

THE BODIE TIMES

PROTECTING BODIE'S FUTURE BY PRESERVING ITS PAST

THE NEWS OF BODIE, MONO LAKE & GROVER HOT SPRINGS

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Last of the Old Time Miners

By Dave James

Bodie Foundation Trustee

Bobby (Robert T.) Bell was born in Bodie to Lester L. and Louise Bell on March 9, 1914, about a year after the mighty Standard Consolidated Mining Company went out of business. Bobby lived most of his life in and around Bodie. The Bell house where he was raised still stands, a lucky survivor of the devastating 1932 fire that wiped out most of the town.

Bobby was born into a mining family, where his father and grandfather were

respected miners, millmen and assayers. Bobby's grandfather, Lester E. Bell, first came to Bodie in 1879, when the town and its mines were booming. By the time Bobby was born, Bodie's boom days were in the distant past. After the turn of the century, the town was much quieter than a few decades hence. Still, for those willing to work long and hard—with little reward—there was a living to be squeaked out.

He attended the Bodie schoolhouse through 8th grade. Bobby then was sent to live with an aunt in Inglewood, California

where he attended High School, but never graduated. Part way through his senior year, he returned to Bodie to help his father work in some mining leases. Bobby first went down into the mines as a teenager, working in the Standard, Noonday and Bulwer (pronounced Bulver) mines. They went after anything the mining companies left behind.

Bobby described working a lease with his father: "We worked a ledge in the Bulwer Tunnel 2,000 feet in—behind the Standard shaft. The ledge (vein) was about four feet wide and had a stringer



Bobby Bell was approximately 5 years old when this photo was taken. about four inches wide between it and the hanging wall (layer of rock above). It was above the big Bulwer Station (an area inside the mine where ore carts were

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In loving memory of our dear Alice Marie Dolan

September 10, 1913 – June 14, 2015



Close friends Alice and Terri Geissinger.

By Terri Geissinger

Bodie Foundation Historian

Alice lived her 101 years as a feisty, energetic, inquisitive and intelligent woman. Raised in Bridgeport, Bodie and Aurora, she grew up surrounded by the people and places that now fill our history books. Graduating high school, she went on to obtain her Bachelor's Degree at Stanford and

returned to teach school in Bodie 1932-1934. Choosing to continue her education, she obtained her Master's Degree in Education and taught school in Elk Grove, Weaverville and spent a few years teaching for the Armed Forces in Germany. Later, she promoted to the Dean of Girls and Guidance Counselor at Tamalpais High School from where

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Charley Spiller retires from State Parks



photo by Chris Spiller

Charley started with State Parks as a seasonal Maintenance Park Aide at Bodie in 1993. After a few years of working winters in Bodie and summers for the U.S. Forest Service, he became a Park Maintenance Worker 1. He then joined other employees on a building stabilization team devoted to Bodie for three years.

In December 2000 he took a full-time permanent position at Sunset State Beach in the Santa Cruz District. Six months later, he promoted to Maintenance Mechanic at Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

In late 2004, Park Maintenance Supervisor Chuck Fell offered Charley a transfer back to Bodie as the Maintenance Mechanic. Charley said it was a difficult choice, as both parks are spectacular places to live, but Bodie won out.

Asked about the special challenges of working maintenance in Bodie, "Remoteness, weather, and arresting

decay," he replied.

"It's a long day's drive to get building materials or repair parts, or to get a signature for what Sacramento deems a Paperwork Emergency," said Charley "It takes most of a work day just to haul the trash to the dump, and that needs to happen two or three times a week during the busy season."

Weather can make those long trips even longer, and considerably more dangerous. Getting vehicles (even snowcats) stuck or having mechanical breakdowns are all too common. Preventing water pipes from freezing requires constant vigilance, and thawing them out is rarely easy.

Bodie's policy of "arrested decay" can be difficult to implement, he said. "The older the materials get, the harder it is to retain the character with replacement lumber," he said. "The new wood will age eventually, but we get impatient for things to 'color up'."

As for retirement plans, Charley replied, "I'm enjoying more opportunities to play my mandolin with friends and I'm working on getting caught up around the house and garden. Bodie has not yet seen the last of me either, as I am now an official State Parks Volunteer."

Bodie Foundation News Briefs

2017 Bodie Calendar contest

The 2017 Bodie Calendar Contest web page is now available to begin uploading photos. Please go to www.BodieFoundation.org and click on '2017 Calendar contest.' Everyone must register in order to submit photos, even if you have previously registered. Please review the rules on our website, as they have changed slightly. Winners will be notified next spring after the contest closes January 31, 2016.

New Walking Brochure debuts

The Bodie State Historic Park walking brochure has been updated, including a new, simplified route and a lot of updated information on many of the numbered "stops" on the route. Be sure to pick one up either at the front kiosk or in the museum.

Interpretive panels up at Bodie

The next time you're visiting Bodie, be sure to check out several new permanent information panels near the parking lot. They are attractive signs that explain information on Bodie, its boom years, the mining operations and some of the equipment.

Similar panels will be in place soon at the 'Old Marina' parking area at Mono Lake on various topics related to the lake. The Old Marina area is accessed from Highway 395 at the southwest corner of the lake. There are boardwalks wandering through the area along with tufa formations at this location.

Cemetery Mapping Project

The Bodie Foundation, California State Parks and Monarch, Inc. have recently entered into a partnership

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Comments, stories and photographs are welcome.

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New editor of *The Bodie Times*

By Dave James
Bodie Foundation Trustee

I began as Editor of *The Bodie Times* with the Fall 2009 edition, which is shortly after I was elected to the Bodie Foundation Board of Trustees. Effective at the end of this year, I am resigning from both the Board and as editor to be dedicated to full-time retirement. I want to warmly thank the Bodie Foundation for the opportunity to serve in these roles. The experiences have enriched my life and it was truly my pleasure to serve.

I am very pleased to announce that Chris Spiller has been hired by the Bodie Foundation to be the new editor for both *The Bodie Times* and the annual Bodie calendar. It is my pleasure to introduce Chris to you.

BT: Chris, you have recently retired from State Parks. Tell us about your career and how long you have spent in Bodie.

Chris: I started at Bodie in early 1997 after working three years at the U.S. Forest Service at Mono Lake and Mammoth Lakes. I worked four seasons at Bodie until December 2000 when my husband took a promotion to another state park. I continued working as a senior park aide at Monterey State Historic Park until I promoted to State Park Guide at Monterey. I presented tours of the old adobes and other museums in the park. We eventually ended up at Big Basin Redwoods State Park. I presented campfire, junior ranger and pre-school programs. I feel I grew as an interpreter, learning new skills and helping with special events. We returned to Bodie in 2004.



Chris Spiller, new editor of *The Bodie Times*.

BT: You have a background in journalism also. What area(s)?

Chris: I have a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, with a specialization in photojournalism from San Diego State University. I worked as a reporter, section editor and photographer at several small papers after graduation, including *Sierra Daily News* in the early 1980s in Bishop, California. That was my introduction to the beautiful Eastern Sierra. In 1986, I was hired as a photojournalist at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Assignments included just about everything you can think of: news, events, political figures and sporting events—from high school to professional sports.

BT: I know you love Bodie—as we all do. What is it about Bodie that speaks to you?

Chris: There are so many things: the beauty of the buildings with fall sunlight on them, winter storms, glorious sunsets, and wildlife roaming the park. The main thing that speaks to me is the people of the past. While a journalist, I enjoyed writing articles about historic lives and events. When I came to Bodie, that love of history took off. I wanted to know more about the people who lived here, what their daily lives were like and how their surroundings shaped them. There's more to Bodie than the stories of gunfights and bad men, although there are certainly wild stories to tell there. We have to remember that Bodie was a community of men, women and children and they all depended upon one another, especially in times of trouble and extreme weather. There is a wonderful remark by Grant Smith, who lived in Bodie as a young man: "A friend in Bodie is a friend for life."

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua receives Mindful Birding Award

By Dave Marquart
State Park Interpreter 1

California State Parks and the Mono Lake Committee are the recipients of a 2015 Mindful Birding Award for their efforts to promote ethical birding guidelines and bird

conservation through their Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua event that is held each June.

The organizers of the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua are long-time proponents of ethical birdwatching behavior. They have refined and simplified the event's code of ethics

over the years to provide clear guidance on how birders can achieve safe and gratifying birdwatching experiences while maintaining the ability of birds to behave naturally. The event distributes its code of ethics to field trip leaders and attendees, and

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Postcard from Grover Hot Springs State Park



Firefighters relax on the Visitor Center deck at Grover Hot Springs State Park.

By Carolyn Vaughn
Bodie Foundation staff

I can see summer metamorphosing into fall – another season complete. My view of the willows and meadow grasses turning golden in the softening reflective light and a lone one-eyed Douglas squirrel busy demolishing freshly fallen green pinecones makes me think of nesting, hot apple pie and crisp, cool days.

There is nothing somber about the remaining few weeks of summer and the quiet that descends on the park as visitors return home. I think of John Muir saying,

“I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”

“How imperishable are all the impressions that ever vibrate one’s life!” as John Muir states so eloquently. “I think of imperishable memories too. Firefighters (heroes, in my eyes) working tirelessly on the Washington fire that consumed just less than 18,000 acres of our scenic forest; a devastation to this small mountain community. The shift in winds graciously

spared Grover Hot Springs State Park, but other areas along the highway 89/4 corridor were not so lucky.

I think of all the opportunities to reacquaint myself with visitors who have been returning for 20, 30, 40 years plus, making Grover Hot Springs an annual pilgrimage. I think of Andrew, who is 13 years old now, and how we met.

An unusually cold day brought Andrew into the visitor center alone, shivering; arms wrapped around his body and inadequately dressed. I asked him if he was cold and he replied with a quick nod. I sensed there was something special about him and my “mothering instinct” kicked in. I offered up a magical hot chocolate. Feeling restored, off he goes out into the wilds with a big “thank you!” Not much time passed when Andrew returned along with his older sister in tow. I listened as he quietly explained to her

how he obtained the hot chocolate, sans money. All the time his sister wanders the visitor center, observantly taking mental notes. She stops in front of the donation jar, reads the message and pulls out some coins from her pocket and drops them in without saying a word.

Meanwhile, Andrew approaches the counter and sets a couple of stones down. I see a beautiful smile and a gift offering. This is important to him, so I graciously accept these and a hug, too. I’m thinking he’s an angel.

And so are the firefighters who camped in the day use area and came for coffee every morning after their long night shift to fill me in with their progress and inspiration.

I continue to watch that tenacious little one-eyed Douglas Squirrel, not giving up because of only one eye. These are just a few of my imperishable memories. As the saying goes...miss you, wish you were here!

BIRDING from page 3

publishes its ethics online for a wide distribution.

The event offers a variety of birdwatching field trips that connect participants to nature through the splendor of birds. By strengthening participants’ connections to nature, and by providing guidance on ethical birding and nature

conservation, the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua is serving as a model for other birding festivals.

Mindful Birding is a charitable project of the Morrissey Family Foundation that presents ethical birding guidelines from around the world, and offers awards to birding festivals that demonstrate improved or superior ethics.



Birders flocked to the 14th annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua June 19-21, 2015.



A few of the sights and sounds of Friends of Bodie Day 2015.

Good bye God, we're going to Bodie!!

Friends of Bodie Day a giant success

By Terri Geissing
Bodie Foundation Historian

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to all of those who attended our 28th annual Friends of Bodie Day making this year one of the best ever!

Bodie came alive as 2,300 visitors filled the streets and many of them in period costume. Throughout the

day, interpretive programs entertained and educated the crowds. Live music, living history, tours, and good food kept everyone happy and busy. A favorite of the day was the Dynamite Mule Team, which arrived in town pulling heavily laden wagons. The beautiful beasts of burden stopped in front of the museum, where the wranglers demonstrated

how mule teams were used back in the day. They unhitched the wagons and transformed the team into pack strings loaded with boxes of dynamite. They meandered through town showing just how steady and sturdy these animals are and then back to the museum to re-hitch to the wagons and drove off into the sunset. We want to send out a

special thanks to Rick and Lorrie Edney and crew for all the effort spent toward our big day. The member evening program was a Ghost Walk through town. Members were elated as they were escorted through some of their favorite buildings where talented staff and volunteers shared legendary stories of the souls of Bodie.

BELL from page 1

once loaded). The company had left it because it supported the station above. The stringer was real high-grade, about \$200 or \$300 (of gold and silver in) a ton (of rock). The rest of the ledge was just \$10 rock (\$10 of gold per ton of rock). We dumped that. Cain (J. S. Cain, who owned the Standard mill and mining rights by then) was charging us \$6 a ton to mill, so with Cain's percentage and our labor figured in, my Dad decided it (the low-grade ore) wasn't worth monkeying with.

We didn't use powder. The ledge was so soft we could break it out with a picky poke bar. I was about 16 then. The Bulwer Tunnel level (in the Standard Mine) had caved into the shaft a long time before we started working in there. Most of the high-grade ore in that ledge – about 90% of it – went down the shaft (when it caved). There were some timbers there that held some of it back. That was where we worked. We only got about \$2,000. We would have gotten \$20,000 if we could have gotten it all...that was the last time anybody worked in the Standard Mine."

Bobby learned early how to prospect, mine and operate the stamp mill. In fact, it was he and his father who last operated the Standard Mill in 1935.

In 1930, Bobby witnessed two events that took place in Bodie. First, a movie company came to town to shoot a movie – Hell's Heroes. It was a big production and all of the townspeople were used as "extras". According to Bobby, a great deal of the footage shot in Bodie was accidentally exposed to light before it was developed, ruining it.

That same year, federal agents swept into Bodie to arrest anyone selling liquor, diligently enforcing Prohibition laws. Bobby watched as several townsfolk were brought before (what Bobby referred to as) a "kangaroo court" to pay their fines. According to Bobby, "They (federal agents) wasn't gone out of town two days, they (bars) was all back in business. Sure, what the hell?" He also lamented one time, "That's a mining town for ya! If they haven't got booze and women, everybody will leave."

On top of his mining related skills, he had a machine shop and also operated several pieces of large road equipment while working with the county in the 1950's, maintaining some of the dirt roads in the area. Bobby had also picked up sporadic work for various mining companies that came to Bodie after WWII, but none of those companies could make a go of it and eventually folded up operations.

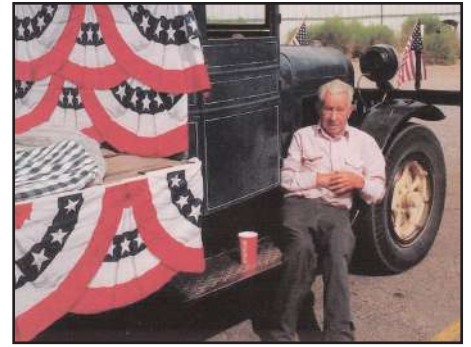
During this time, Bobby eventually married another 'Bodieite', Elaine Currie. They never had children. Elaine passed away in 1978. By now, Bobby was splitting his time between Bodie in the milder weather months and Hawthorne, Nevada the rest

of the time. He and Elaine eventually moved to Luning, Nevada where Bobby spent his last years.

In 1955, Bobby and partner Ed Wiley dug some test holes on the south end of the mining district. Bell said, "We just picked a spot where there were some ledges. We did some panning and got some colors. Thought we'd go down and see what was there..."

They used the rear end from an old Buick and other car parts as a drilling rig. (This drilling rig lies near the icehouse in Bodie.) According to Bobby, "We got the shaft down about 90 feet. Never did find anything (of value), just sulfide rock and some quartz stringers, but didn't find much else. There must be a ledge down there, somewhere. You never know – it might be down there – might not." Bobby never considered this a mine as he said, "If you don't make any money, it's a prospect."

When State Parks took over Bodie in 1962, Bobby went to work for them. He worked in the town he grew up in until 1976. After that, he would return to Bodie periodically and visit with those who wanted to hear tales from 'The Last of the Old Time Miners'. Bobby passed away on January 9, 2003 and is interred in the Bell family plot in the Bodie Cemetery. Less than 10 'Bodieites' remain who are eligible to be buried there. Godspeed Bobby Bell. May your pick always stay sharp and your powder dry.



Bobby poses with Bodie's Dodge Graham truck during a 4th of July parade in Bridgeport.

*Editor's note: Background information came from one of the following sources, to which I am indebted: Book - "The Mines are Looking Well..." by Michael H. Piatt
Oral History interviews with Bobby Bell in September 2000 and 2001 by Tom Clayton
www.BodieHistory.com by Michael H. Piatt
Book - "Bodie 1859 - 1962" by Terri Lynn Geissinger*

NEWS BRIEFS from page 2

to perform full aerial mapping of all burial areas at Bodie, including the formal cemeteries. The Bodie Foundation Board of Trustees has approved funds for this project. The mapped coordinates will be used to produce maps for park management purposes and provide the foundation for developing a new map and brochure about the cemeteries and burials at Bodie. State Parks will provide oversight for the project and receive ownership of the data products and intellectual property rights.

This project will allow accurate and detailed mapping of the cemeteries and all burials areas discovered and documented over the past few years with the use of dogs from the Institute for Canine Forensics. It will provide the general public, Bodie Foundation and Park employees with reliable information and retain historic information that is rapidly disappearing. Such information will provide higher quality information for park talks and tours.



New materials were used where original fencing was missing. Old photos were used in determining details of original enclosures, which were duplicated.

Speaking of Bodie cemeteries, other vital work continues with the

resurrection of several wooden fences around many plots. The original fencing at many of the grave sites was simply too badly decayed to reuse. New lumber, crafted specifically to what the original looked like, has been used. While many visitors—especially photographers—don't like the “fresh” lumber around graves, it won't take very long at all for this new lumber to “color up.”

Pika study receives funds from Bodie Foundation

The Bodie Foundation Board of Trustees has recently approved funding of continued pika studies in and around Bodie. Current pika research at Bodie is led by Dr. Lyle Nichols from Santa Monica College, in collaboration with Dr. Mary Peacock and graduate student Kelly Klingler, from the University of Nevada, Reno. *(Editor's note: see the Spring 2015 issue of The Bodie Times for a more in-depth article on the pikas of Bodie.)*

The pika is on the “front line” of climate change due to the relatively small microclimate it needs to survive. Understanding what affects temperatures have this little creature gives us a better understanding of more global climate change issues.

The funds provided are to understand the range of local temperatures that Bodie's population of pikas experience. Small temperature loggers will be purchased and placed underneath the rocky surface in occupied and unoccupied ore dumps. They will be monitored and may make it possible to understand if temperature is related to pika occupancy.

Bodie Christmas Ornament

Get them while they last! Bodie Christmas ornaments are now available for purchase either from the museum store (while it remains open this fall) or the Bodie

Foundation online store at: www.BodieFoundation.org/store (click on Gift Items). They are \$9.95 each.

**DOLAN from page 1**

she retired. She traveled around the world and enjoyed telling stories of her escapades.

Both her parents, Cordelia Hays and James Dolan, were Bodie and Bridgeport pioneer families. Her family legacy is nothing short of fascinating. Her Grandfather and Uncle built most of Sonora Pass and Highway 182 where her Uncle Henry Hays operated the toll station outside of Bridgeport. Her father was raised in Bodie with several siblings and grew into a solid, compassionate, hardworking man who was elected Mono County Sheriff. He was shot and killed near Mono Lake in 1915. Her mother—strong, educated and elegant—taught school in Aurora and Bridgeport and became the first woman in California to be a Superintendent of Schools.

Alice was a historian and enjoyed sharing her knowledge and experiences of her long, full life. She adored her home town of Bridgeport and Bodie. We are grateful for the time she spent shining her light on the past that we can only imagine. She is deeply missed and her memory will forever be ours.



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