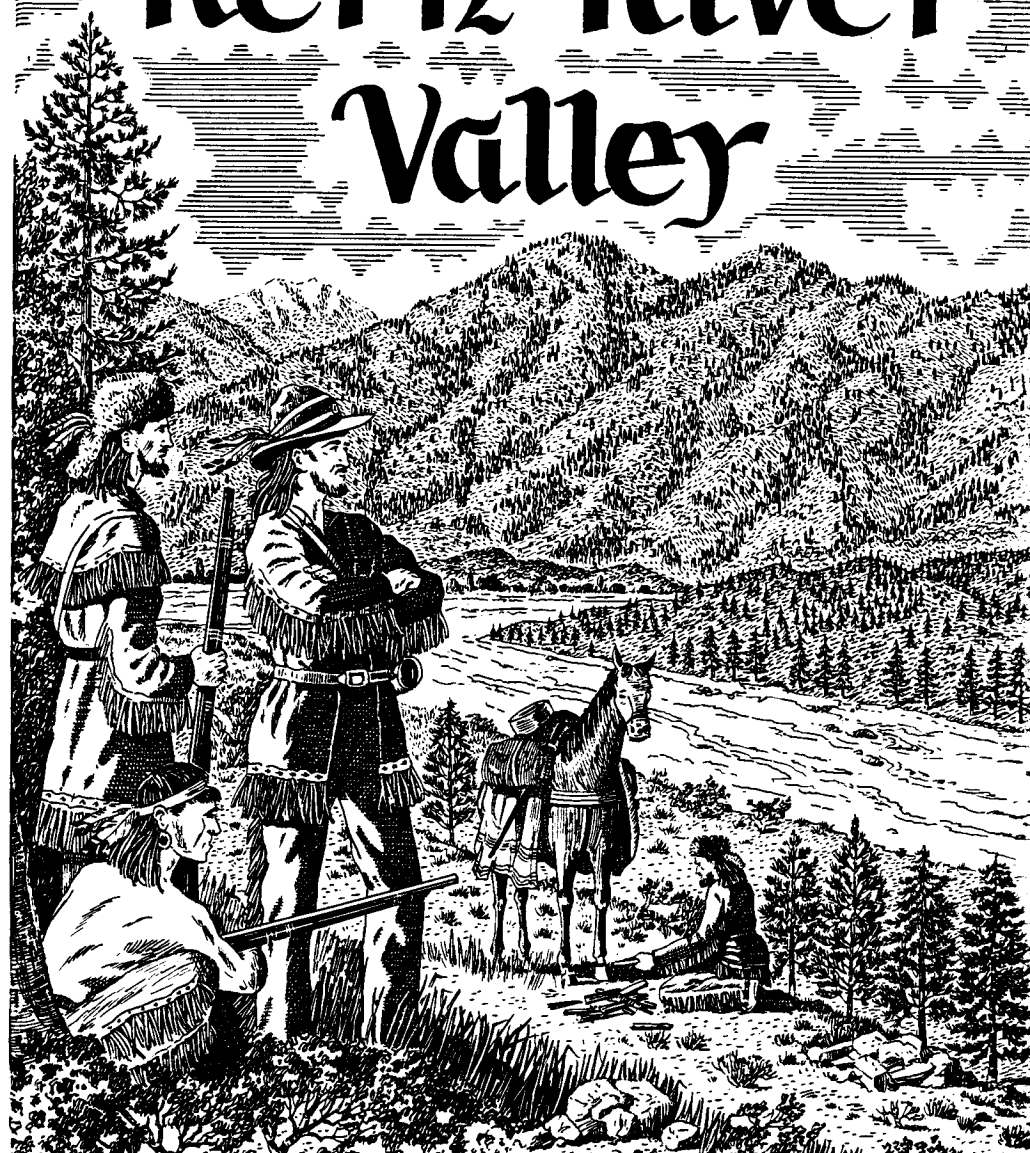
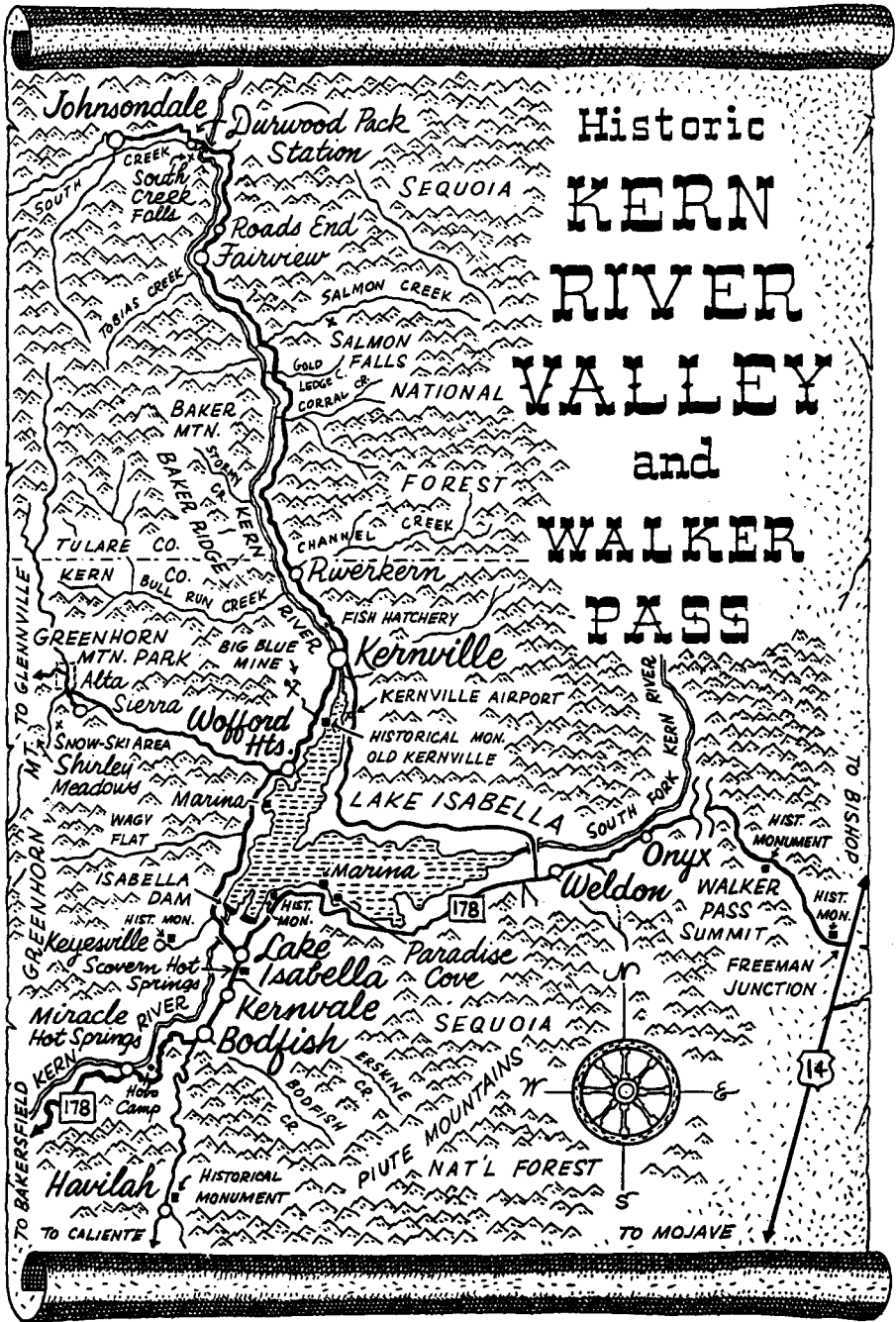


first edition
Romantic Heritage of 
**Kern River
Valley**



... from Trail Blazer, Gold Seeker and
Pioneer Settler to modern Developers ...



FRONT COVER SKETCH -

Joseph Reddeford Walker, famous trail blazer, explorer and trapper, was the first Anglo-Saxon to enter what is now Kern River Valley. This was in 1834, while seeking a new route over the Sierra Nevada. Continuing his rugged journey eastward from this valley, he discovered Walker Pass, now named after him.

These three historic plaques are mounted on the stone monument erected at the summit of Walker Pass on Highway 178, eastern entrance into the Kern River Valley. They read, left to right—



"WALKER PASS has been designated a Registered National Historical Landmark. Under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935, this site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States."

"CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARK. WALKER PASS. Discovered by Joseph R. Walker, American Trail Blazer who left the San Joaquin Valley through this pass in 1834. This area was traveled by topographer Edward M. Kern after whom the Kern River was named, while accompanying the Fremont Expedition of 1845. After 1860 it became a mining freight route to Owens Valley. DEDICATED April 25, 1937."

"DEDICATED in Memory of JOSEPH REDDEFORD WALKER who discovered this pass in 1834, by Peter Lebeck Chapter and Platrix Chapter E.C.V., Oct. 19, 1963."

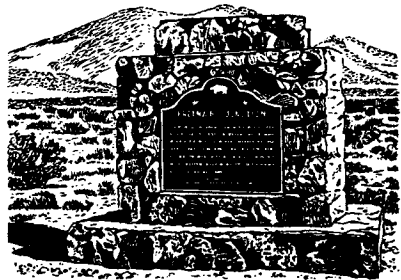
WHEN Joseph Reddeford Walker, renowned guide, explorer and trapper, first gazed upon the turbulent river that swirled through the precipitous mountain-rimmed canyon which is now Kern River Valley, little did he vision the epoch-making drama of conquest which would take place here during the next century and a quarter.

The year was 1834. Heading a trapping expedition formed by Captain B. L. Bonneville, Walker had traversed the Sierra the previous year over the old Mono Trail to the north. Now he was



"CAMPSITE OF EDWARD M. KERN Near this spot at the confluence of the north and south forks of the Kern River, the Theodore Tilton Party of Captain John C. Fremont's third expedition to the West camped for several weeks during December, 1845, and January, 1846. The River was named by Fremont in honor of Edward M. Kern, topographer for the expedition. Kern County was established in 1866 and derived its name from that of the river."

—taken from Historical Monument on a knoll at the east side of Lake Isabella overlooking the present dam.



"FREEMAN JUNCTION. In 1834 Explorer Joseph R. Walker passed the junction of Indian trails after discovering nearby Walker Pass. Death Valley 49er parties here diverged west and south after their escape from Death Valley enroute to the California gold fields. Later this became the junction point where the bandit Tiburcio Vasquez preyed on stages and freighters traveling between the Kern River mines and Los Angeles and the mines of Bodie and the Panamints."

— from Historical Monument facing on Highway 178 just west of Highway 14 and Freeman Junction.

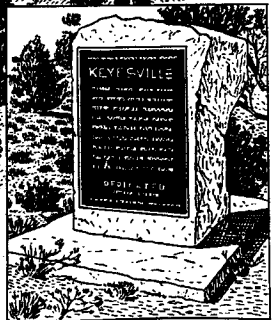


Oldest retail establishment in this entire area is the picturesque general country store at Onyx, erected over a century ago. Its traditional white plank exterior typifies the buildings of the last century. A portion of the original store and tavern of William Scodie, pioneer settler, can still be seen.

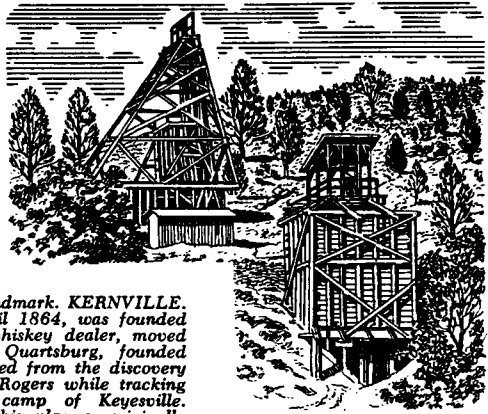
on the return trip to the East. Seeking a new and easier route over the rugged mountains, he was the first Anglo-Saxon to cross the present Kern River Valley. Forging eastward, he discovered what he sought—the northernmost snow-free pass through the Sierra Nevada, now named Walker Pass in his honor.

This pathfinder, however, was not the first white man to view the Kern River. A few months before the Declaration of Independence was signed, in 1776, Francisco Hermenegildo Garces, a missionary-priest, had crossed the river a few miles east of present Bakersfield, christening it Rio de San Felipe. Thirty years later Fr. Jose Zalvidea had named it La Porcuincola. Neither Garces nor Zalvidea is known to have penetrated into the present Kern River Valley. For years, early Mexican settlers in the lowlands had referred to the river as Rio Bravo, or “Fierce River.”

Joseph Walker made his appearance again in 1843 as a guide to the Chiles Party which had traveled overland from Independence, Missouri. This was the significant beginning of wagon train migration to California. However, at the base of Walker Pass, the emigrants were forced to abandon their wagons and continue on foot with pack animals through the pass, into the present Kern River Valley and on to the California coast.



Above—Just a handful of weathered cabins is all that remains of the mining settlement of Keyesville. At right—historical monument which reads “California Historical Landmark. KEYESVILLE. From 1853 until 1870 Keyesville was a center of both placer and quartz gold mining. On this knoll just below the townsite may still be seen the outline of an earth-bank fort to meet a possible Indian attack.. DEDICATED April 25, 1937.”



Left - "California Historical Landmark. KERNVILLE. Kernville, called Whiskey Flat until 1864, was founded in 1860 when Adam Hamilton, whiskey dealer, moved shop here from more temperate Quartsburg, founded earlier that year. Both camps resulted from the discovery of the Big Blue Ledge by Lovely Rogers while tracking a stray mule from the earlier camp of Keyesville. DEDICATED April 18, 1937." This plaque, originally in Old Kernville, was moved to present location in front of cemetery across the highway from the fabulous hillside Big Blue mine, sketched at right as it appears today.

Two years later, in 1845-1846, Walker led the Theodore Talbot party of Captain John C. Fremont's Third Western Expedition through Walker Pass and into the Kern River Valley. For some twenty-two days during December, 1845 and into January, 1846, the party camped at the confluence of the north and south forks of the river. An historic monument on a knoll above the present Isabella dam marks the spot of the encampment. An eminent member of the expedition was Edward M. Kern, topographer and artist. Captain Fremont named the river in his honor. Twenty years later Kern County was established, adopting the name of the river.

From the James Marshall discovery of gold at Coloma in January, 1848, the tide of intrepid argonauts to California began. Among these were the ill-fated Death Valley 49er parties. Some of the straggling, exhausted members of one of the contingents finally reached present Freeman Junction, turned westward over Walker Pass and continued through the Kern River Valley to the gold fields up north.

It was inevitable that the horde of prospectors would fan out from the Mother Lode country and head south, finally exploring the gulches of the upper reaches of the Kern River. Excitement rose to fever pitch in 1853 when Richard M. Keyes, a miner from

Because Old Kernville retained for many years the picturesque atmosphere of a Western mining town, it was used frequently as the setting of early-day motion pictures. Movie street, on the northwest side of town, is sketched from an oldtime photograph which appeared in the Sierra Rainbow.

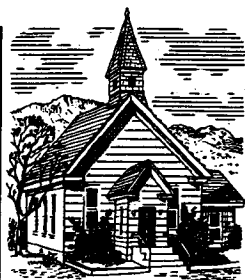




Left - Replica of first Kern County courthouse and jail used at Havilah, 1867-1874. On display at Pioneer Village in Bakersfield. Center - Historical plaque at the site of Havilah with inscription reading "California Historical Landmark. HAVILAH. Gold deposits at Havilah were discovered in 1864. After Kern County was organized in 1866, Havilah was the county seat until 1872, when the government was moved to Bakersfield. Havilah was an active mining center for more than twenty years. There are still some active mines in the vicinity. DEDICATED, June 12, 1938." Right - Crumbling stone walls at Havilah are mute reminders of an era long past.

the White River region, uncovered the quartz vein about three and one-half miles southwest of present Isabella dam. First known as Hogeys, the mining camp of Keyesville sprang to life, becoming the first town of any consequence in what is now Kern County. By 1854-1855 the boom was on! It is estimated that some 6000 miners were scouring Greenhorn, Bradshaw, Black, Frenchman's and other gulches on the southeast slope of Greenhorn Mountain. Keyesville was a typical roisterous mining town, with its usual complement of saloons, trading posts, cabins, shanties and tents. Most notable of the claims were the Keyes and Mammoth mines. The first quartz mill was brought in by Abia T. Lightner.

By 1858, mining had begun to taper off in the Keyesville area. Then an unforeseen bonanza mushroomed into being! It revolved about a Cherokee Indian, Lovely Rogers, originally from the Mother Lode region. While chasing his errant mule in a side canyon on the slope of Split Mountain eight miles north of Keyesville, Lovely Rogers finally picked up a rock to hurl at the animal. He paused. There in his fist was a rock studded with gold! This



Left - Still standing is the long unused flour mill of A. Brown and Co. at Weldon. Right - The charmingly quaint lines of the Methodist church at Weldon attract passersby on Highway 178

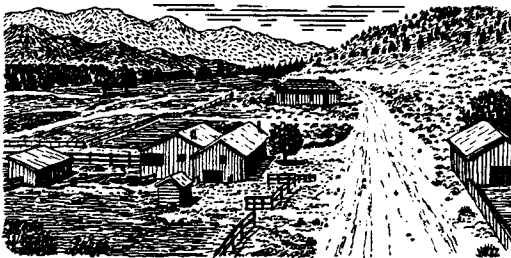


So much of the history of Bodfish revolves around its post office. At left, the original post office building in use from 1895 to 1929. In the latter year, headquarters were moved to the Bodfish store, at extreme right. In 1955, a new post office building was erected, shown in center.

was the beginning of the celebrated Big Blue mine which was to operate almost continuously until World War II. It was the year 1860. The stampede that followed was one of the most remarkable in the history of Kern River mines.

Adjacent to the mining activity, the settlement of Rogersville made its appearance, named after Lovely Rogers, but soon it was changed to Quartsburg. One Adam Hamilton, a Keyesville merchant, arrived on the scene, set up two whiskey barrels with a plank for a counter, and started dispensing drinks. His enterprise was altogether too close to the sleeping quarters of the miners, and upon being asked to leave, he set up shop on a flat a short distance away. It was obvious that his clientele would follow him. The new town was dubbed Whiskey Flat, a name that stuck even though some of the most discriminating wanted to call it Williamsburg. It was not until 1864 that the esthetic element prevailed and Whiskey Flat was changed to Kernville.

As with all pioneer mining activity in the West, the Kern River region had its full share of disappointed fortune seekers. Among these was a small group of prospectors who had headed some ten



Left - Sketch of Old Isabella adapted from one of the earliest photographs, published in the Sierra Rainbow. Below left - Scovern Hot Springs, a notable landmark for many years, and at right, Miracle Hot Springs, originally known as Hobo Hot Springs, one of Kern River's resort attractions.



Lake Isabella is one of the largest fresh water lakes in Southern California. It came into being by the construction of the dam, started in 1948 and completed in 1953, by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although created for combined flood control and irrigation purposes, it now provides incomparable recreational facilities. Thirty-eight miles of shoreline offers many sheltered coves and beaches. It is the outstanding fish producing lake in the West, with bass, blue gill, crappie, catfish and trout, and permits fishing every day in the year. It is a mecca for every type of water sports — boating, water skiing, sailing and swimming.



miles south of Keyesville. While camped near Clear Creek below Cross Mountain, they uncovered a rich quartz deposit, setting off another gold rush migration in 1864. This resulted in the founding of the mining community of Havilah, so called by Asbury Harpending who drew upon the Biblical quotation “. . . land of Havilah, where there is gold.”

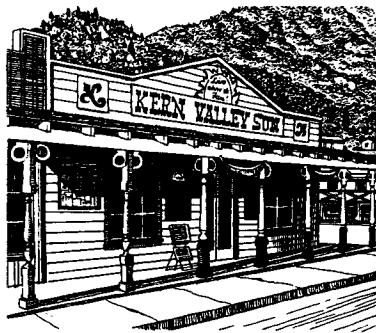
Asbury Harpending, promoter, opportunist and shrewd business man became this area's first subdivider. He laid out the town, sold property at fabulous figures and then departed in 1865, profiting with some \$800,000 which he is said to have deposited in San Francisco banks. Havilah prospered and by 1865-1866 had an estimated population of nearly 3000 persons.

In 1866, portions of Los Angeles and Tulare Counties were taken to form the new Kern County with Havilah becoming the first county seat. For almost a decade, the mountain areas held the spotlight. Because of the slowing down of mining activity, and the arrival of the railroads coupled with the marked increase in agriculture in the lowlands, Havilah lost out to Bakersfield as the county seat in 1874.

One of the acute handicaps facing the miners in the 1850's



Still standing at the edge of Kernville's shopping district is the oldest house in the Valley, erected during the last century on the old Borlando ranch.



Adapting all the color and picturesque detail of the add undeniable charm to Kernville's attractive business c



This is one of two marinas located on the north and south forks of the Lake, for convenience of boating and water skiing enthusiasts. In addition, public launching sites are accessible from highways which encircle the Lake.

was the rough, steep mountain trails which had to be negotiated by pack animal between Visalia, source of supplies, and the Kern River mines. The first tortuous wagon roads that followed taxed the daring teamsters to the utmost. However, in the late 1860's and 1870's, and during succeeding years, roads were gradually improved to accommodate the freighting wagon trains and stage coaches which connected the Kern River communities with Los Angeles and the Owens Valley lines.

Although the Kern River mines had dominated the scene for almost a quarter century, beginning in the late 1850's settlers were engaged in ranching and cattle raising, centering in Lynn's Valley northwest of Greenhorn Mountain, in the valley across the river from Keyesville and in the broad reaches of the South Fork region, including the adjacent Kelso, Scodie and Squirrel Valleys. All during the past century, as well as today, cattle ranching has been an important asset of Kern River Valley. Ideal summer range exists in the prolific meadows of the higher valleys in the Sierra.

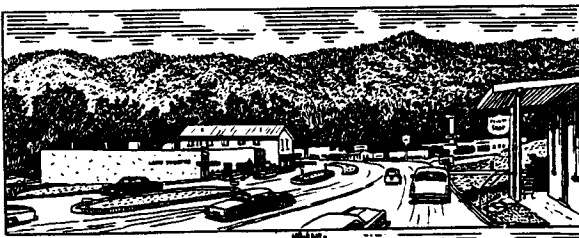
Space does not permit the description of hundreds of early day happenings, the recounting of the exploits of outstanding pioneers, nor does this brief sketch attempt to span the years from the 1880's



These early West, these buildings center.



These intriguing structures line a portion of the business district which faces on the green park in downtown Kernville.



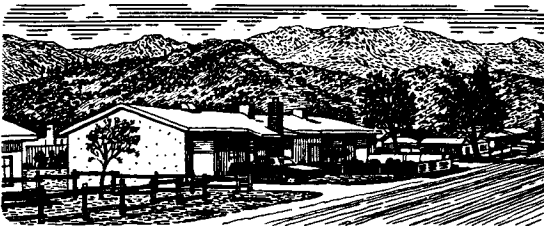
Left—Entering the business district of Wofford Heights, one of the most beautiful and desirable of the fast developing communities in Kern River Valley.

Right—Because of its location at the junction of Highway 178 and the busy thoroughfare which borders the west side of the lake, the shopping center of Lake Isabella not only serves this community but the environs beyond.



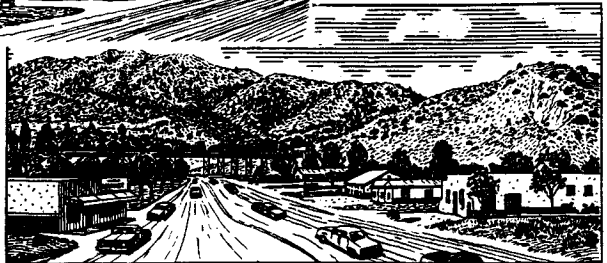
to the middle of this century. With Southern California's steady increase in population, more and more vacationists had discovered the rare advantages of this year-round mountain playground. With the advent of the automobile and paved roads, the number of visitors had accelerated each year.

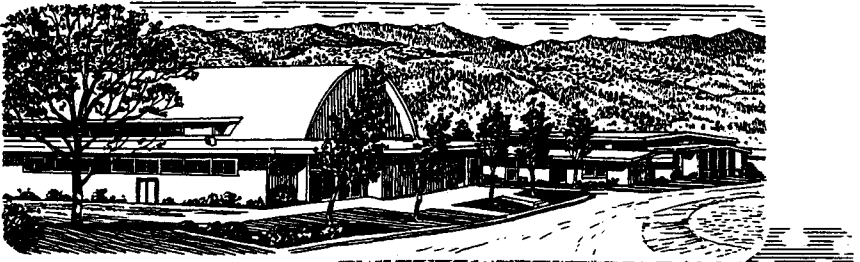
Then came the most astounding transformation in the history of the Valley — the building of the Isabella dam. Created primarily for combined flood control and irrigation purposes, it was under construction by U. S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1948 to 1953. And in its creation, Lake Isabella was formed, one of the largest fresh water lakes in Southern California with thirty-eight miles of intriguing shoreline. Boating, sailing, water skiing and fishing the year round — truly a mecca for every water sports enthusiast and ardent angler. Combined with river and stream fishing, riding and hiking trails, public camps and excellent winter sports facilities already present in Kern River Valley, the recreational advantages of



Left—Modern residential subdivisions at Kernvale, located between the communities of Lake Isabella and Bodfish, attest to the growing demand for permanent housing in the Valley.

Right—Looking south on Highway 178 toward Bodfish, a community which is likewise undergoing marked changes because of the steady influx of permanent residents and vacationists.





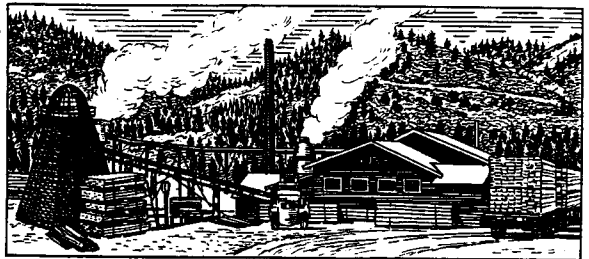
The Valley is rightfully proud of its fine educational facilities, as exemplified by the Kern Valley high school at Kernvale, shown above, and one of the elementary schools at Weldon, on the right.



Lake Isabella have pushed the tourist trade to new highs each year.

What of the future? During the past century, the Kern River Valley has made the transition from bonanzas of gold to those of recreation and historic lore. It has become famous for fine cattle ranches which utilize the lush meadows of the high Sierra for summer range. Hydro-electric plants have spun a web of transmission lines that energize metropolitan Southern California. The beautiful Kern River watershed, with its primitive back country, and the wide expanse of Lake Isabella behind a newly-constructed dam provide limitless recreational resources and retreats for metropolitan vacationers, resulting in an ever-expanding resort economy.

KERNVILLE. First called Whiskey Flat, the original town of Kernville grew up on the site of the Indian Bankalachi village of Tulonoya. Typical of a western mining camp, its main street was a mixture of boarded false-front stores, assay offices, saloons and a China town. As the mining days receded, the character of the town changed and it became a combination of the old and the new. However, the romantic atmosphere remained. Vacation-bound visitors did not come in great numbers until the advent of paved roads. With the construction of Isabella dam and the creation of



Left - Some twenty miles up canyon from Kernville is the spectacular South Creek Falls which can be viewed from the highway. Above - Mill of the Mt. Whitney Lumber Co. at Johnsondale, a short distance above the Falls.



Over sixty miles of the Kern River and many miles of lesser streams above and below Lake Isabella lure the angler. These are stocked regularly by the Kern State Hatchery above Kernville. This is the native habitat of the fighting Kern River rainbow and golden trout. River fishing is open during regular trout season only.

the lake which would inundate Old Kernville, came the tremendous task in 1952 of relocating the entire community to its present site. Modern Kernville still retains much of its early charm because so many of the old buildings were moved bodily to the new location. Largest trading center in the Valley, Kernville has every modern convenience for residents and visitors alike — fine stores, bank, motels, restaurants, sporting goods stores, library and beautiful residential sections, with a nine-hole golf course at the city's edge. A paved airstrip nearby is maintained by Kern County.

WHISKEY FLAT DAYS. The memory of Whiskey Flat is recalled annually when Kernville and its neighbors stage Whiskey Flat Days in February. Costumes of the 1860's, parades and social events mark this pioneer celebration.

LAKE ISABELLA. The original town dates from 1893 and was built on the site of the Bankalachi village of Pitnamiu. Stephen Barton named it for the Spanish queen who financed Columbus' discovery voyage. It was at the junction of roads connecting Old Kernville and Bodfish to the South Fork area. In its early period, Isabella was a mining and ranching center. After the gold rush subsided, it was supported by travelers and nearby ranchers. Then came 1952, deadline for evacuation to make way for the Isabella dam project. The entire town was moved to its present location. Lake Isabella, as it is now called, is prospering as one of the Valley's largest trading centers, straddling the junction of Highway 178 and the busy thoroughfare to Kernville. Its business center, tourist accommodations, and residential development continue to keep pace with the mounting influx of residents and visitors.

Rounding out the recreational advantages of this area is the tournament size nine-hole Kern Valley Golf Course bordering Lake Isabella at the edge of Kernville. It is open to the public and includes a clubhouse and practice putting green. The spectacular backdrop of mountains adds to the pleasure of playing the course.





Twenty minutes west of Wofford Heights, in the Greenhorn district of the Sequoia National Forest, snow sports abound. At Shirley Meadows, 7100 elevation, the ski area provides three free rope tows. Accommodations, ski and toboggan rentals are available in the region.



The Valley and higher mountain back country are a hunter's paradise. Chukar, quail, dove, pheasant, duck, deer, bear, mountain lion and other game provide excellent sport.

WOFFORD HEIGHTS. Founded by Irvan Wofford, one of the largest land owners in the Valley. It was he who was mainly responsible for attracting many motion picture companies to use this general locale, particularly in the early days. Situated along the east slope of Greenhorn Mountain, overlooking a beautiful shoreline of Lake Isabella, Wofford Heights' business district includes motels, commercial houses, theater and cafes. Some of the finest of the Valley's residential districts are located here.

BODFISH. Named for George Bodfish who came west from New England to the present site of Bodfish in 1864. He managed a wayside tavern. In the early days, settlers lived here and it was a stage stop to change horses. Principal nearby mines were the Glenn Olive in Bodfish Canyon, the Shoestring and Shamrock. The post office was established in 1895. Because of highly-traveled Highway 178, today's Bodfish is experiencing increased stop-over business on the roadside while residential growth is on the increase.

KERNALE. Fronting on Highway 178, between Lake Isabella and Bodfish, the residential subdivision known as Kernvale is one of the most rapidly developing areas in the Valley, with new businesses fronting the highway. The Kern Valley high school is located at the edge of Kernvale.

WELDON. Named after William Weldon, cattleman, who moved into the South Fork area in 1857. From his large stock ranch he supplied much of the beef consumed by Keyesville mines. Weldon

Not the least of the attractions of this inviting lake, river and mountain region is the wide variety of motel, lodge and resort accommodations available throughout the year in the Kern River Valley and vicinity. These facilities are being expanded constantly to meet the increasing number of vacationists and sportsmen.





Business Office of the Continental Telephone Company of California overlooks the park in the central section of Kernville. The office serves the entire Kern River Valley region.

was the headquarters of the A. Brown & Co., whose activities included a flour mill, ranches, stage line to Caliente and general stores in Havilah, Old Kernville and Weldon. This community was well situated for its pioneer role, at the fork of the Walker Pass road and the freight route to Los Angeles which traversed Kelso Valley to a junction with the Owens Valley freight lines either by way of Jawbone or Butterbread Canyons.

ONYX. Situated west of Walker Pass on Highway 178, it was founded in 1889. It was first established by William Scodie and carried his name for some time. Near Onyx is the historic Scodie Ranch, for years a stage stop on the Owens Valley route.

Along the river from Kernville north to Johnsondale, mill town of the Mt. Whitney Lumber Co., are public camps and resorts such as Riverkern, Fairview, Road's End, Durwood Pack Station and others, some providing pack-in outfits for trips into the Kern Plateau, the Dome area and other secluded regions of the high Sierra. Above Johnsondale, the scenic road, often blocked by winter snow, leads to the southernmost grove of sequoia gigantea.

ALTHOUGH the history of Continental Telephone Corporation dates but from 1960, Continental's California Interstate operations trace back half a century to pioneer companies which became vital segments of the system. Some had their humble beginning during the rugged formative days of booming mining camps.

Mining activity attracted two Denver men to the Bishop region in 1904. Unsuccessful in finding promising claims at Tonopah and Goldfield, Nevada, they turned their attention to the possibilities of developing hydro-electric power on Bishop Creek, in the Sierras to the west, to supply the mines.

Subsequently, in 1905, The Nevada Power, Mining & Milling Company was organized and became the first in a line of successor companies. During the year an initial telephone line was constructed paralleling the first power transmission line from Bishop Creek, via Silver Peak, to Tonopah and Goldfield. It served the power company for internal purposes.

In October 1910, Interstate Telegraph Company, predecessor to California Interstate, was originally incorporated. Control of the

new company was acquired by power company associates in 1911 and a single communications network formed. Composed of power company communication facilities within the counties of Nye and Esmeralda, Nevada, and Inyo and Mono, in California, plus a line under construction to the south within the additional California counties of Kern, San Bernardino and Riverside, Interstate commenced operations in March 1912.

Over the years service boundaries have drastically changed. By late 1912, the line following power transmission facilities to the south was completed and tie-in was achieved to the nation's telecommunications network at San Bernardino.

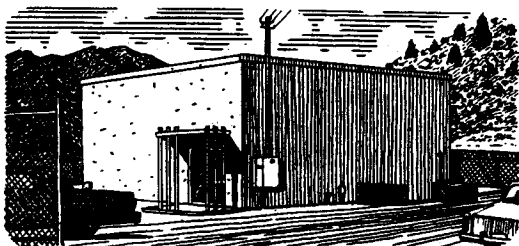
Shortly prior to this time, the first telephone in the Kern River Valley had been installed at Isabella by John Dannier, who soon extended a single strand line to connect Isabella with old Kernville, Weldon and Onyx. About 1915, the Brown family connected their widely scattered ranches with a magneto system of their own, installing a switchboard at Kernville. Next came George W. Bandy, who purchased these minimal operations in 1920 and formed the G. W. Bandy Telephone Company. In 1933, Bandy sold to Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Green, who changed the name to the Kernville Telephone Company. Orian Campbell, in 1941, became the next owner and operated the company until acquired in 1945 by Mr. and Mrs. Donovan F. Gouldin. California Interstate purchased the company from the Gouldins, assuming control in May 1958.

New central office facilities have been constructed at Kernville, Lake Isabella and Weldon. Within the exchange areas there are currently some 2,973 telephones in service, an impressive increase from the 235 of May 1958.

California Interstate was incorporated in January, 1954 and acquired the business and assets of Interstate Telegraph Company. Subsequently, in June of 1965, California Interstate became part of the Continental System. It became Continental Telephone Company of California in 1969.

Headquartered in St. Louis, Continental Telephone Corporation now represents the third largest independent (non-Bell) telephone company in the United States, with operating properties in 42 states, including Alaska, in Canada, the Bahamas and West Indies. A manufacturing arm has recently been added to the growing Continental operations.

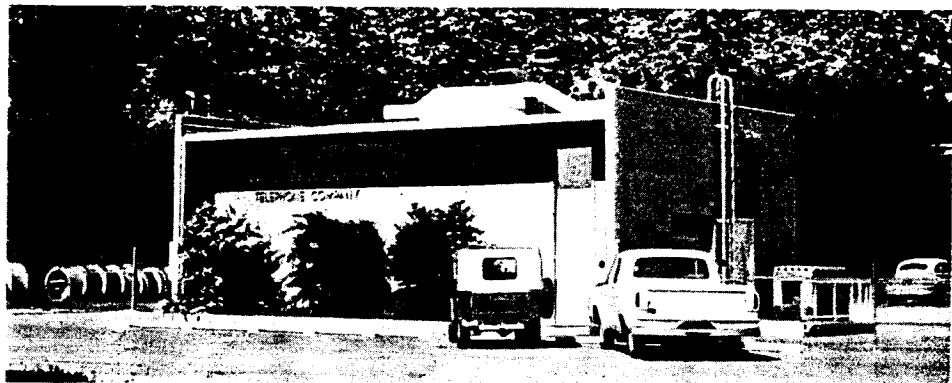
Recently completed Lake Isabella Central Office of the Continental Telephone Company of California serves as switching center for Lake Isabella and surrounding vicinity.



WITH a past rich in historical romance and tradition, it is obvious that the communities of Kern River Valley are on the threshold of an equally colorful future — one promising unprecedented advancements, yet retaining all the unspoiled charm which is prized so much.

The family of Continental Telephone Corporation is proud that it has, in certain measure, been a part of the development of this area and it looks forward to greater participation in the years to come.

This history portrays, in brief form, the transition of this area from its earliest days to the present. This company, in its efforts to cooperate with the communities it serves, hopes this booklet may be a source of enlightenment to both residents and visitors.



Continental Telephone Company of California's Kernville Central Office.



**CONTINENTAL
SYSTEM**

**CONTINENTAL
TELEPHONE
COMPANY OF
CALIFORNIA**