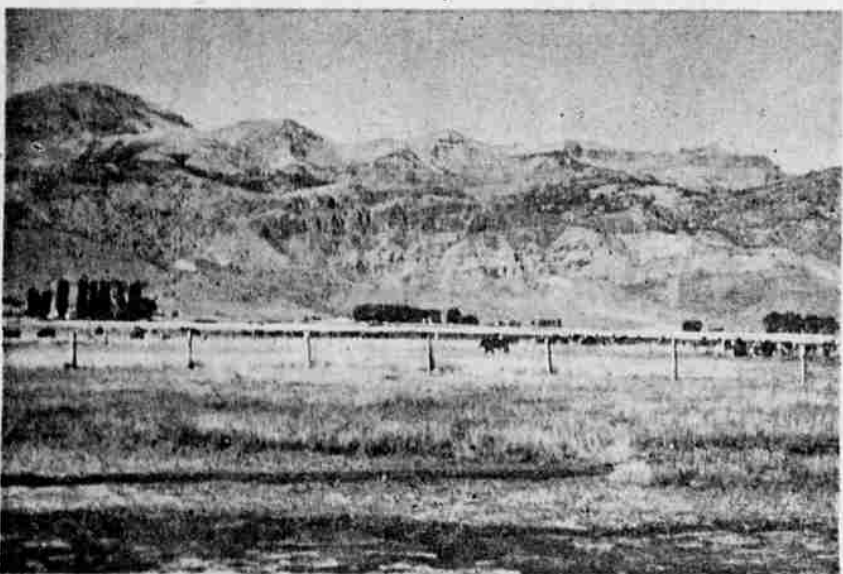


Surprise Valley One Of Modoc Area's Most Interesting, Contrasting Spots



THE EARLIEST commercial building constructed in Surprise Valley still stands. It was built in 1865.



FINE RANCHES dot the west side of Surprise Valley.



ARTESIAN WELLS are a common sight in Surprise Valley. The underground flow of water provides for ranching and some crop growing.



THIS EARLY day flour mill built in Surprise Valley shows the marks of age. It was built in 1875.

By J. O. McKINNEY

Surprise Valley in northeastern Modoc County is as aptly named as a crazy quilt—and holds nearly as many contrasting features. Where else will one find ice caves in the same vicinity as boiling springs? Sand dunes roll in desert winds within sight of geysers.

The eastern part of this valley, an oval less than 60 miles long, and from six to 10 miles wide, is an alkali flat. Shadscale, a shrub that grows only where little else can, is the biggest vegetation there. Saltgrass also grows where the alkali-impregnated soil will support it. A few crops have been grown, but for the most part, that side of the valley is worthless. It looks it!

But the western side is mostly covered with lush fields. Crops flourish, and prosperity radiates. Water for irrigation is so plentiful that an artesian well may be developed on nearly every ranch. One rancher reports eight free-flowing fountains where irrigation is needed. There is also sub-irrigation spots where permanent pastures grow with no care.

WATER TRAPPED

Warner Mountains that extend along the entire western side of the valley are responsible for the difference in moisture. The Warners account for most of the precipitation in Modoc County. Trout streams flow down into the western part of the valley; while subterranean veins are readily tapped for the many flowing wells found there.

Lower hills on the eastern rim of the valley are arid. The center of the valley is a series of lake beds, mostly dry, but during wet years, become a chain of shallow lakes, fed by streams from the west. There is no outlet for this water, save evaporation.

Of interest to visitors during dry periods are the many mirages that flow about the dry lake beds as air currents shift and change. One can easily see lakes of water that retreat with the winds, or when approached. Dust devils, columns of dust that reach into the sky as a result of myriads of small cyclones, dance and shift over the baked soils. All

these things add to the variety and unnatural quality of the valley.

Perhaps the most outstanding features of the region are its many hot springs. Temperatures range from warm, to more than boiling point. Water from one spring comes from the ground heated to 220 degrees Fahrenheit.

These springs exercise an influence on valley temperatures. There are more frost-free days in this valley than in other parts of the county. The area had been settled for several years before the ranches were forced to store hay for winter feed.

In direct contrast to this mildness is that there are more violent upheavals of nature there than elsewhere in the county. Earthquakes have visited this valley of contrasts more than once. Cloudbursts have scattered ruins in various parts of the farmlands. Weather changes can be sudden and violent.

Less than a decade ago, a section of soil surrounding a clump of hot springs exploded. Columns of water and mud were tossed in the air with a roar that brought hysteria to many residents. Soil was blown as far as 4½ miles away.

Total permanent results were that two lakes now occupy the spot where once there were many springs.

The Bare Ranch in the extreme southern end of Surprise Valley was the first permanent residence there. It still is run under the name of the original owner. Now owned by Christiansen Brothers, and united with their holding across Warner Mountains, it is perhaps the biggest single cattle ranch in California.

VAUGHN SHRINE

Attracted to Surprise Valley by its unique charm, a baseball star of two decades ago, Arky Vaughn, came there to retire. An unexplained tragedy brought about his death from drowning in one of the lakes that supplies water for the valley's favored west side. He is buried at Eagleville, one of the four small towns in the valley. Other players coming there to hunt often visit his grave, a shrine to one of the game's greatest third basemen of all time.

Adding a pleasant touch to the bleak east side of the valley, there is now being erected a fine health and pleasure resort.

A 17-unit modern motel is completed. A huge natatorium housed inside an auditorium will allow healthful bathing during all types of weather. The pool is 50 by 90 feet, with a children's partition fenced off from the deeper water. The mineral spring water requires cooling before use. Its radium content is said to be highly medicinal. Tubs and shower will be available beside the plunge. It is scheduled to be open to the public during the spring of 1961. Its location is six miles east of Cedarville, the valley metropolis.

Beside the above named town, Eagleville is 17 miles south along a well paved road that runs the entire length of the valley. Lake City is 10 miles north of Cedarville; while Fort Bidwell is about 15 miles farther north at the north end of the valley. All the towns hold relics of pioneer days. An old flour mill at Lake City still stands, despite being built during the 1860s. It has been abandoned for many years but several sacks of flour are still left there—50-pounders that bring back nostalgic memories of the long ago.

Fort Bidwell is the site of an Indian reservation. Once an Indian school was stationed there.

HENRY KOBER
But the most interesting part of Fort Bidwell history is the story of Henry Kober. A native of Germany, he has been in Fort Bid-



ONE OF Surprise Valley's most interesting persons is Henry Kober, who has been a merchant in Ft. Bidwell since 1889.

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Top Ten Records

1. SAVE THE LAST DANCE FOR ME, Drifters
2. I WANT TO BE WANTED, Brenda Lee
3. GEORGIA ON MY MIND, Ray Charles
4. YOU TALK TOO MUCH, Joe Jones
5. LET'S THINK ABOUT LIVING, Bob Luman
6. CHAIN GANG, Sam Cooke
7. DON'T BE CRUEL, Bill Black's Combo
8. MY HEART HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN, Connie Francis
9. DEVIL OR ANGEL, Bobby Vee
10. POETRY IN MOTION, Johnny Tillotson

THE COVER

Melissa Walker, 5, finds it much easier to fondle and handle a make-believe paper turkey than the real thing as she contemplates the joy of the pending holiday.

Melissa is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen R. Walker, 608 North 6th St., Klamath Falls.

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