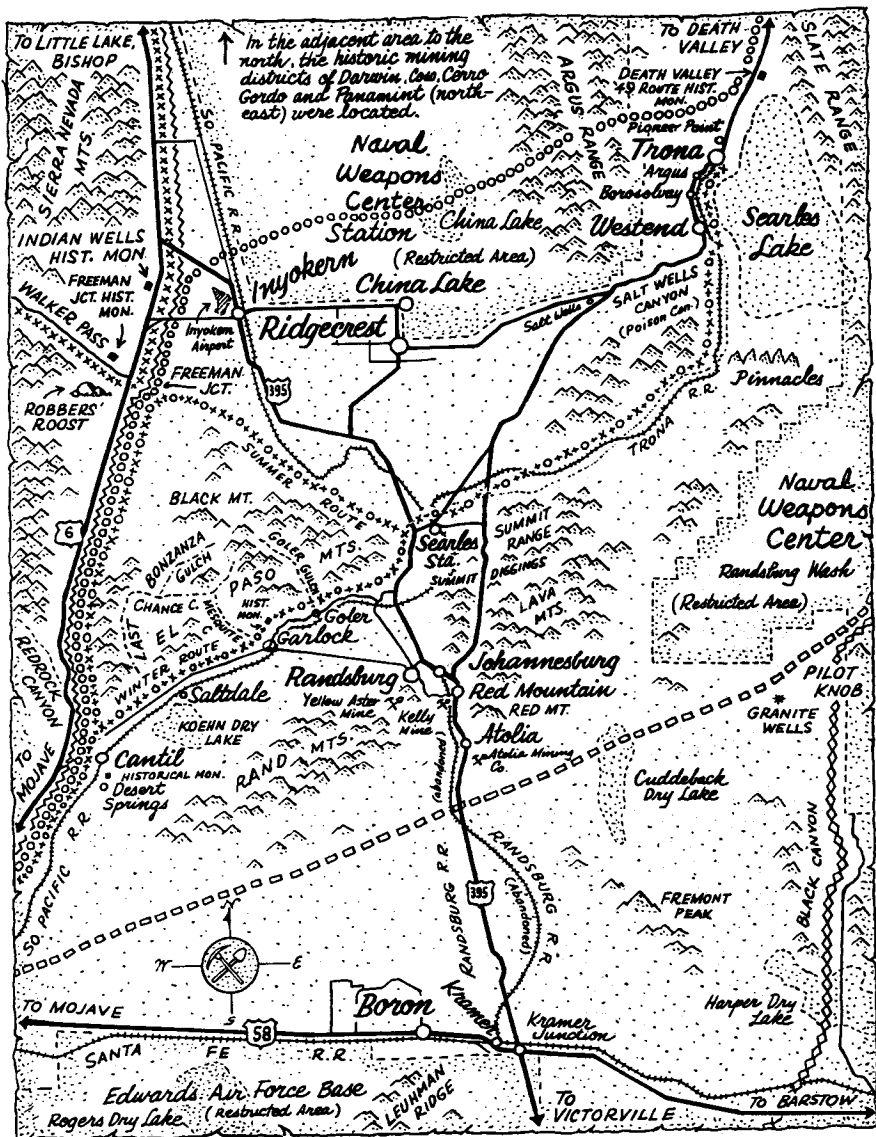


Romantic Heritage of
**Upper Mojave
Desert**



*A Saga of Pioneer Discoveries
... and Modern Achievements*

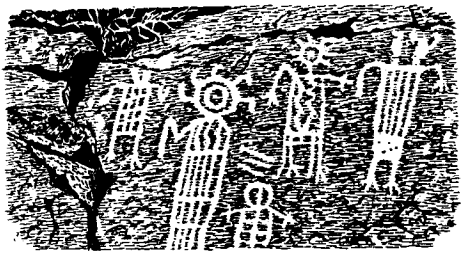


PIONEER TRAILS in the UPPER MOJAVE DESERT

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| xxxxxx | 1834 - Joseph R. Walker Trail | ~~~~~ | 1870s - Remi Nadeau - Cerro Gordo Freighting Co. |
| o o o o o | 1843 - Chiles-Walker Expedition | o o o o o | 1870s - Panamint Stage from San Bernardino |
| o o o o o | 1849 - Death Valley Party (Mississippi-Georgia Division) | o o o o o | Death Valley - Mojave Borax Road |
| o o o o o | 1849 - Death Valley Party (Jayhawker, Manly, Bennett, Arcane, Brier Division) | o x o x | Searles Lake - Mojave Borax Road |
| xxxxxx | 1860 - Dr. Darwin French | — — — — — | Present Day Highways and Roads |

In addition to these major routes, many other pioneer trails and roads traversed this desert region.

Indian artifacts, knives, arrow-heads, campsites and well-preserved petroglyphs (the latter in Petroglyph and Renegade Canyons within the northern boundaries of the Naval Weapons Center) offer mute testimony to the existence of migrating tribes extending far into the distant past.



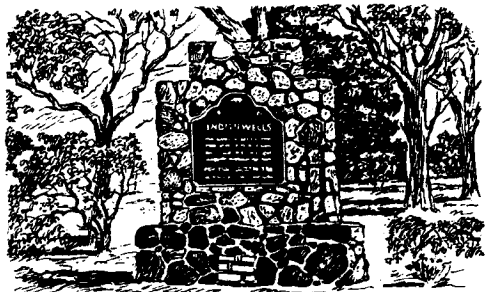
HISTORY has left an indelible mark on this vast interior region of California, embracing the northwestern part of the Mojave Desert, including the Indian Wells Valley, Searles Valley, the Rand District and Boron area. It is a land steeped in the romance and lore of a colorful past which witnessed a cavalcade of pathfinders, explorers, gold seekers, stage coaches, and freighting wagons — culminating with the entrance of railroads, industrial enterprises and now, the modern missile, rocket and space age.

Here is a land of contrasts. On the west rise the dramatic peaks of the Sierra Nevadas. To the north and northeast are the lava-banded Cosos and the buff and brown mountains of the Argus Range, with the Slate Range as its furthest corner. On the east, the little broken ranges are an extension of the Panamints while the Kramer Hills dominate the southern stretch of this vast desert.

Before the coming of the white man, native Indians of the Shoshonean family, divided into such groups as the Panamint and Coso, roamed the broad sandy valleys and mountain canyons. Farther south was the domain of the Chemhuevi, while Paiutes from the north found their way into this region.

Such was the way of life until early in 1776, when Francisco Hermenegildo Garces, a missionary-priest, trudged up the Mojave River southeast of the present Boron area. He was followed a half century later by Jedediah Smith, renowned trapper and explorer from the Midwest, who took the same route. But on the return trip from California, it is believed he crossed the Sierras to the north somewhere near Mono Lake. Thus, a new era of exploration of this part of the West came into being.

INDIAN WELLS. "Indian water hole on Joseph R. Walker Trail of 1834 where Manly-Jayhawker Party of 1849 found their first water after five days of travel from Argus Range. During 1860's was site of stage and freight station from Los Angeles to Coso and Cerro Gordo mines." — Taken from Historical Plaque on Highway 6, south of junction with Highway 395.



For more than 100 years, this vividly-colored canyon, with its cathedral-like formations, has witnessed the parade of early pioneers, stage coaches, desert freighters, and more recently, modern automobiles. Natural southwestern gateway to the Indian Wells Valley, the route of Highway 6 follows this historic path.



In 1834, the famous trail blazer and explorer, Joseph Reddelford Walker, returning from the California coast, discovered the pass through the Sierras which has been named for him. Later, he guided the Joseph B. Chiles emigrant party of 1843 south through the present Indian Wells Valley and westward over the pass he had found a decade earlier.

In the winter of 1849-50, straggling, famished argonauts — the Mississippi and Georgia contingent of the ill-fated Death Valley Party — faltered over the Argus Range and out toward the gold fields over Walker Pass. Another contingent, made up of the Jayhawker group, Manly, Bennett, Arcane and Brier parties, suffering unbearably during their arduous trek, which skirted what is now Searles Lake, crossed the Argus Range, traversed the stretch of desert through the present China Lake area, and gratefully found water at the spot where the Indian Wells monument now stands. Indian Wells Valley received its name from this historic place. From there, the contingent followed the foothills of the Sierras southward through Red Rock Canyon to its final destination.

One of the Mississippi members of the Death Valley party had found a bit of silver float in one of the mountain canyons. He fashioned it into a crude gunsight, an act from which stemmed a whole legion of prospectors hunting for the fabled "Lost Gunsight Mine." These treasure seekers fanned out over the Argus, Coso, Panamint and Inyo ranges, some individually and others in well organized expeditions, such as those of Dr. Darwin French and Dr. Stanley George.



Overlooking Walker Pass, this clump of rocks is known as Robbers' Roost, so named because the notorious bandit, Tiburcio Vasquez, used this hideout. From its vantage point, he and other bandits could sight in advance the oncoming bullion freighters and stages in the valley below.



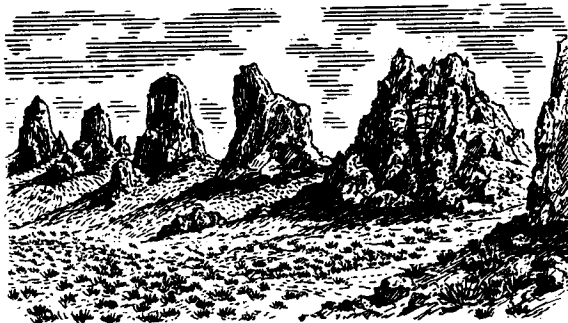
In the meantime, the influx of prospectors through the entire Mojave Desert increased in tempo. The 1850's witnessed the Kern River gold rush with towns started at Keysville, Whiskey Flat (Kernville) and Havilah. Travel came over the Walker Pass as well as Jawbone Canyon to the south, the latter route avoiding picturesque Red Rock Canyon.

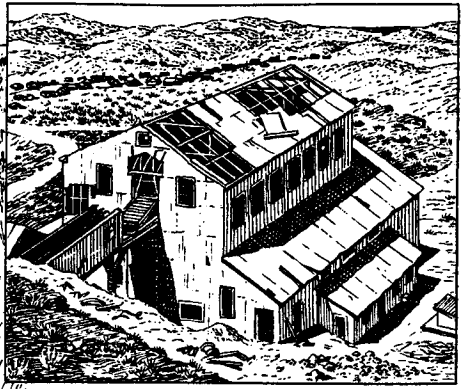
In the 1860's and 1870's, the Darwin district mines, the fabulously rich Cerro Gordo, and the silver ledges of Panamint City, the latter discovered by hiding highwaymen, brought a new surge of humanity in search of fortune.

An interesting interlude in the procession of prospectors came about when three camels of the 1861 California-Nevada border party crossed Panamint Valley, the Coso Mountains and strode down to Walker Pass. The survey party ran out of supplies and abandoned its work around the north end of Death Valley.

As large-scale mining activities emerged from individual prospecting, well defined wagon roads made their appearance, supplanting the early trails of horsemen. Stage lines with mail and express service came up Red Rock Canyon. Near present Inyokern, they either veered northward toward Darwin or continued almost due north, following the base of the Sierras to Owens Valley. Chief figure in both stage and freight service for some time was Remi Nadeau, who headed the Cerro Gordo Freighting Company. Some 25 miles east of the present Boron area, the Myerstein stage line from San Bernardino headed north through Black Canyon, passed Granite Wells and Willow Spring enroute to Panamint camp.

Left—Little did those hardy pioneers of a century ago realize that under the white crystalline surface of Searles Lake, a brine, would eventually produce great wealth—wealth that would create huge plants and thriving cities on its western shoreline at the base of the Argus Range. Right—Truly, a phenomena of nature are the Pinnacles which rise up from the desert floor south of Searles Lake. It is believed that these spires were built up by blue green algae when an ancient sea covered this area.





Left - "Glory hole" of the famous Yellow Aster gold mine which sparked the mining boom at Randsburg in the mid-1890's. Above - The mine's 100-stamp mill as it stands idle today, overlooking the town of Randsburg in the distance.

A new chapter in the history of Mojave Desert mining and transportation came into being - one which was to play a tremendous part in the economic life of the past as well as the present.

While mining in the Slate Range, John and Dennis Searles found borax crystals on the salt-encrusted surface of the huge dry lake which now bears their name. This was in 1862. Unknowingly, they had discovered the richest deposit of diversified chemicals the world has known.

Not until a decade later did actual mining operations get under way when the pioneer San Bernardino Borax Mining Company was founded.

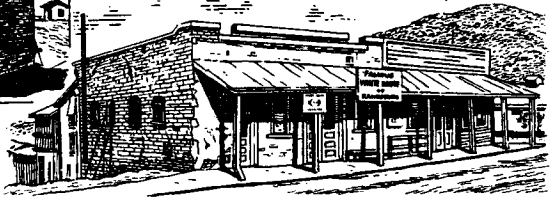
An acute problem facing the Searles was transportation. Heavy wagon ore trains were put into use and they plied back and forth to Mojave over what is generally called the Searles Lake - Mojave road. Stations were established at intervals, principal of which was Searles Station, an important supply point. The route followed the present Trona Railroad to Searles Station, where it divided, a winter course going down the canyon via the site of Garlock. In the summer, to avoid deep sand, it circled north near present Inyokern and then continued south through Red Rock Canyon.

Almost simultaneously, with the beginning of borax operations at Searles Lake, the discovery of borax deposits in Death Valley attracted attention. In 1881, Aaron Winters found cottonball borax near Furnace Creek, a deposit developed by William T. Coleman, who, in the following year, started the Harmony Borax Works, which later became a part of the Pacific Coast Borax Company. Confronted with the formidable task of hauling the borax over 165 miles of desert to Mojave, the now-famous fleet of special wagons were built. Drawn by twenty mules (in most instances eighteen mules and two horses), they made the trip over Wingate Pass, past Granite Wells, and across the desert south of the present Atolia.



Above—Built after the Randsburg fire of 1898, this picturesque building once housed Rinaldi's Meat Market; previously Wells-Fargo Agency.

Below—A landmark of yesteryear is this quaint structure still boasting the sign "White House, Oldest Bar in Rand Dist. Established 1897."



Thus, the Death Valley - Mojave borax road became another vital link in the network of routes in this desert region.

With the completion of the Southern Pacific line over the Tehachapis to Mojave in 1876, freighting time to Los Angeles was greatly expedited. This applied as well to the Mojave - Needles branch finished in 1882, which ran through the Boron area. In a trade of railroad trackage, the Santa Fe took over this line two years later.

By the end of the 1880's mining at Darwin, Coso, Cerro Gordo and Panamint had all but ceased. The Kramer gold district held the spotlight for a very brief period in 1884. The early 1890's witnessed some activity in the Goler mining district in the El Paso Range.

In succession, there followed strikes in Last Chance and Red-rock Canyons, Bonanza Gulch and Summit Dry Diggings. It was at the latter that three discouraged prospectors decided to move on and investigate the iron-stained hills of what is now the Rand Mountains. Charles Burcham, ex-cattleman and merchant. Frederick Mooers, newspaper man, and John Singleton, millwright, were rewarded with the discovery of massive gold bearing quartz. This was the beginning of the sensational Yellow Aster gold mine in 1895. They called their claims "Rand," after the noted district in Transvaal, South Africa. Dr. Rose Burcham, wife of Charles Burcham, grubstaked the trio.

News spread like wildfire, and hundreds of prospectors combed the surrounding hills. Tents and hastily improvised shacks were thrown up in the original Pioneer Camp, located above present Randsburg. As additional claims were staked out, the settlement

The Desert Museum at Randsburg, a branch of Kern County Museum since 1948, was established five years earlier by the Desert Lions Club as an archive for the fabulous Rand Mining District. It houses miners' and Indians' artifacts, early photographs, Yellow Aster mine locomotive, arrastra, and gem and mineral specimens.





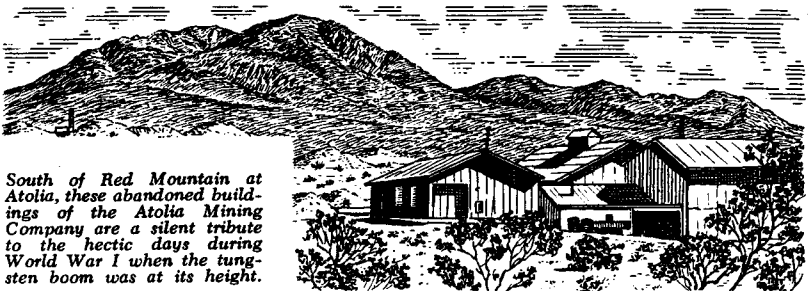
If it could speak, what a story the St. Charles Hotel would tell of the unforgettable boom days. For a half century, it has occupied its present location in the center of Johannesburg. In the sketch above, the building almost hidden behind the hotel once housed Teagle's store, one of the desert's foremost pioneer establishments. Its original facade, of course, has been changed.

spread down the hill and became Rand Camp, forerunner of Randsburg. Big Butte, Little Butte, King Solomon, Sunshine, Windy, and other mines were opened. The boom was on in earnest. By the end of 1896, the population had swelled to 1500 and was still growing. Eugene Garlock set up the first stamp mill nearby, on the site which now bears his name. This settlement mushroomed to several hundred almost overnight.

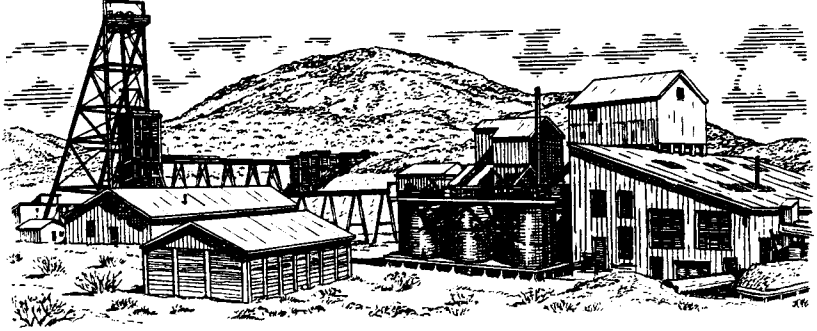
Space does not permit describing the hectic boom days, or the picturing of downtown Randsburg with its wooden sidewalks, flanked by picturesque, and sometimes ornate, facades of saloons, dance halls, stores, bank, post office, theater, churches, and the school.

It has been estimated that up to 1940, the total gold production from approximately 100 mines in the Rand District reached some \$40,000,000.

Down the hill from Randsburg, Johannesburg (or Joburg) was established in 1896. Named from the renowned mining center at Johannesburg, South Africa, its importance to the Rand District stemmed from the fact that it became the terminus of the Randsburg Railway which joined the Santa Fe at Kramer in 1898. Here, stages and freighting wagons met the train, making the community a busy supply point for the mines, and vast desert to the north. The Randsburg Railway was discontinued in 1933, and the tracks were torn up the following year.



South of Red Mountain at Atolia, these abandoned buildings of the Atolia Mining Company are a silent tribute to the hectic days during World War I when the tungsten boom was at its height.



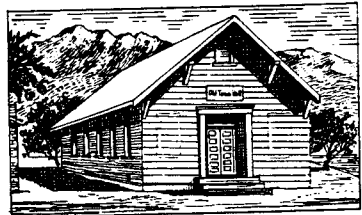
Few of today's motorists, when passing through Red Mountain on Highway 395, realize that this mine which they can see on the hillside was the famous Kelly, one of the greatest silver producers in the West. Its discovery started the big silver rush to the Rand District in 1919.

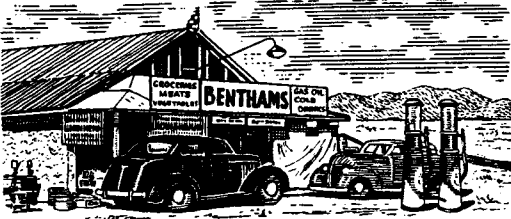
Shortly after the turn of the century, prospectors south of Red Mountain uncovered what they called "white iron," a scheelite ore from which tungsten is made. However, it was not until World War I that the tungsten boom flared up at Atolia. This settlement derived its name from a combination of Atkins and De Golia, two pioneer operators. As many as 4,000 people were engaged in tungsten mining to supply the peak wartime demands. The famous mounds of the "Spud Patch" can be seen today in the dry wash, where individual prospectors dug a few feet below the surface and found nuggets which averaged the size of potatoes.

Then came the Rand District's third great find — silver!

During searches for a red paint pigment at Red Mountain, Jack Nosser and Hamp Williams, on a return trip to Randsburg, discovered an outcropping which looked promising just off the road. Assays made in Bakersfield revealed that it was rich ruby silver. They had been grubstaked by John Kelly and Miss Edith Coons. The famous Kelly mine started operations in 1919, and according to estimates, has produced some \$27,000,000 in silver. Silver King, Santa Fe, Silver Glance, Big Four and other mines shared this silver structure, which ranks as one of California's richest and largest.

These historic buildings virtually "grew up" with their respective communities. At right, the Old Town Hall at Inyokern which was the focal point of community gatherings over a span of many years. Below, venerable Mission-type Austin Hall, a landmark in the heart of Trona's business district.





YESTERDAY and TODAY at Ridecrest — At left, store and gas station of Bill Bentham as it appeared in 1939. This was the sole business establishment when the community had but fifteen homes. In striking contrast is this same corner today, shown in sketch at right which pictures the busy intersection of Ridecrest and China Lake Boulevards. The new business block replaced the original store in 1950.

The settlements of Osdick, Hampton and Inn City sprang up close to the "Big Kelly" mine. At Osdick, named after Pete Osdick, pioneer mining operator, a post office was established in 1922. The merged communities became known later as Red Mountain.

During the period that the Rand District occupied much of the limelight, far reaching changes were taking place in other sections of the Upper Mojave Desert.

In 1905, attention had focused again on Searles Lake with the discovery of "trona" crystals. This led to exploratory work. In 1913, the American Trona Corporation was formed to remove potash and other chemicals from the brine underlying the dry lake surface. Completion of the plant in 1916 came in time to relieve the acute shortage of potash in World War I. In 1926, the Corporation's name was changed to the American Potash and Chemical Corporation, and in 1967 the company became a subsidiary of Kerr McGee. The production facilities at Trona have been expanded again and again. From the brine of Searles Lake, potash, borax, soda ash, salt cake, lithium concentrates and other chemicals are produced for agriculture and industry.

Ever since 1913, when colemanite, a borax ore, had been uncovered in the Kramer district, while a well was being drilled for water on a homestead, the Pacific Coast Borax Company (U. S. Borax) had been interested in this area. Then, in 1925, drillers working under the supervision of Clarence Rasor brought up borate of soda or "tincal." Then further drilling brought up a new crystal which broke into needle-like splinters, a new form of borate. This was called "rasorite" in honor of Rasor; also "kernite" after the county in which it was found. Development of the new mine was started. Over the years, the plant has been expanded continuously and with the extensive mining operations from the huge open pit, the U. S. Borax & Chemical Corporation has taken its place as the foremost producer of borax and derivatives.





On the shores of Searles Lake, another extensive development was taking place. In 1920, F. M. "Borax" Smith, long a dominant figure in the borax world, organized the West End Chemical Company, and engaged in the operation of the large chemical plant which had been installed by the West End Consolidated Mining Company. Located in the community of Westend, which it created, the company has been in continuous operation, processing the brines from the lake to produce soda ash, borax, sodium sulfate, lime and other products used widely in the chemical industry. As a result of research, plant operations have been enlarged many times over the years. In 1956, it was merged with the Stauffer Chemical Company and is now a division of that firm.

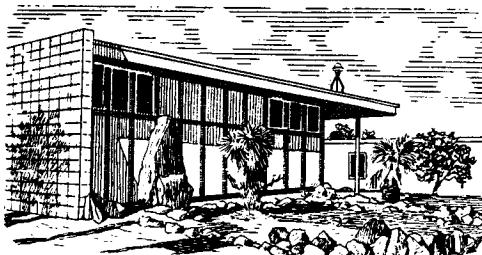
By the time the 1930's rolled around, the low price of gold, silver and tungsten had reduced mining of those metals to a sporadic point. However, borax production continued unabated. Then ribbons of paved roads spread across the desert, creating an era of gas stations and services to accommodate motoring tourists.

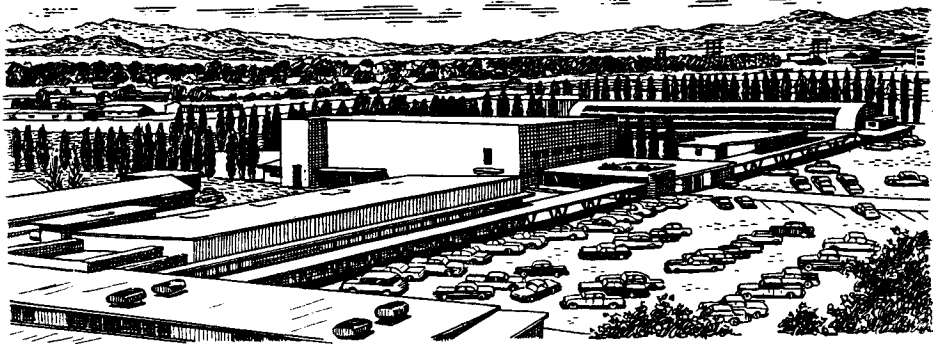
Then came the electrifying change in the 1940's. The missile, rocket and space age had arrived! The vast open spaces of this desert were ideally suited for military bases engaged in scientific research, exploration and testing.

The Naval Weapons Center, formerly the Naval Ordnance Test Station, was established by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox in an order dated November 8, 1943. Until April 1945, its primary function was to provide facilities and services to the California Institute of Technology (CIT), which was doing wartime rocket development work for the Office of Scientific Research and Development.

With the assistance of CIT personnel, the Bureau of Ordnance began construction of the Center in 1943. Although the immediate objective was to support the wartime rocket work of CIT, the long-

Typifying the progress and modern community development at Ridgecrest, is the well equipped and completely staffed \$1,250,000 Ridgecrest and Drummond Medical Center, shown at left. On the right is the Ridgecrest branch of the Kern County public library. Exceptionally fine schools, churches, residential areas, shopping centers and recreational facilities make up this well-rounded community.



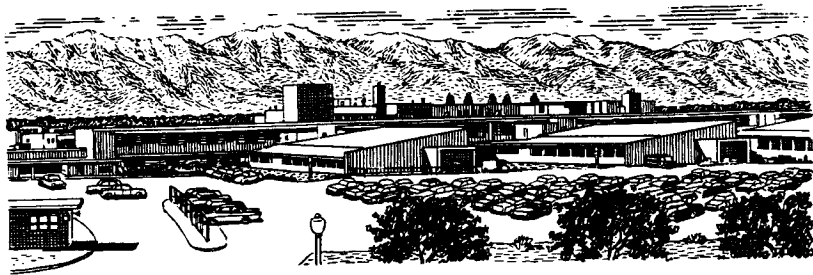


Aerial view of modern shopping center at China Lake. This community was named after the dry lake of the same name located five miles northeast of the present townsite. The lake became known as China Lake as the result of a small borax mining operation conducted in the 1870's with Chinese labor.

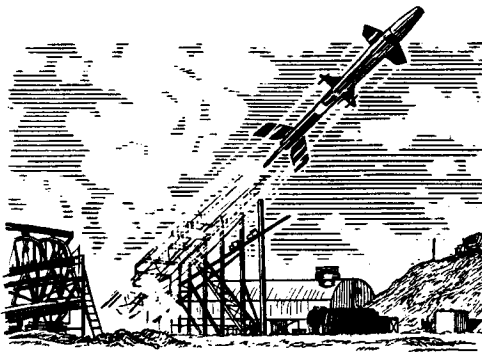
range objective was to equip the Center as a permanent center for rocket ordnance research, development, and testing. Along with the building of the technical facilities, it was necessary to build housing and community facilities for Center personnel. In 1945, the Bureau of Ordnance took over the area as a permanent research and development center for rockets and other missiles. The main area of the Naval Weapons Center (NWC) covers 1,198 square miles in Indian Wells Valley and adjacent mountains.

Headquarters area is in the northeast corner of Kern County and includes the community of China Lake. Many major facilities and test ranges are located in Inyo and San Bernardino Counties. The test activity at Randsburg Wash, 23 miles southeast of NWC, contains another 796 square miles. In addition to these desert areas, NWC, China Lake, is headquarters for operations at NWC, Pasadena, Morris Dam, Long Beach and San Clemente Island. Although it also serves as a test station, it is primarily a center for research and development of weapons. Management control and direction of the Center was transferred from the Bureau of Ordnance to the newly established Bureau of Naval Weapons in December, 1959.

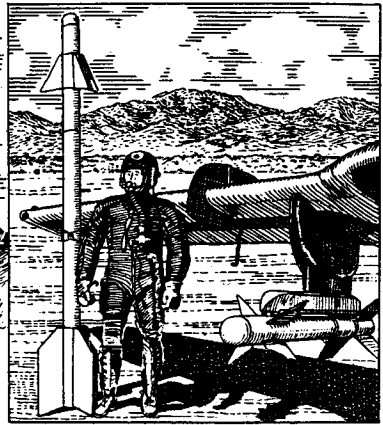
Since 1943 the Center has grown from a small cluster of Quonset huts to a full size research center with its modern laboratories



Michelson Laboratory, focal point of activity at the U. S. Naval Weapons Center, provides working space for approximately 1,600 people engaged in various technical pursuits. It has over 11 acres of floor space, all air conditioned.



Above - Experimental missile launching at U. S. Naval Weapons Center, China Lake. At right - Test pilot and Sidewinder missile.



and test ranges. Michelson Laboratory, dedicated in May, 1948, is the center of the technical operations at nwc. Millions of dollars have been spent in equipping the Center for research and development on advanced weapons systems. The physical plant and equipment at nwc are valued at \$300,000,000, with a large portion of this being in the China Lake area.

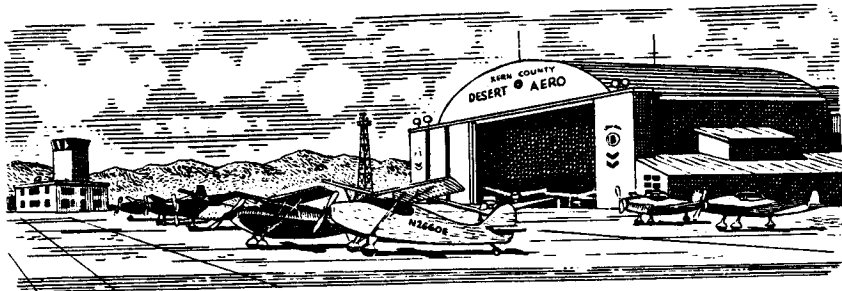
The Naval Weapons Center employs approximately 3,775 civilians and 1,150 military personnel at China Lake. The community of China Lake, completely government-owned, houses 13,000 residents. The high professional level of these residents gives the community the air of a college town.

The main research and development facilities at China Lake are located in Michelson Laboratory and at the Propulsion Laboratories. The Naval Air Facility (NAF) gives aviation support for the programs of research, development, and test.

Weapon development at nwc covers a wide range of items: guided missiles, free-fall weapons, rockets, anti-submarine weapons, fire-control systems, limited warfare ordnance, space vehicle components, and new propulsion systems. In the historical category of missiles developed here are HOLY MOSES, TINY TIM, and MIGHTY MOUSE. Among the more modern ones are SIDEWINDER and ZUNI. The SIDEWINDER went into use on fleet aircraft carriers in 1957.

In support of Center as well as service-wide development programs, nwc operates five major ground ranges, three test tracks, and two major aircraft ranges. These ranges and tracks with their extensive instrumentation represent one of the nation's most complete and versatile facilities for testing modern weapon systems and their components through early design and development stages.

In the Boron area, the 6593D Test Group (Dev.) of the Air Force Systems Command performs applied research in rocket propulsion, both chemical and nuclear, as well as tests of systems in missiles. A dozen or so steel and concrete test stands are located on Leuhman Ridge at the Edwards Air Force Base. Here, powerful rocket engines, and sometimes entire missiles, are bolted down



An increasingly important asset in the economic growth of Indian Wells Valley is the airport at Inyokern, with its 7800-foot night-lighted runway. It is capable of handling commercial airline services.

tightly, then fired to test their qualifications. The need for such a Group operation was recognized in 1946, when World War II development in rocketry started. The next year this site was selected and the first test firing took place in 1952.

To the north of Kramer Junction, atop Mockingbird Hill, sits the 750th Radar Squadron, a silent sentinel overlooking the Mojave Desert. It is a member of the Air Defense Command and a part of the Western Air Defense Chain. The information obtained through the unit's radar equipment is transmitted to the SAGE Direction Center at San Bernardino, and used in the defense of Southern California.

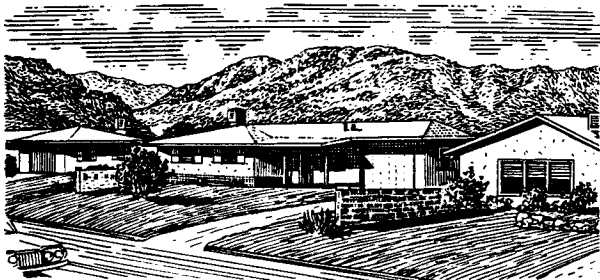
What of the future? Residents of the Upper Mojave Desert predict achievement in the years ahead far beyond the wildest dreams of the rugged pioneers.

RIDGECREST. Largest community in the Indian Wells Valley, the rapidity of its growth has been approached by few California cities. This community, within the brief period of thirty years, has expanded into a thriving trading center for some 30,000 people, 22,000 of whom reside in Ridgecrest, Inyokern, China Lake (nwc) and immediate environs.

In the 1920's, the site of Ridgecrest was homesteaded property, with alfalfa as the principal crop. In the early 1930's, Crum Brothers were operating a small dairy to serve Trona and Westend. Because of inadequate housing for families of workers at those industrial communities, a group of employees purchased lots at the present Ridgecrest site and erected homes. The ladies of the small village decided that it should be called "Sierra View," but Post Office officials notified them that it would be Ridgecrest because there were too many cities already using "Sierra" as part of their names.

When the first store was erected in 1939, there were but fifteen homes. Little change took place in the struggling town until 1943, when the Navy came streaming into the Valley with trucks, bulldozers, cranes and other equipment to build the Naval Ordnance Test Station at adjacent China Lake. The impact on Ridgecrest was immediate. Almost overnight, the village became a teeming

These attractive residences, located on the hillside in Westend, are a worthy addition to the community and typify the modern trend of development in the area.



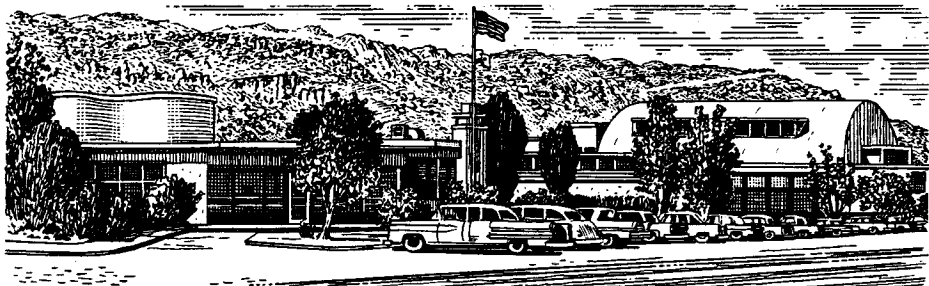
center of activity with the erection of stores, homes, schools and churches, service and utility facilities following one after the other.

With the expansion of nwc, Ridgecrest's growth has continued unabated. Today, there are some 300 business establishments, with a payroll of approximately \$6,000,000, and more than 3,000 homes and apartment units. Ridgecrest is proud of its fine schools, churches, residential developments, the Drummond Medical Group and Ridgecrest hospital, and civic and recreational facilities. The resort, scenic and recreational attractions of this Valley, and those in the Sierras and Death Valley nearby, are responsible for the increasing tourist travel through the Indian Wells Valley.

INYOERN. Oldest in the Indian Wells Valley, this community was known originally as Magnolia. With the extension of the Southern Pacific railroad to haul supplies for the Los Angeles aqueduct in 1910, this camp was established as a siding. In 1913, it was named Inyokern because of its proximity to the borders of the two counties. During the succeeding years, homesteads were developed with orchards and diversified farming, but by the late 1920's this activity had been greatly reduced.

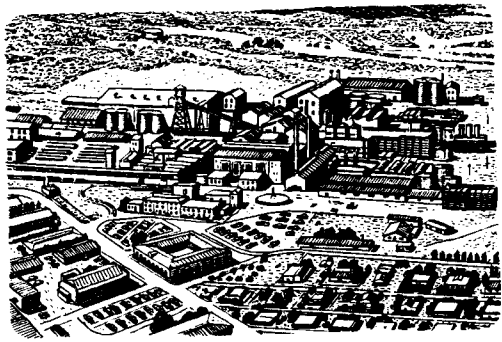
Increasing automobile traffic over the newly-paved Highways 395 and 6 during the 1930's provided incentive for new development, as did the creation of the airport in 1933. This airport was the original site of nwc before it moved to the China Lake area.

Inyokern benefitted from the expansion of nwc, nearby, and homes, businesses and services were built to take care of employees at the base. Today, because of its strategic location on Highway 395, near the junction of Highway 6, and over-all growth of the



Trona is rightly proud of its fine educational facilities, as exemplified by the architectural beauty and completeness of the Trona Unified School, which serves the thriving community.

Major producers in their fields, the three large plants shown at right contribute immeasurably to the economic life of this portion of the Mojave Desert. Pictured in sketches, left to right; Kerr McGee's American Potash and Chemical plant at Trona, Stauffer Chemical Company at Westend, and the U. S. Borax & Chemical Corporation located at Boron. Their production of borax alone amounts to a considerable portion of the world's output.



Indian Wells Valley, Inyokern can look to the future with confidence. BORON. What was formerly Amargo is the community of Boron today. When a camp was created for employees of the mining operations which began in 1926, it was called Boron, after the element boron found in borate ore. About 1932, Charley Trenery's saloon was the first building to be erected at the present townsite. Soon, some of the married men built homes near the railroad track and the new town was started. The Santa Fe Railway moved its Kramer depot here in 1941.

Obviously, the economy of Boron has been dependent in large measure upon the operations of the U. S. Borax & Chemical Corporation. With the location of the rocket engine testing station at nearby Edwards Air Force Base, operated by the 6593D Test Group (Dev.) Air Force Systems Command, and the creation of the Boron Air Force Station, 750th Radar Squadron (SAGE), Boron's growth has been accelerated, as reflected in its expanding trading area.

CALIFORNIA CITY. Founded in 1958, this community is located to the northwest of Boron in the vicinity known as the former Goforth Ranch. A master plan entailing some 83,000 acres of level grazing land is changing this vast upper desert area into one of the foremost planned communities in the country.

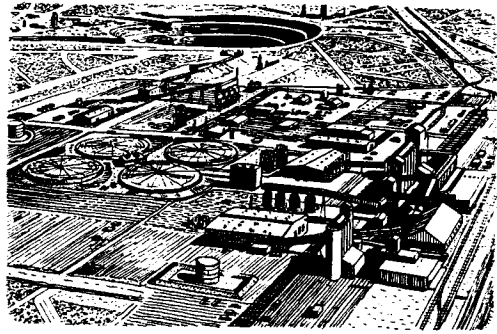
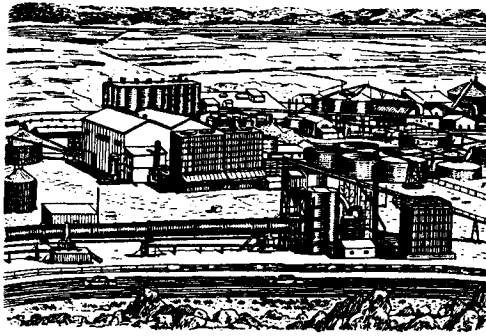
TRONA. Named after "trona," a crystalline salt deposit found in



Focal point for 88 acres of recreational facilities, this waterfall in California City's Central Park is surrounded by a 20-acre lake. Pavilion at right incorporates 12th century Swedish architectural form accented elsewhere in the community.

A portion of the Boron business district, strategically located on Highway 58 and Santa Fe Railroad. This community benefits from adjacent borax operations and military establishments nearby.

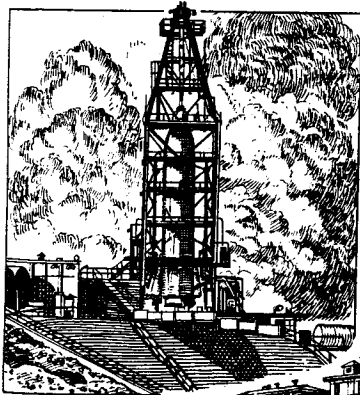




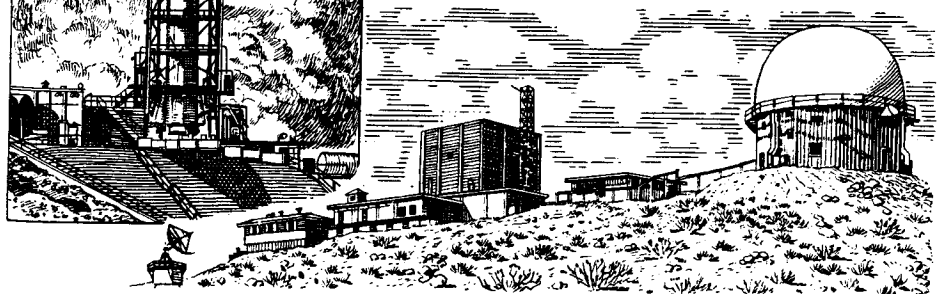
the reefs on Searles Lake, this prosperous community is the largest in the Searles Valley. Its growth, over almost a half century, has kept pace with the increased activities of the American Potash and Chemical Corporation, which provides the basis of Trona's economy. In addition to its expanding business district, residential development has gone forward, including the fine suburban area at Pioneer Point nearby. Recreation of every type is to be found here, including an 18-hole golf course and large swimming pool. Trona benefits from the increasing traffic to Death Valley which takes this picturesque route.

The community of Argus is situated to the south of Trona. WESTEND. Overlooking Searles Lake, this community was created as a company-owned town originally by the West End Chemical Company. Now Stauffer Chemical Company owns and operates the plant. A worthwhile addition to Westend's housing is the recent development of a district of fine, modern homes against the foothills.

RAND DISTRICT. All too few motorists over Highway 395, when passing through Atolia, Red Mountain, Johannesburg and by the turn-off to Randsburg, appreciate the full significance of the historical background of these communities. There are those who believe that the great wealth which still lies underground will be the source of a new and greater prosperity some day in the future.



Left — Tests conducted on Atlas rocket engines by the 6593D Test Group (Dev.), Air Force Systems Command at Edwards Air Force Base. Below — High atop Mockingbird Hill in the Mojave Desert, the 750th Radar Squadron (SAGE) at the Boron Air Force Station is a part of the Western Air Defense Chain.





At Boron, telephone central office facilities are housed in this modern building. The company's first microwave system terminated here in 1955, spanning 17½ miles between the Edwards Air Force Testing Station and the Boron Central Office. Today, the system has expanded considerably.

ALTHOUGH the modern 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 beginnings during the formative days when mining spurred early developments.

Mining attracted two Denver men in 1904. Unsuccessful in finding promising claims at Tonopah or Goldfield, Nevada, they turned to possibilities of developing hydroelectric power on Bishop Creek, in the Sierras to the west, to supply the mines.

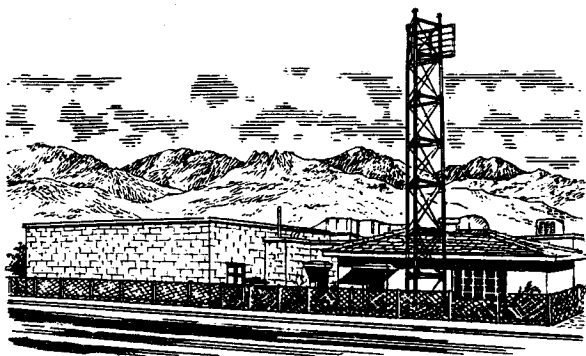
Subsequently, in 1905 The Nevada Power, Mining & Milling Company was organized and became the first in a line of successor companies. During the year a telephone line was constructed paralleling the first power transmission line from Bishop Creek, via Silver Peak, to Tonopah and Goldfield. It served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

In October 1910, Interstate Telegraph Company, predecessor to California Interstate, was originally incorporated. Control of the Company was acquired by power company associates in 1911 and a single communications system formed. Composed of power company facilities within Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada, and Inyo and Mono, in California, plus a line under construction to the south in Kern, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties of California, Interstate commenced operations in 1912.

Over the years service boundaries have drastically changed. To the south, following construction of power transmission facilities, telephone lines were strung through the Indian Wells Valley during the spring of 1912, gaining access to the nation's telephone network at San Bernardino in August.

Late in 1913 a telephone line was completed from Randsburg northeast to Searles Station, connecting with a private line extending from Trona. The Randsburg Telephone Company was purchased in 1914. It consisted of a line to Mojave and an exchange plant at Randsburg, which operated manually until converted to dial in 1949.

The southern fringes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains overlook this telephone central office facility and microwave terminal station at Inyokern. For many years, long distance operations were also centered at this location. However, late in 1967 they were moved to new quarters at Ridgecrest.



The first public telephone in Indian Wells Valley was installed at Inyokern in 1921. It served as the only public station until 1943 when temporary central office provisions were made. Establishment of the Inyokern Exchange followed in 1944.

Growth throughout Indian Wells Valley has closely paralleled development of the Naval Weapons Center at China Lake. The manual exchange at Inyokern converted to dial in 1948. In 1950 a satellite office was constructed at Ridgecrest, and Inyokern became a permanent long distance center. Conforming to growth patterns, Inyokern became the satellite office within the Ridgecrest Exchange in 1957. However, in 1967, Inyokern again assumed exchange status, and the long distance operations at Inyokern moved to new quarters at Ridgecrest.

In 1947 a line from Ridgecrest to Argus and Trona replaced the earlier connections through Randsburg. Dial service was provided the Searles Valley region in 1951, with completion of a central office at Trona and formation of the Trona Exchange.

Telephone lines were first extended into Boron in 1945. Dial service was offered in 1949 with establishment of the Boron Exchange. Within the exchange, a satellite office at North Edwards was placed in service in 1965. Adjacent to the north, California City received exchange service beginning in 1962.

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 Telephone Corporation.

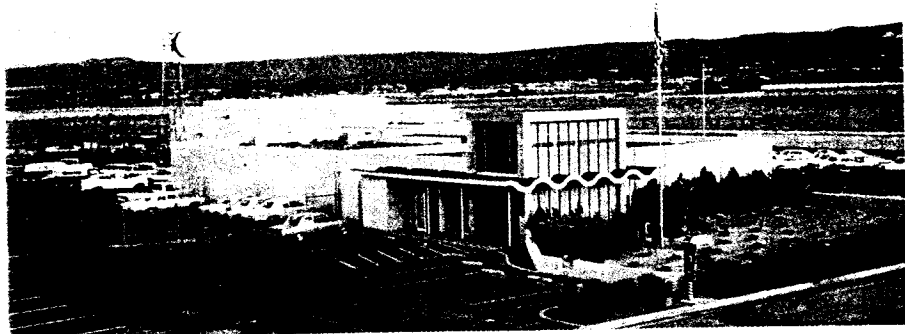
Incorporated in 1960 and headquartered at St. Louis, Missouri, Continental now represents the third largest independent (non Bell) telephone company in the United States, operating in 37 states, including Alaska, in Canada, the Bahamas and West Indies. A manufacturing arm has recently been added.

Throughout these service areas growth is continuing at a rapid pace, making Continental Telephone Corporation one of the fastest growing telephone companies in the nation.

WITH a past rich in historical romance and tradition, it is obvious that the communities in Indian Wells Valley, Searles Valley, Rand District and Boron Area 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 these areas and it looks forward to greater participation in the years to come.

This history portrays, in brief form, the transition of these areas from their 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.



Ridgecrest Telephone Service Center business, engineering, plant and district offices in foreground with long distance center at the rear.

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CONTINENTAL
SYSTEM

**CALIFORNIA
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