



Antelope Horn

Newsletter of the Kern-Antelope Historical Society, Inc.
Member of the Conference of California Historical Societies
PO Box 1255 Rosamond, CA 93560
January, 2020

Meetings:

Regular Meetings:

- 2nd Thursday of the month
(except July & August)
- 5:30 pm - at the Wanda Kirk Library, 3611 Rosamond Blvd., Rosamond, CA.

Board Meetings:

- 4th Thursday of the month as needed. All are welcome.
- 4 pm - location to be announced

Looking Ahead:

January: to be determined - watch for the special email!

January Meeting - Come join us **Thursday, January 9th, at 5:30 pm at the Library.** But you will have to “stay tuned” to find out who our speaker will be. As soon as it is confirmed, I will send out an email with **details!** (Notice that the second Thursday rolls around quickly this month - next week, in fact - since this month started Wednesday.) You can also watch our webpage at www.kahs1959.org to get the latest information.

Welcome to 2020!

Here we are, entering the '20s - well, not the Roaring Twenties, but it might be interesting to take a **quick** look back a hundred years ago and think about what was going on in that famous, or infamous, era.

The Twenties was a period of economic prosperity. Because of rapid industrial and economic growth, many new things became available to large numbers of Americans - like automobiles, telephones, movies, radio,



and electrical appliances - things that made their lives easier or entertained. Jazz and dancing became prominent, maybe as a reaction to the mood during WWI, in the previous decade.

In the following article, excerpted from the Prologue of *Antelope Valley News and Views during part of The Great Depression 1925-1935*, Grace Graham Pickus describes life in the AV during the Depression. It was the Great Flood of the Mississippi and its tributaries, near the end of the Twenties, which would lead to the Graham family making the move to the Antelope Valley. Keep in mind this was published in 2000. This book is one of the KAHS books available for sale.

Antelope Valley News and Views during part of The Great Depression 1925-1935

By Grace Graham Pickus (Copyright – 2000)

Prologue

This is the much-abbreviated summary of how the Great Mississippi Flood of 1926-27 affected the nation and my own family.

In the absorbing book *Rising Tide – the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America*, John M. Barry sweeps the reader into his story of destruction, suffering, power, nobility and behind the scenes maneuvering which surrounded that awful disaster.

Mr. Barry writes that in the latter part of August 1926 “heavy and persistent rain began to fall.” I shall insert along in this short review some of my own memories. Barry records that those first rains were over the northern plains states and moved eastward into Iowa and Missouri, then into Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio.” At that time I was a twelve year old girl living on a farm in upstate Illinois about eleven miles from the Illinois River, a tributary of the Mississippi.

Those early rains started the damage, which cost us our farm. Even though it was normally the dry season, August, September, October (corn shucking time), harvest time, the hard and persistent rains made it impossible to get into



Please notice: if you are receiving a hardcopy (black and white copy) of this newsletter and would like to enjoy it in color, it is available at our website: www.kahs1959.org.



“The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, U.S. Route 51 between Mounds, Illinois, and Cairo, Illinois. (NOAA photo library)”

This photo is an example of the conditions in Illinois in 1927, which caused crop failures and led to Grace Graham Pickus’s family moving to California.

The article below continues Grace’s story about why her parents chose to leave their farm and eventually move to the Antelope Valley. The flooding came near the end of the Roaring Twenties and was followed by the Great Depression of the next decade.

the field to harvest especially the crop of red clover seed which my father had planted, expecting to use the cash from the crop to pay the mortgage on our 140 acre farm.

Barry records: “On October 1, water poured over the banks of dozens of streams and flooded towns from Carroll, Iowa to Peoria, Illinois, 350 miles apart.” About a week later another storm caused flooding to reach from Terre Haute, Indiana to Jacksonville, Illinois, which was about 60 miles from our county seat of Lewistown, Illinois. Barry stated that on “New Year’s Day 1927 the Mississippi River reached flood stage at Cairo, Illinois, the earliest for any year on record.”

Two “asides” here: one for young desert dwellers, the other about what was new in the news at the time. First a good sized stream or river was important to early settlers of this country as water was a common and cheap means of transportation, a way of getting to places where roads had not yet been built. Consequently villages, towns and cities often started and grew on the banks of the waterways, and spread out on the river bottomland near the marketing centers created. Because they were subject to flooding in high water, levees were built along the riverbanks. A good strong levee was good insurance.

Second, I was surprised to learn that at the beginning of the new year (1927) “the first regular long-distance telephone call from New York to London was made by the president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (Walter Gifford).” Also the first demonstration of television with both picture and sound was made with Herbert Hoover taking part; it traveled from New York to Washington D.C. Front-page news was Charlie Chaplin’s divorce, and in Columbus, Mississippi the Ku Klux Klan was using its regular tactics to keep order as they saw it. But the biggest stories on every front page reported the deaths and damage caused by the continuing storms.

At Beardstown, (my [Grace’s] part of the state), on the Illinois River, flood stage had been reached on Sept. 5, 1926 and it continued “in flood for 273 of the next 307 days.” The Mississippi itself remained in flood state, in awful, unpredictable, destructive flood for “153 consecutive days.” Because of the rising, rampaging rivers all through the Mississippi drainage basin, in the lower basin, down river “twenty-seven thousand square miles were under as much as 30 feet of water, an area roughly equal to Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont combined.”

The statistics John Barry gives help tell the scope of the flood: “Unofficial but authoritative estimates exceeded \$500,000,000; with indirect losses the number approached \$1,000,000,000, large enough in 1927 to affect the national economy.”

Already in early April there were 35,000 people washed out of their homes on the river’s tributaries and it continued to rain. There had been severe blizzards from Wyoming to Texas; high winds were causing the flooded waterways to pound the levees and “tornadoes in the lower Mississippi valley killed forty-five people.” On April 13th the tornadoes



Please notice: if you are receiving a hardcopy (black and white copy) of this newsletter and would like to enjoy it in color, it is available at our website: www.kahs1959.org.

along with heavy rains "ripped through twelve states." But it was on April 15, 1927, Good Friday, that the hardest, heaviest and most extensive rain fell – 15 inches in 18 hours in New Orleans, and upriver in the area of Cairo, 10 and 12 inches in that one storm.

On our farm, Tater Crick (Potato Creek) was running bank full and when we three older Graham children wanted to walk down through our woods to see it, mother warned us repeatedly to stay back a good distance from the edge because the swift stream could have undercut the banks which might well give way and plunge us to our death. Potato Creek emptied into Spoon River (made famous by Edgar Lee Masters)*, which in turn flowed in to the Illinois. At Grafton several miles above St. Louis the Illinois joins the Mississippi.

In those days there was no safety net, no government agencies to help the victims of natural disasters. The author of *Rising Tide* states: "The government itself would do nothing to help the flood victims recover. The Treasury that year collected a record surplus of \$635 million, yet in a disaster that affected almost 1 percent of the nation's population, the government would not even create a loan-guarantee program." The nation's response to the victims of that great flood was considerably more positive. The Red Cross fed and provided shelter for hundreds of thousands; many of the Red Cross workers served weeks, even months without pay. Even though many Negroes and sharecroppers were neglected and abused, a great number of them did heroic work in life saving and essential levee repair and construction. Many plantation owners and financial institutions in the threatened and flooded areas made their people and their funds available to rescue and try to save what could be saved.

Service clubs and fraternal organizations (American Legion, Elks, Masons, the Parent Teachers National Congress) and movie theater chains all over the country hosted benefits and collected contributions. A manufacturer of toothbrushes donated 4,500, and Singer Sewing Machine Co. provided its products at 50 percent off with shipping prepaid. Several thousand school children in Poland sent money at the instigation of the Polish-American Society in the United States. Will Rogers a popular and beloved commentator/comic gave numerous benefits, as did a number of well-known Hollywood stars. Radio stations made appeals for listeners to give to the overburdened Red Cross and provided free time to Hoover when he spoke of the urgent needs. "Ultimately," according to John Barry, "tens of millions of Americans donated money for relief."

So now with the red clover seed crop ruined in the mud, our father and mother were faced with making a hard decision, one that would change our whole way of life, a change that I have been thankful for from 1927 to 1997. We moved to California

* - *This refers to the Spoon River Anthology" by Edgar Lee Masters - a collection of short free verse poems that collectively narrates the epitaphs of the residents of Spoon River, a fictional small town named after the real Spoon River that ran near Masters' home town of Lewistown, Illinois.*

New Members for 2019-2020 - So happy to have you join us. Welcome to KAHS:

Ken & Doreen Zakar

Website: www.kahs1959.org

Email: info@kahs1959.org

Please visit the website for more information about Antelope Valley history. Copies of recent newsletters are available, as well as other information. The first online KAHS book is now available. *Glimpse of the Prehistory of Antelope Valley*, by Stuart Glennan, is described as "Archaeological Investigations at the Sweetser site".






The Kern Antelope Historical Society greatly appreciates its business members.
We hope you will support them and say thanks when you see them.

Desert Breeze Enterprises

Don and Chavonne Sladek
 Owners/Hosts
 tel. (661) 256-4409
 Rosamond, CA 93560
 dbe2016@icloud.com
 Contact us for help with business travel
www.airbnb.com/rooms/5571552

Fosters FREEZE

Hensley/Taylor
 Rosamond Fosters Freeze
 2080 Rosamond Blvd.
 P.O. Box 624
 Rosamond, CA 93560
 (661) 256-4436

Patty's Cafe

OPEN
 7 Days A Week
 6AM - 8PM
 661-206-4395


661-342-0213 Kern UDA #35 Server #415
SLADE COURT SERVICES
 Evictions
 Small Claims
 Process Serving
 Michele Slade

Rosamond News
 Newspaper • Direct Mail • Web • Email • YouTube
 27,000 people
 93560

 Since 1986
 We go to everybody here
 2696 Sierra Hwy • P.O. 848 • 93560

How to Pay your KAHS Membership Dues with Zelle®

1. **Get started** by enrolling your email or U.S. mobile number through **your mobile banking app** or with the **Zelle app**.
2. Enter the **KAHS email address** - info@kahs1959.org.
3. **Enter the amount** to send and be sure to designate the **reason for the payment** such as "Sally Smith Individual Membership". KAHS will get a notification of your payment and the reason.



If you are not a member of the historical society, we hope you will consider joining. You can make a check, payable to Kern Antelope Historical Society and mail it, along with this coupon to the address below. You may also now pay using Zelle!

KERN ANTELOPE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mail to: Kern Antelope Historical Society
 PO Box 125
 Rosamond, CA 93560

	<u>MEMBERSHIP TYPE</u>	
Date	<u>Type</u>	<u>Dues</u>
Name _____	Student & Military	\$5
Address _____	Individual	\$15
City, ST, Zip _____	Couple	\$20
Phone Number _____	Family	\$30
E-mail _____	Business	\$35

Club Year - June 1st through May 31st

For Sale by KAHS

Books - \$10 (*\$8) Each:

Here Roamed the Antelope
Bears - Borax and Gold
Along the Rails from Lancaster to Mojave
The Antelopes Left and the Settle-ers Came
In Love with Life in Lancaster (Hard Times
1927-1932)
Antelope Valley Pioneers
Castles in the Valley - Shea's Castle
A Page in the History of Antelope Valley: the Arthur
Pickus Story: His Home for Seventy Five Years
Mojave, A Rich History of Rails, Mining and Flight
Gold-Fever - 40 Years Digging Antelope Valley
History
Antelope Valley News and Views During Part of the
Great Depression 1925-1935

Video DVD - \$15: Antelope Valley Yesteryears

Maps - \$4 (*\$3): Historic Settlers Circle Map

Online Book: *Glimpse of the Prehistory of Antelope Valley*

**Members' Discount Prices in Parentheses*

2019-2020 Executive Board

Officers:

President: Gretchen Winfrey winfrey@qnet.com
Vice President: Delores Julian ddjulirosa@yahoo.com
Secretary: Janet Winters poppiesrme@gmail.com
Treasurer: Terry Landsiedel visitrosamond@gmail.com

Directors At-Large:

Joe Pauley
Chavonne Sladek
Frances Thompson

WEBSITE: www.kahs1959.org **EMAIL:** info@kahs1959.org

General Meetings:

5:30 pm-Second Thursday of the Month, September through June
At Wanda Kirk County Library
3611 Rosamond Blvd. Rosamond, CA 93560
(Exceptions: June, September & December -
Location to be announced)

Memberships:

\$5 - Student & Military; \$15 - Individual; \$20 - Husband & Wife;
\$30 - Family; \$35 - Businesses

The Kern Antelope Historical Society was established in 1959 for the purpose of learning and preserving the history of California, especially the Antelope Valley, which includes parts of Los Angeles and Kern counties. Speakers are invited to talk at our monthly meetings about aspects of our various cultures. Subjects range from Indians of the past to the Space Age. The Society offers field trips for members to significant locations in and around the valley throughout the year. Come join us to learn more about the wonders of this area we live in and also meet some new people.

KERN ANTELOPE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1255
ROSAMOND, CA 93560



Since 1959