
FRIENDS OF BODIE NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 Issue 1

Spring 1996

Executive Secretary's Message

The winter of 94/95 left behind some 18 ft. of snow. It began snowing in early November and continued into late June. We were able to clear the Bodie Road (SR270) of snow by mid May to allow visitors to the park ... wishful thinking ... we then closed it due to deep mud for about week. Tioga pass did not open until the end of June; visitation at Bodie was down as a result. Since July 1st over 162,000 people have visited Bodie; each month's visitation exceeding that month in the previous year.

The Department of Finance approved over \$350,000 to stabilize Bodie for fiscal year 1995-96. This is part of a \$1,000,000 package to be spread out over the next three fiscal years. Plans have been made and work has already begun on some buildings. This may be the biggest stabilization venture in Park history. Most of the work will be accomplished, for the first time, by State Park Maintenance staff. The Dept. of the State Architect (DSA) will also be involved. DSA rebuilt the west facing foundation of the Standard Mill and rebuilt the south wall of the museum this last summer. In this day of tight budgets we were blessed to get this.

The Friends of Bodie Night was held in late September in hopes of catching some warm weather. Unfortunately I was unable to attend ... I understand it was the one of the coldest nights in September. It didn't really get cold again until January. A printed Tee-shirt was offered for the occasion and was well received. All proceeds went into the Friends of Bodie Fund, which has now grown to over \$35,000.

In 1997 Bodie will have been a State Historic Park for 35 years. We are looking at some ideas to help raise funds to help meet our goals as stated in the Friends of Bodie brochure. We are looking to you, our members, for ideas and ways to help put these ideas to work ... we welcome your comments. Some of our ideas are mentioned in this newsletter.

Thank you all for your Friendship during 1995. We hope to hear or see all of you at Bodie at least once in 1996.

Sincerely,

J. Brad Sturdivant

GHOSTS OF BODIE ONCE AGAIN APPEAR

by Sue Lamie

H. Ward, Bodie's "pioneer furniture dealer" and part-time undertaker materialized again this year. On September 30th, he led a group of over 75 Friends of Bodie members around "boot hill" to show of his handiwork. On the way to the cemetery, however, they got sidetracked by a gunfight between the ghosts of Ed Ryan (volunteer Dennis Dettloff) and Dave Bannon (Park Aide Mike Whitsel). Sadly, Dave faired poorly in the battle and by the time the group moseyed down Green Street his funeral was beginning at the Methodist Church. At the Honorable Reverend Walt Stone's bidding, the group seated themselves in the dusty church pews in order to give a proper send-off to the newly departed soul.

With the tolling of the church bell (26 times to correspond with the age of the deceased), the group moved on to meet some residents of Bodie's cemetery. Although they'd been waiting some time, the ghosts were a lively bunch and eager to share their stories with the group.

H. Ward (Ranger Mark Pupich) introduced the group first to the long abused and misunderstood W.S. Bodey (Park Aide Charley Spiller), founding father of the Bodie mining district. They then got to meet the "Angel of Bodie," Evelyn Myers (budding actress Jordan Sturdivant), Bodie pioneer Elizabeth Butler (SCA Elaine Johns), and the reluctant ghost of miner William Hicks (Park Aide Dave Marquart). Lottie Johl (museum staffer Julia Hayen) explained how she came to be buried inside the cemetery, while other women with her background were denied the privilege. Finally, the thoroughly chilled group was introduced to Alex Nixon (Ranger Jack Shipley), head of the powerful Bodie Miners' Union.

The group then returned to the museum for hot drinks, snacks, and a tune or two from the Empty Pockets String Band (Bodie Auxiliary chapter). As the moon was rising over Bodie Bluff they headed back to their warm homes or hotel rooms, while the ghosts of Bodie settled down in their graves for another year.

Thanks to all the FOBs who brought food to share, and to Slim's Costume Shop for helping to dress the ghosts. Also, thanks to the behind the scenes folks: disaster control team Dave Carle and Jill Lachman, assistant undertaker Steve Demske, social coordinator Sue Lamie, and caterers Pat Molnar and Fay Osborne.



IN MEMORY ...

William Brownell "Bill" Merrell ... 1939 - 1995

We were saddened this past spring with the passing of a good Friend. Bill had been a volunteer at Bodie for the past six years. A Lawyer by trade, I can still picture him pacing back and forth on the steps of the old Methodist Church during one of his history talks as if he were presenting his case to a jury.

Never one to accept credit for anything, we thought it a good idea to mention a few things he had accomplished for Bodie:

- Bill was working on a book about Bodie Constable J.F. Kirgan. He had located relatives of Mr. Kirgan's during his search for information. The book was nearly finished.
- He had researched and developed a map of the townsite circa 1880 and presented the park with 2,000 copies for sale in the museum.
- He put together the preliminary route for a tour guide of the cemetery.
- Bill was wonderfully patient and gifted when it came to organizing park files regarding the ongoing mining issue. He provided many pieces of inside information concerning this issue.
- He was also responsible for organizing the Bodie photo inventory.

CEMETERY STABILIZATION

by Mark Pupich

During 1992 the Bodie Cemetery was given to California Park System from Bureau of Land Management. The cemetery, like the buildings in Bodie, needs stabilization work. There are a few family plots that receive annual care from surviving family members, but the rest of the graves have received little or no care for many years.

A stabilization and restoration project for a cemetery can be a tricky one to complete. There is not a lot of information on how to go about it properly and if done improperly can do more harm than good. A cemetery is a vital part of the community's history. Cemeteries give us some insights about the people that once lived in the area. If a marker is lost, moved or damaged, a part of history lost forever. A proper stabilization project starts with a detailed survey and recording of the entire cemetery, historical research, and a plan. The plan will list what needs to be done by priority and how it is to be done. Then the planner determines who is to do the work: can an untrained volunteer do it, or do you need a trained and experienced professional? And before anything can be started a very important issue needs to be resolve -- funding.

I hope to work towards a plan for stabilization of the Bodie Cemetery in the near future.



ACEC UPDATE

by Brad Sturdivant

The Bureau of Land Management portion of the ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) has been completed and signed off by the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation. As of this writing, Mono County has just begun to bring sections before the Planning Commission. From there it will go before the Board of Supervisors.

A portion of the ACEC recommended that State Parks or BLM should look into the possibility of purchasing the 550 acres on Bodie Bluff to the east of the park, "from a willing seller." For the last two years, since completion of the ACEC, State Park Staff in Sacramento have been busy writing grant proposals to raise funds for that reason. Negotiations were scheduled to begin in January of this year between State Parks and the trustee for the Galactic holdings. **This is good news!**

FROM WHERE I SIT -- NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM DESK

by Sue Lamic

If you were one of the 104,378 people that visited the Bodie museum this season, you may have noticed some changes. If you couldn't make the trip to Bodie, let me fill you in on what we were up to this season.

Most noticeably, the Miners' Union Hall, which houses the museum, got a bit of a facelift. For years now the southern wall has been sagging and in danger of collapse as the support beams were all cracked. The Division of State Architects sent Pete, Don, and Gary to shore it up for us. It's great not to have to worry about the roof falling in or snow coming through the wall.

Inside the museum we have added a few new sales items. Sagebrush Country is for all the people who "just wonder what that little white flower is." The book is a very well produced natural history guide covering the native flora and fauna of high desert areas like Bodie. Tom Morse of Global Preservation Projects has produced another panoramic poster that shows the view up Green Street at sunrise. It's selling quite well. Also, we had to raise our prices a bit to include the 7.25% sales tax. This and the raise in postal rates affected our sales by mail, too. A new price list is included in this news letter.

VOLUNTEERING AT BODIE -- 1995

by Jack Shipley

Bodie State Historic Park has a small but active volunteer program. Once again in 1995 the Park was made a better place to visit by the contributions of these hard-working people. This year we had a total of 1018 hours put in by 29 different regular volunteers, which is the second-highest ever, plus three months each by two special long-term volunteers called "interns" (see article on next page), and group work by a high school class and a Boy Scout troop.

Bodie is an unusual place to volunteer in: it can be very rewarding, but it is definitely *not* easy. The ghost town is located out pretty close to the middle of nowhere, and there is no nearby population center from which we can draw interested workers. Consequently, most Bodie volunteers come from a long distance away, and work here for one week or weekend at a time. That makes it difficult to get in the proper training, or to accomplish normal on-going projects. Our interpretive volunteers, for example, must do lots of study and homework elsewhere *before* they get here, in order to prepare themselves for giving out information to the public.

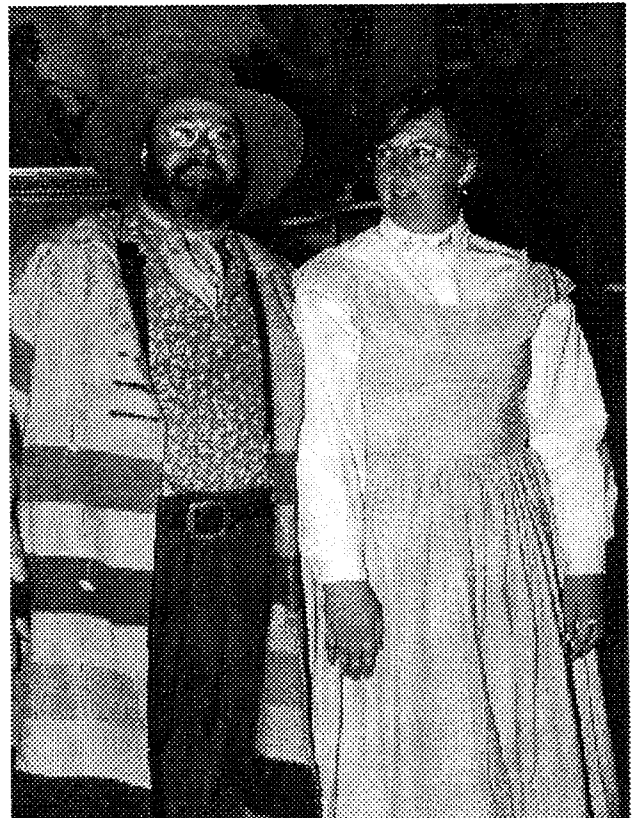
Another problem for our volunteers is the lack of available housing. About two-thirds of them camp in our little staff campground above the Picnic Area in tents, motorhomes, or trailers. The other third stay in motels in Bridgeport or Lee Vining, 45 minutes away. But in spite of these difficulties, most of our workers do a great job, and enjoy themselves in the process.

To help give you some idea of the many jobs that volunteers do here at Bodie (in case you ever thought of donating some time yourself!), here are brief profiles of the five people who put in the greatest number of hours this year. For example, "everybody's favorite volunteer" Slim Osborne comes to Bodie for three separate weeks each year in his small motor home. He is a retired electrician, and we give him several small electrical or carpentry projects each time around. But physical work is not enough for the affable Slim: he has built up enough knowledge of industrial history to give a very popular series of guided tours of the Standard Stamp Mill.

New volunteer Dennis Dettloff has taken the opposite approach: since he works all year in a people-oriented job, he takes a week's vacation several times a year to do heavy physical labor at Bodie. He had enough energy this year to drive fence posts (for Bodie's improved cattle fence) all by himself about as fast as a regular four-person crew.

Finally, an entirely different type of work is done by volunteers like Marguerite Sprague, who does behind-the-scenes historical research. Occasionally she comes to Bodie, but usually she works outside, studying old Bodie documents at the Bancroft Library near her home, or interviewing former Bodie families all over the West. Marguerite got our brief information sheet translated into Italian, and is now, along with Pat Molnar, translating the park brochure into French and German. Another great behind-the-scenes worker is retired fire chief Bill Cone, who put in over 72 hours tracking down donations of used fire equipment for the Park.

To these five people, and the two dozen others who gave their time and energy, everyone who loves Bodie says "Thanks!"



THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

by Sue Lamic

"How do you get to work here?" is a common question Bodie staff get asked. One answer to that question is -- "Become a Student Conservation Association volunteer"

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is a non-profit group based in Charlestown, New Hampshire. Founded in 1957, the SCA exists to match qualified people with parks that need an extra hand. Their bulletin lists positions in parks from Acadia National Park in Maine to Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and everywhere in between, including an out of the way park known as Bodie State Historic Park.

Since 1990, the Friends of Bodie/Sierra State Parks Foundation has funded at least two SCAs each season. The SCAs are essential parts of the park staff -- they do history talks and mill tours, collect entrance fees, patrol, accession artifacts, and even help out in the museum. The typical SCA works twelve forty hour weeks. They receive free housing and a fifty dollar weekly stipend, along with much valuable experience. The majority of Bodie's SCAs are invited to return the next season as paid staff members.

The SCA's first encounter with Bodie can be a bit intimidating. Imagine driving out to Bodie from Ohio or Georgia. You arrive at about dusk and are brought to the Gregory house and given a copy of Bodie 1859 - 1900. You'll need to read it carefully -- you'll be giving 45 minute long history talks to groups of twenty to one hundred people in a few weeks. The housing rules are explained to you, along with important lessons on how to bait and set mouse traps and how to start a fire in the wood stove -- your main source of heat in a town where most nights are below freezing. If your roommates aren't home, you'll probably keep yourself awake all night thinking about what they *really* mean when they call Bodie a ghost town.

It does get better though. Out of the five visitor service seasonals this year, four of them were once SCAs in Bodie. This is positive testimony to the SCA program and to the fact (some new SCAs find hard to believe) -- "Bodie grows on you."

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1995

Winter

Big snow storms in March pile snow at Bodie to a depth of 5 feet on the flat and drifts to 15 feet.

Coldest temperature was -19 on 1/17/95.

Spring

Bodie road opened in May, but closed several times due to late snow storms.

Total snow fall was 203 inches.

Summer

Finish stabilization work on Burkham House. Morgue by cemetery stabilized.

Built new cattle fence along Park boundary.

Rebuild exterior south wall of Miners' Union Hall.

Foundation work on front of Standard Stamp Mill, roof work on boiler room at Mill, and foundation and floor work on Blacksmith Shop in Mill complex.

Autumn

Continued work on fence.

Friends of Bodie Night.

Stabilization of Dr. Street House started.

DPR BUDGET WOES

by Brad Sturdivant

Well we're back at it again! Earlier this year we were informed that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) could be facing a cut of some \$20 million dollars in the budget for 1996-97. What? That sure made some of us wonder what was going to happen.

DPR set up committees to look at ways to generate funds to operate parks. One of these committees was to look at closing parks, turning parks over to other agencies, and having them run by private companies. In this area one agency was contacted about taking over operations of a park unit. The results were all kept quite secret from people at the unit level; perhaps so we would not be needlessly worried. -- continued page 6

Well, as it turned out, the Governors budget does include over a \$3 million cut and a promise that within the next five years DPR will no longer receive any General Fund moneys. What this means is that funds generated at the various parks from day use, camping, etc. will determine how the park will operate ... or ... if it will. In the past, grants, bond issues, donations, concessions and cooperating associations have also assisted with keeping parks at a specific level of service to the public.

What does this mean to the visiting public? Who knows for sure ... at the least an increase in fees. Beginning this April campers will see an increase of \$1.00 to \$2.00 in selected areas -- yet to be determined.

PARK HOURS

- 8 am -- 4 pm November 1st to March 1st
- 8 am -- 5 pm March 1st to May 1st
- 8 am -- 6 pm May 1st to first Sat. prior to Memorial Day weekend
- 8 am -- 7 pm First Sat. prior to Memorial Day w/e -- mid September.
- 8 am -- 6 pm Mid September to Mid October
- 8 am -- 5 pm Mid October to November 1st

PHOTOGRAPHERS DAY

This summer we are going to try a Photographers day. During this day photographers will be allowed to enter the park 1/2 hour before sunrise and stay until 1/2 hour after sunset. It will be limited to 100 people and the cost will be \$30 (\$20 for FOB members). The tentative dates are Saturdays July 20th and August 17th. For further information and reservations contact Bodie at (619) 647-6445.

BODIE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

1996

The Bodie photography workshops, offered through The Friends of Bodie, provide unique photographic opportunities and instruction. During these workshops the participant will have the opportunity to photograph Bodie at sunrise, sunset, and inside selected building. A large portion of the proceeds from the workshops goes to the Friends of Bodie to help fund management, protection, and interpretation at Bodie.

The leaders of these workshops are professional photographers and experienced workshop leaders. The workshop leaders, tentative dates, and fees are listed below. For further information and registration please contact the workshop leaders.

Clinton Smith, P.O. Box 1761 Mendocino, CA 95460, (707) 937-2261

Dates: July 29-31, Aug. 9-11

Fee: \$225

Bob Cumming, 9623 Hazard, Garden Grove, CA, 92644, (714) 531-2698

Dates: Sept. 9-11, Sept. 12-14

Fee: \$200

Thomas Morse, P.O. Box 30866, Santa Barbara, CA, 93130, (805) 682-3398

Dates: July 25-28, Sept. 23-26

Fee: \$465

Noella Ballanger, P.O. Box 457, La Canada, CA, 91012, (818) 954-0933

Dates: June 5-9 (6th & 7th in Bodie), Oct. 2-7 (3rd & 4th in Bodie)

Fee: \$300

BODIE FUND by Brad Sturdivant

According to the Friends of Bodie brochure developed a - way back in 1986 a special fund was to be set up specifically for Bodie State Historic Park. Well ... as of this past summer an account was set up at a (the) local bank in Bridgeport.

Prior to this landmark all funds generated at Bodie went to the Sierra State Parks Foundation (SSPF) and proceeds were shared with other parks within the Sierra District. Funds generated from memberships, photo workshops, and donations will now go directly into the Bodie account. All funds generated through sales will still go to the SSPF with the possible exception of selected sales items. This will not hinder our status within the SSPF for other necessary interpretive needs or projects.

I guess this brings us to the BIG question ... of ... how will these funds be utilized. Again, going back to the Friends of Bodie Brochure, there were three goals identified:

1. Stabilization of structures
2. Protection of artifacts
3. Construction of a visitor center

We are looking at several options. One would be to leave the money where it is and go on a fund raising crusade and build a visitor center as stated in our brochure. Other possibilities could include:

1. Build a room within a room in the brick portion of the Boone Store for artifact storage.
2. Provide funds to hire staff to accession artifacts so they can be stored.
3. Hire an interpreter to help with the ever increasing demand for interpretive programs.
4. Stabilize structures. This past summer state Environmental License Plate (ELP) funds were provided for projects of this nature and the future looks good for more beginning next fiscal year.
5. Purchase of the private property on Bodie Bluff east of the park.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? We welcome your ideas. Both on how to use the funds and how to raise additional funds for protection of our non-renewable resource.

RESURRECTION OF THE BODIE RAILROAD by Brad Sturdivant

In 1995 the Bodie Railway & Lumber Company Association was formed to look into the possibility of rebuilding the 'railway to enable tourists to enjoy a unique experience in their visit to Bodie and its surrounding historical areas.'

A limited feasibility study has been prepared by Centennial Rail, LTD., a Colorado Corporation. The study states that the project is possible and that the association should proceed. It would require purchase of some of the property east of the park to include the old railroad station and grade. The station would be utilized as a museum/visitor center that would help pay for the construction of the line from Bodie Bluff to HWY 167.

What do you think? Is this something the Friends of Bodie should be involved with? What affect will this have on the ghost town atmosphere?

I believe Bodie has a future and I want to be a part of it! Enroll me as a Friend of Bodie in the category checked.

Name _____

Bridgeport, CA 93517

Address _____

Memberships

City _____ **State** _____

\$20 Copper

\$35 Silver

\$50 Gold

\$100 W.S. Bodey

Zip _____

\$250 Life

Renewal

Donation, without membership.

Please send information on how I can volunteer my time.

Bodie State Historic Park

P.O. Box 515

Bridgeport, CA 93517

