threat of development became a concern. There was a movement to petition the state to purchase the land and make it a state park. In 1959 the state park became a reality.

Today, visitors come to Grover Hot Springs to enjoy soaking in the hot pool, camping, and hiking. A visitor may also notice some of the cultural artifacts that remind us that we were not the first to enjoy Grover Hot Springs.

One obvious artifact is an old cabin standing by the pool complex. This cabin was once owned by the Scossa family, pioneer cattle ranchers and past owners of the hot springs. Other abandonments from the past await visitors' discovery.

We invite you to discover this gem of a park, and pursue the area's history. For more information about Grover and Alpine County visit www.VisitGroverHotSprings.com and www.AlpineCounty.com

Foundation Continues to Grow

by Brad Sturdivent

I've been thinking about what has been accomplished by the Foundation since our last newsletter, way back last spring.

We started off on Memorial Day weekend with a "Meet the Board of Directors" event. Board members Nancy Frye, Norm Stump, Mark Pupich, Dave James and I were all in attendance.

Chris Spiller and Terri Geissinger in period costume guided six special cemetery tours which were the highlight of the day and were packed with visitors.

From that point on it was business as usual for park staff. Entrance station operations, museum, tours of the stamp mill and history talks filled the day. A new tour was offered that took visitors up onto the ridge and back down behind the Standard Mill. We set up our booth and marched at the annual 4th of

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Bodie staff and Foundation members march as the Bodie Mutts baseball team in Bridgeport's Independence Day parade.

FOB Day Celebration

FOB DAY, from page 1

them of their chips.

Music wafted over the old town from the Big Meadow band and the Bodie Travelers duo. Parking control folks kept as much sanity as possible in the parking lot while visitors in period costumes roamed the park.

A watermelon-eating contest attracted many youthful participants. Vendors sold various arts and crafts and Albert's Meat Market provided wonderful barbequed food and drinks.

As sundown neared, FOB members were treated to a delicious steak or chicken dinner from Albert's then roamed the town to visit several of the buildings and their inhabitants.

They visited Sam Leon's saloon, Lottie Johl's home, the Quinville home, the McMillan home and the Wheaton Hollis Hotel. They were greeted in each locale and provided the opportunity to go inside these structures that are usually off limits.

Inside the Wheaton Hollis, visitors were subjected to raucous harassment by a bunch of "patrons" at the hotel bar while the hotel cook searched in vain for fresh liver. Outside schoolteacher McMillan's home, one of Bodie's "north end girls" discussed education of a different nature.

As darkness descended with the settling dust and all the visitors had departed, the staff kicked off their shoes, changed out of their period costumes, plunked down on the nearest chair and audibly groaned from the long and exhausting day. Refreshments and stories of the day began flowing. Another FOB day was now sweet memories.

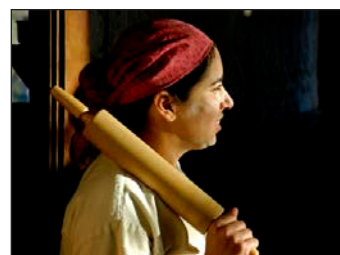
Dave James is a Director of the Bodie Foundation.



Elwood Brown (right), an original Bodieite, poses for a photographer between the Dechambeau and IOOF buildings



Ashley Dunbar (above) presents visitors with stories of Bodie's lively nightlife. Sasha Trana (below) keeps rowdy patrons in line.



Visitors wait to enter Lottie Johl's home on Main St.



Albert of Albert's Meat Market grills steaks (left). A visitor gets a closeup inside Sam Leon's Saloon.

Visitors Embrace Mono Lake

MONO LAKE, from page 1

visitor registers around the lake (yes, we do read them!) have a predominant theme that resonates with me. Here are a few of those comments that highlight that theme:

“Extremely peaceful; tranquil; serene; great place to meditate; soul-soothing.”

Why is it that so many of us feel so embraced by this place? What exactly is it that nature does for us?

For me, communing with Mono Lake and its silence can allow me to more clearly realize who I am as a human being, what is important to me, and where my place is in this world. Henry David Thoreau wrote, “A lake is the landscape’s most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth’s eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.”

Over the years I’ve encouraged many people, both locals and visitors, to make time for the lake, to find a secluded place around the shore somewhere to sit and just be with nature. *I also request that they leave all possible distractions behind including friends, MP3 players, books, (yes, even their bird books and field guides).*

This is not an easy assignment for many. Being alone without distractions risks making us restless and uncomfortable, and for some, bored. But that glimpse of who we are when we are without any props or distractions can be illuminating. “Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another,” wrote the 1st–2nd century Roman poet, Juvenal.

During stressful times

we humans seek refuge in nature. Studies show that communing with nature does, in fact, reduce stress. Research has also shown that people who are able to be around nature or even view images of nature following a stressful event can recover more quickly from that event.

Several visitors to the lake following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 spoke to me of how much more important Mono Lake was to them at that particular time. A visit to Mono Lake following 9/11 may have reassured many that there are forces at work in the world that are much larger than the violence humans inflict upon each other.

Considering visitors often conduct their vacations the way they do their lives—hurriedly—even a brief visit to Mono Lake can do wonders for the soul.

And the visitor registers show many repeat visitors. “We keep coming back; we love this place—we come here often; after all those years—still awesome,” say visitors. A visit with Mono Lake, however brief, can also help us renew our relationship to the earth and recharge the spirit.

Having talked to thousands of visitors over the years I’ve learned that many who have desk jobs are able to do what they do because they know there are places like Mono Lake in existence. For some, Mono Lake is California’s Alaska—if you can’t get here often, just knowing it exists and is being protected, and will be there when you need it is sometimes “soul-soothing” enough, at

Foundation’s Growth Continues

FOUNDATION, from page 2

July celebration in Bridgeport.

Funding for the Bodie Cemetery Project is back on track. A team of conservators recently spent two weeks resetting and reassembling 28 leaning and/or damaged stone grave markers. This phase of the work was funded by Proposition 84. In addition, a Cemetery Management Plan is in the works, funded by Proposition 12. More work is planned for next season.

The second project is the beginning of stabilization work on the Railroad Superintendent’s Residence. We know it as the “Railroad Station” (which it isn’t). A Historic Structures Report (HSR) is being written to determine what needs to be done.

This summer we made some progress on opening a Visitor Center at Grover Hot Springs State Park within a small new office building State Parks opened. Over the winter, our plan is to include a new bookstore.

We made some great strides with sales at Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve to help with seasonal funding.

There are a few projects the Board is working on along with the normal day-to-day business agenda. These are: developing permanent logos (“brands”) for each of the three parks (which will lead to new merchandise opportunities), enhancing our websites for all three parks and putting together an “Information Package”.

This package will include items like our Mission Statement, past and future milestones/accomplishments, info on the folks who

least temporarily.

“No words can describe” writes another Mono Lake visitor. “Yes, the earth speaks, but only to those who can hear with their hearts . . . it often sends its messages without words,” writes Steve Van Matre, author of *Earth Magic*. Some who try to interpret nature only with their minds may never feel that deep connection with the earth that some of us feel.

Those of us who work for land-management agencies in the Mono Basin have an awesome and important job to protect the sense of wildness that provides opportunities for solitude and reflection. Lest we ever lose sight of that mission we simply need to read another comment in the visitor register like this one: “This place just makes me feel good.”

Dave Marquart is a Park Interpretive Specialist, Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve.

make up the Board; overview of financials. This is essential for advertising “who we are” and required info for corporate donors and grant applications. We also have another exciting activity in the wings, which we will share in a future newsletter once the project is finalized.

The greatest thing that has happened from this man’s point of view is how well all of you have received the transition to the Bodie Foundation.

You helped us get the museum open this last spring when money was tight. You made purchases from our Museum store and online sales, attended our tours and talks, attended photographer’s days and contributed to our General Fund.

We, the Board of Directors, our Business Manager, State Park staff and volunteers cannot thank you enough for helping to keep the dream of Bodie alive.

Brad Sturdivent is President of the Bodie Foundation.

Bodie Happenings — 2010



Bodie's railroad office, usually off limits to visitors, is now a stop on the Vista Tour.

by Mark Langner

With the 2010 interpretive season wrapping up at Bodie I'd like to point out a few of the newly developed and in-the-works interpretive programs, presentations and features that are occurring at the Park. It is a long and exciting list and the park staff and volunteers have done an excellent job working to insure that a visit to Bodie continues to be a grand experience!



A Ford flatbed truck, in storage for many years, now sits proudly on display in all its rustic glory.

A Ford flatbed truck, long buried under piles of boxes in the back of the Wheaton Building was dusted off and brought out for display across from the museum. Park staff replaced a couple of windows and now the truck is one of the most photographed features in the park.

The downstairs of the IOOF was cleared of years of clutter and transformed from a warehouse to a space where indoor interpretive programs can be held.

Visitors greatly enjoy the opportunity to enter into a building that is normally closed to the public. A large glass bottle collection is currently on display along with a display of several cook and warming stoves. Plans are being made for a rotating art and photo exhibit and other interpretive activities.

The Bodie Vista Tour now takes more adventurous visitors on an hour-long excursion into the mining district. This area is normally closed to the public. Highlights include a close-up

look at the railroad office, a visit to the water ponds and a stunning view of Bodie and the Sierra Nevada from a unique perspective.

A DPR curator oversaw a team of conservators who specialize in cemetery conservation. They were busy this Fall repairing headstones and gravesites.

Fallen stones were restored to their upright positions, gravesites were repaired and better delineated, and some stones, long in storage, were relocated to their original locations.

A large map of the Bodie Mining district was professionally conserved and protected, insuring that it will be



A collection of glass beverage bottles is on display inside the IOOF Building.

around for many more years. A full size color copy of this very interesting map is now hanging in the video/interpretive room where the public now has a chance to enjoy it for the first time.

New curtains of authentic style, weave, pattern and material, were imported from Europe and hung in the Museum. These replaced several of the old and very tattered ones. The new curtains look wonderful and offer some needed UV protection to museum artifacts.

Please see HAPPENINGS page 8

My Summer in the Hills of Bodie

by Jaclyn Workman

On my birthday in March I got a call for an internship I had applied for at some place called *Bodie State Historic Park*, somewhere in California. The location sounded pretty neat: lots of outdoor activities and surroundings, pleasant weather (I've always preferred it to be a bit cooler), and what history major wouldn't want to live in a ghost town for the summer?

I tossed around the idea for a few days, but my mind was already made up for me long before I called back to accept the position. Not everyone is fit for living in a ghost town - you have to be a little crazy, I think - and it turned out that I was both.

When I look back on my time at Bodie from my college apartment in Chicago, a few different aspects are foremost in my mind. First of all, I almost always think of the weather. Up until October, Chicago has been balmy - in the low 90's - with at least 40% humidity, and fans were running on high through the night. After sleeping in flannels all summer long, it was a difficult switch to make.

Next I think of the noiselessness. I never once heard a siren while I was in Bodie - not the way I do here in Chicago. For those who remember "Somewhere in Time", I considered car alarms to be the penny that threw me back from paradise, reminding me that I had to go back to hearing dozens of car alarms every day and every night when I returned to Chicago.

I also think about the nature. The city has only ever been a temporary place for me. As a native of rural western



Jaclyn displays a memento of her Bodie days during her farewell celebration in August.

Michigan, I find Chicago's large city, crowded streets, and overbearing buildings overwhelming. But Bodie was a respite from all of that.

Nestled in the surrounding Bodie Hills, I saw much, considering that I didn't have a car. I got out a few times, enough to become the "face of Bodie" at the Mono Lake Visitor Center. But it was those simpler hikes - the ones where I got up in the morning on my days off and trekked up into the Bodie Hills, field guide in hand, to learn more about what surrounded me in my new home - that I enjoyed the most. It is a side of Bodie that many never see. And never before in my life have I ever seen so many stars.

But what I remember most when I think about my summer in Bodie is the people. It takes a special person to want to live in a ghost town, and I and my coworkers had just the right spirit for it, I think. Some visitors come to Bodie and wonder how we spend the time there without getting bored. Yet there must be something to it, because there are people who come back to Bodie time and again, sometimes every year, sometimes every other month: to the same old buildings, the same old stories, the same



Rod Duff Retires

We are shocked and saddened to report that after 13 years, our compadre, the legendary Rod Duff, super senior park aide, has officially retired. Although he has promised to return as a volunteer, we will miss his odd behavior, generous sense of humor and deep knowledge of Bodie. Rod, also known as Forney Hobbs, Foreman of the Standard Mill, guided thousands, (if not more), stamp mill tours, entertaining and educating countless visitors. His vast knowledge and vintage appearance actually convinced many folks that he lived here in Bodie during the boom years. He is loved by many and will be missed by us all. Rod, if you are reading this, congrats on your retirement and we really hope you come back to help us next season!

old artifacts. It makes many tourists stop and wonder: why?

Having now come, spent my time, and gone myself, I think I can answer that question in a word: *connection*. In a world where communication is becoming increasingly brief, and often sight and sound are the only stimulated senses, places like Bodie offer something more. You're not just reading history, you're connecting with it: hands-on, kinesthetically interacting with objects that have seen as many years as your grandparents, or more!

Bodie's people become your family, and Bodie itself becomes your home. You can

learn a lot by living in Bodie for three months, and I did. But I think I'd like to go back for more.

Jaclyn Workman was a 2010 Student Conservation Association intern at Bodie.

Fun Fact Quiz

Q: True or False: The power poles bringing electricity from the Green Creek hydroelectric generating plant to the Standard Mill in Bodie were in a straight line. Common thinking at that time was that the electricity would "jump off the line" if it had to "bend" a corner.

See PAGE 9 for answer

Remembering Laird Johnson



Terri Geissinger, Bodie Foundation Business Manager, explains the significance of Laird Johnson's bicycle and pink flamingos at Friends of Bodie Day. Johnson rode the bike to and from his motor home at Milk Ranch and the flamingos decorated his front yard. Johnson died two days before FOB Day from hantavirus infection.

Preparations for Bodie's annual Friends of Bodie Day took on a somber note after the sudden death of seasonal park aide Richard Laird Johnson, 61, on August 12. Laird, as he liked to be called, died from hantavirus infection, according to the Mono County Health Department.

Laird was completing his fifth season at Bodie and worked primarily in the museum.

"Hantavirus is typically spread to humans when infectious material from rodents is inhaled," said Dr. Rick Johnson, Mono County Public Health Officer in a written statement. Dr. Johnson is not related to Laird Johnson.

Hantavirus was first recognized in the United States in 1993, according to the



Laird Johnson

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. California has had more than 40 cases, many of which had exposure in the Eastern Sierra counties.

Laird will be remembered

for his quirky sense of humor. He regularly placed pink flamingos in the wild grass in front of the recreational vehicle he called home while at Bodie. The bicycle he rode to and from the museum, with pink flamingos in the basket, is now parked beside the boardwalk on Main Street in front of the museum.

Laird's family held a memorial at Bodie on October 2. Staff and volunteers attended, sharing Laird stories with the family. A BBQ and slideshow was enjoyed with tender tears and much laughter. The day was fitting for a fine man.

Laird's bike and flamingos will be lovingly cared for.

Planned Giving Assures Bodie's Future

Gifts from your will or estate are a wonderful way to create a legacy and can be given with specific goals in mind. Please consider these options to support the Bodie Foundation.

- Name the Bodie Foundation in your will. Consider leaving a specific percentage of your estate to fund future needs at Bodie, Mono Lake or Grover Hot Springs such as stabilization of structures, artifact conservation or wildlife habitat protection. Your gifts will us help build an endowment.
- Name the Bodie Foundation as a contingent beneficiary to your IRA or pension plan.
- Name the Bodie Foundation as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy your family may no longer need.

For details on giving to a specific project, or how to best benefit your favorite park(s), contact the Bodie Foundation at (760) 647-6564.

The Bodie Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization and your gifts are tax deductible as allowable by law. Tax ID number is 26-3107902.

The Bodie Foundation assists California State Parks with operations at Bodie State Historic Park, Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve and Grover Hot Springs State Park.

Thank you for helping us protect our heritage and establishing your legacy.



Bodie regularly receives packages containing objects that were “accidentally” removed from the Park and are returned with letters of atonement. Most of these objects are small, pocketable items such as bits of glass or nails. This summer the staff was surprised to receive a package containing two wooden grave markers that were reportedly “found” in a ditch outside the cemetery in the 1950’s and stored in a garage for 50 years.

More Bodie Happenings

HAPPENINGS, from page 5

Many thanks to Donna Jones of State Parks Sacramento Headquarters for her invaluable help. You’re awesome Donna!

Several new Bodie related books were added to the sales area of the museum. These exciting new titles present a new look at historic Bodie.

Designs are being drafted for a new museum display case that will feature a rotating exhibit of never before displayed artifacts.

Outdoor interpretation received an interesting new twist with the introduction of volunteer Roger Vargo’s “Rusted History” talk and tour which examine some the larger pieces of historic equipment found around the park.

Bodie staff worked on a revision of the Bodie walking tour brochure. The tour has been re-routed, leading you in a more logical progression and directing visitors to the museum earlier on. It will also place more focus on the human history and experiences in Bodie.

A walking tour and brochure of the larger outdoor artifacts – Pelton wheels, wagons, ore carts, etc. – is being developed. This brochure will assist visitors in learning much more about these unique and

interesting items.

Volunteer Lou Weaver dedicated her time on weekends staffing a table in the museum that handled the very popular Junior Ranger Program. She did a great job and left a lasting impression on many excited kids. She helped create another generation of Bodie lovers!

A new interpretive panel was hung in the picnic area. This is the first time, in a long time, park information has been provided for this area.

Protection of artifacts was a priority this fall. Many of the outdoor artifacts were lifted from the mud and dirt and placed on a rock base, allowing better water drainage and better protection of both metal and wooden parts from decay.

A snow sled, falling victim to the elements, was moved from outside behind the D.V. Cain House, to inside the garage of the same house. The sled is now more visible and better protected.

At the corner of Main and Green streets, afternoon history talks are now a daily feature. These very popular half-hour presentations draw large and enthusiastic crowds.

Petra Nichols, a bilingual volunteer, is completing training

Bodie: Your Calendar Town

Submit your favorite Bodie photo for possible use in the 2012 Bodie Calendar.

One winning image will be used for each month of the calendar that will be sold to the general public to raise funds for projects supporting Bodie State Historic Park. **Entries must be submitted electronically and will be accepted January 1, 2011- April 15, 2011.**

Images must have been taken in Bodie State Historic Park (regardless of year) and must meet eligibility requirements as stated below.

Official Rules

- Anyone may enter the contest.
- There is no limit to the number of entries a photographer may submit, but each photographer is limited to **one** winning entry.
- Entries are by digital submission only at www.BodieFoundation.org.
- You must digitally sign the entry form to submit your image.
- Images must have a *minimum resolution* of 2,500 pixels by 1,800 pixels.
- Images with identifiable people will not be considered.
- No monetary compensation will be offered.
- Winning entries will be used in the 2012 Bodie Foundation calendar and may be used on the Bodie Foundation website or in the Bodie Times newsletter.
- Images must be received by April 15, 2011.

Conditions of Entry

Entrant agrees that if their image is selected, he or she will assign limited publication rights to the Bodie Foundation.

By entering this contest, entrant further agrees to these official rules and asserts he/she is owner of the image copyright.

Winner Selection

All winning images will be determined during judging in May, 2011. All entries will be reviewed and winners selected by the Bodie Foundation Board of Directors. The judges’ decisions are final. The winning photographers will be notified by telephone and/or e-mail.

and will soon be presenting history talks in German – sure to be a special treat for our many German visitors.

Chris Spiller, senior park aide, conducted the first official Bodie volunteer training program this fall. We are starting to build a large and dedicated crew of interpretive volunteers.

If you were looking for a reason to visit the park again next year, you now have a whole quiver of reasons to choose from.

Mark Langner is the Supervising Ranger at BSHP.

Bodie Visitation Increases 10%

The total park visitation thru mid-October is almost 115,000 people, according to Supervising Ranger Mark Langner, and is a 10% increase over last year, even in challenging economic times.

“This is testament to our visitors who appreciate the history that surrounds us here. Over 17,000 folks took advantage of the free talks and tours along with over 700 kids participating in the Junior Ranger Program. This is way up from last year, due to the fact that the tours are now included in the price of admission,” Langner said.



Bodie Winters:

Today and Yesterday

by Chris Spiller

“Do you live here? Do you live here all winter?”

Those questions are asked daily of park staffers.

Making it through a Bodie winter is a badge of honor for the employees who stay here year round. The employees at Bodie have sno-cats and snowmobiles to ferry them out for park business and the all-important groceries, but severe storms can keep the “cats” and staff snowbound for several days.

The crew at Bodie today has it better than residents of yesteryear who pushed their way through stormy weather using sleighs, sleds and wagons pulled by horses and mules.

A series of severe storms hit Bodie in early January 1906. During those storms, Standard Consolidated Mine Manager Theodore Hoover, his wife Mildred, and daughter Mildred, decided to battle their way out of Bodie with the mail carrier and others. Hoover was leaving Bodie to accept a new job after spending nearly three years at the Standard.

The following is an account of the winter trip from Theodore Hoover’s *“Memoranda: Being a Statement by an Engineer.”*

“On the tenth (of January 1906) I had a telegram from Bewick, Moreing & Co., offering me the position of examining engineer from the Hannan’s Proprietary Co. in Mexico... the eleventh and twelfth were days of further tremendous snowfall and blizzard, but we made preparations to leave nevertheless...

On the morning of the thirteenth, we left the manager’s house at about ten o’clock. The outfit consisted of two bobsleds, each with four horses and four extra ones led behind as relays; also about twenty men with shovels.

In the first sled were Mr. Burkham, the mail contractor, with a week’s delayed mails, and an assistant driver or two.

The second sled we had equipped with high board sides, drawn a heavy canvas over the top and filled inside with clean dry hay and many hot rocks and hot water bottles. Inside were Mildred, Mrs. W.R. Hamilton and little Mildred and our luggage.

Outside were Pearl Mattley, driver, Mr. Hamilton and myself...The blizzard was at the pinnacle of its effort, but we had ascertained that it was

only ten miles to the snow line (some three thousand feet lower elevation) and that below it was raining.

We made an average speed of just about one mile an hour. Sometimes we would go a hundred yards without much difficulty and then we would spend an hour over a few yards, with shoveling and a tangle of fallen horses and harness.

Burkham, driving the front sled, did one interesting thing. We came to a place where a length of about two hundred yards of the road was free of loose snow and at the end of the clear space was a drift twenty or thirty

feet high across the road.

He had the shovellers cut a trench or notch in this drift at the end of the two hundred yards, and when it was finished he put his four-horse team at this notch on the dead run. In two hundred yards, they got a fine start and struck the drift at the notch as if they had been shot out of a gun.

The momentum carried them clear up on the top of the drift, where they piled up in the soft snow in an indescribable tangle of horses, harness, sled, nails and men. It served to start a road for the following sled and our four horses.

At ten o’clock that night we arrived at Del Monte and the snow line, after ten hours making ten miles, saturated with perspiration and blistered, but happy, with a free road to San Francisco, Mexico and the new job.”

Chris Spiller is a Senior Park Aid at BSHP and frequently portrays Mrs. Mildred Hoover when guiding visitors through the Standard Mill.

Fun Fact Quiz

(answer from page 6)



View of a section of original pole line near Bodie.

(Illustration from the *Twelfth Report of the State Mineralogist, 1894*)

A: False. This story is referred to frequently in various books and publications but there is no substance to it. The technical papers written during and after the project of bringing electricity to Bodie make no reference to this. The power poles however, were approximately in a straight line. The lines rose and dropped in elevation, spanning hill and dale between the power plant and Bodie so there were definitely “bends” in the line. The commonly held reasoning as to why is simple – the shortest distance between two points is, of course, a straight line. The shorter the distance, the less cable required, the lower the cost.



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