



# Three Rivers Historical Times

Annual Member Reception  
May 20th, 1:00pm–3:pm  
Update on Museum Activities  
Confirmation of Board & Officers  
Refreshments

M A Y 2 0 1 2

## One of the Old Timers

### William “Billy” Abner Swanson

(From the “the Kaweah Magazine”  
column titled “Old Timers” printed  
July 1960)

The oldest living settler of the Kaweah Valley is William Abner Swanson, who at 85 is still known as “Billy.” Swanson lives on Rainbo Ranch, a 12-acre plot in Washburn Cove, east and above Jim Livingston’s Place.

Billy Swanson, who still only needs glasses for reading, first lived on the ranch of his grandfather, Hale D. Tharp, the first white man ever to see the giant Sequoias. The Tharp ranch is now part of the Hall Ranch. Billy was born in a house near what is now Cobble Lodge, which too will soon disappear under the waters of the new lake.

Tharp homesteaded the ranch in 1856, two years before the Indians took him up the mountains to see the place where the trees were giants. Tharp had originally come across the plains in a covered wagon to seek gold around Placerville. But the dust of the mines affected his health and the doctor told him to get out. He climbed on his horse and started out looking for a pleasant place to live longer. He

discovered a pleasant place to live longer. He discovered the Kaweah Valley, with its friendly Indians, and went back to get his family. The Tharps and their descendants have been “living longer” ever since, like so many people in this valley.

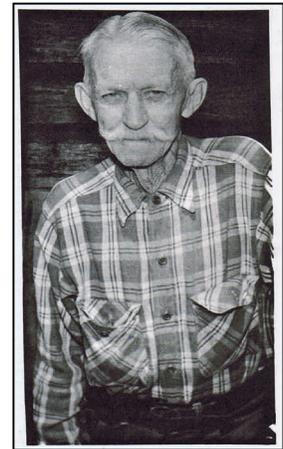
A half a century ago Billy Swanson drove a stage coach from Three Rivers to Mineral King. At that time the road was a winding and tortuous thing which snaked its way up through Bear Ranch and came up to join the present road near Oak Grove. It took four hearty mules, and most of the day, to pull the stage for 25 miles. Billy lived at Lake Canyon during the season and made three round trips a week between Three Rivers and Mineral King. One day he would drive from Lake Canyon to Three Rivers and back. He would pick up a fresh team and the next day drive to Mineral King and back to Lake Canyon.

Billy remembers many things about the Kaweah Valley. He remembers when there were only six families living between

Cobble Lodge and where the Edison power station is now. He remembers too a winter when the Kaweah Rivers froze over enough to walk across. And he remembers summers which were hot and dry. One year the middle Fork dried up to a trickle. You could step across its widest part at the bridge by the village. But nearly all of Billy’s memories are pleasant. Probably the history of the Kaweah Valley is filled with more pleasantness, more love, and more human regard than most any other place. This is an interesting characteristic, particularly since this valley sheltered Indians for at least 2,000 years, and was located near the lusty mining camps, the cattle ranges, the feed and fruit ranches, all of which produced men of violence. But the people who have lived, and those who still live in this valley, are a kindly peaceful lot for the most part.

Billy spends most of his time sitting on the porch of his ranch home where he has lived alone since his wife, Carrie, died in 1950. They had no children, and Billy’s only

living relative is a sister who now lives in Kings City, California. He thumbs through yellowing manuscripts Carrie wrote when she was



correspondent for newspapers here, and re-reads old letters. He looks often, and closely, at a collection of photographs, each with a date on it and the names of the people in it. He remembers the Kaweah Valley as it was many years ago.

He has seen many changes, and he spends some time imagining what changes will come in the future. The things Billy hopes will never change are the kindly thoughts and the friendly acts the Three Rivers people have always practiced with their neighbors.

**President's Corner**



Sometimes I wonder what I am going to talk about in the next issue and all of a sudden a thought comes to mind and that thought this month is 'family history' in Three Rivers.

What is a museum but a place for history. Well, we have a lot of information on the 'first families' of Three Rivers but need a lot more.

Dody Marshall is our archivist and has put together information that has been on file in the museum about various pioneer families. Some are more complete than others. Some have pictures with no names or information. Some have information and no pictures.

She is developing a section of our museum library devoted to these families. Why did they come to Three Rivers; when did they come and from where

If you have this type of family history that relates to Three Rivers we would like to hear from you. We are not asking you to give us your files and pictures but we would like to make copies and scan pictures so your family can be recognized and part of our library.

Contact Dody at the museum (561-2707) or at home (561-4085) or by email [history@3rmuseum.org](mailto:history@3rmuseum.org)

*You might find out that you really are related to your next door neighbor..... Tom Marshall*

**THE LICENSE PLATE FRAMES ARE COMING**

**Make a statement and let the world know you are from Three Rivers with a set of license plate holders on your car**

The Historical Society in response to requests has decided to order and sell license plate frames to fit almost any type of car. The frames will be white background with forest green lettering as shown in our sample.

The cost for each frame is \$10.00 including tax and of course is tax deductible. The frames should be here in mid May.



Be one of the first to display this exciting new frame by ordering your frames now for the front and back of your vehicle. Contact the Society at 561-2707 and/or come by the Museum to complete your order. Cash, check and credit cards are acceptable.

**Come Join The Fun  
May 12 & 13  
The Historical Society  
will be there!**



**Visitor Count At The Museum**

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Year 2010	379	764	848	902	922	1002	947	767	431	317	198	198
Year 2011	199	206	375	870	889	856	835	975	676	966	306	177
Year 2012	256	230	499	824								

**Current Businesses Supporting The Museum In Three Rivers Unless Noted In Listing**

A-1 Totem Market & Gifts	CA Water/Filter, Culligan, Lindsay	Kaweah Park Resort
Affairs Real Estate	Comfort Inn & Suites	L.E. Britten, Construction
Arts Alliance of Three Rivers	Country Bear Photography	Michael F Tharp Assoc., Visalia
Bank of the Sierra	Donald W. Mosley, DDS	Michael Little, CPA
Buckeye Tree Lodge	Gateway Restaurant & Lodge	Mineral King Pres. Society, Exeter
Buckler Chiropractic	ISG Electric, Inc.	Mountain View Realty
		Red Barn Gifts
		Reimer's Candies & Ice Cream

## Project for the Women

Some interesting facts about one of the strongest supporters of the Three Rivers Museum.

*First part is written by Frankie Welch in July 1960 and then followed up by unknown person in August 1960. It seems to fit right in with what our (your) Museum is all about today!*

The Three Rivers Woman’s Club probably has played a more important role in this community since its formation in 1916 than any other organization here. Still it has been threatened with curtains for more than a year now. Numerous other clubs springing up in a rapidly growing community, plus a new Memorial Building, are about to boo the old club off the stage with, “You are no longer needed. Your usefulness is over.”

The club helped remodel the community hall. It secured the white line (now yellow) for safety on the highway through Three Rivers. It sponsored the preservation of historical monuments, including Tharp’s Log in Giant Forest in Sequoia Park. Electricity was obtained for Three Rivers through the efforts of the club. For years the juice flowed by on the big, high tension wires with never a kilowatt dropped down for *our people*.

*editors note; the following is then from the August edition.*

Another obvious reason for the decline of the Woman’s Club is that they have run out of projects. Many of the projects they once under took for the community are now done by PTA, service clubs, garden clubs, church’s and other groups. So, the remaining members of the Woman’s Club would like to propose a brand new project, that is, the founding of a Kaweah Valley museum. Probably nothing is more needed than a program to preserve the rich history and lore of this valley by the collection and exhibition of the hundreds of precious relics of the past.

A Kaweah museum would serve several purposes other than preserving items of lasting interest. Of first importance, it would have a focal point of community interest which could bring old timers and new comers together as nothing else could. It could be something in which each and every person could take pride. It could give Three Rivers a point of distinction. Hundreds of thousands who drive through without even knowing where they are or who stop for a motel and then drive on without even remembering the name of the motel. A very important thing a museum could do is to become a major tourist attraction. We need and must have, points of interest which will attract some of these people, and which will tell the Three Rivers story to them.

*editors note; With time changes came about that brought the importance of this organization back to its full potential and the Three Rivers Woman’s Club has never looked back. The Thingerie is an example of the work that this organization does and the contributions that the Woman’s Club has done since the 1960’s is amazing.*

*In 1991 a group of people, including some Woman’s Club members, felt it was time to put the wheels in motion to create the Three Rivers Historical Society and in 2000 the dream came true with the opening of the Museum.*

*Today the Museum is just what everyone wanted where the attics, the closets, the barns, and the junk piles of this area are identified, catalogued, repaired, preserved, and shown in addition to acting as the visitors center for Three Rivers, a tourist attraction and stopping point for so many of those visitors to Sequoia National Park.*

*The point made here is the Three Rivers Museum could not have happened or continue to happen if it were not for groups and businesses like the Three Rivers Woman’s Club. A major contributor to our Museum.*

*Did you know that the Woman’s Club, like the Historical Society is run entirely by volunteers?*

## Current Businesses Supporting The Museum

In Three Rivers Unless Noted In Listing

Sequoia Cider Mill Restaurant  
 Sequoia Motel  
 Sequoia Natural History Assoc.  
 Sequoia Pacific Realty  
 Sequoia RV Ranch  
 Sequoia Sightseeing Tours

Sequoia Village Inn  
 Sierra Valley Cultural Planning  
 Three Rivers Comm. Svcs. Dist.  
 Three Rivers Drug  
 Three Rivers Performing Arts  
 Three Rivers Village Market

Three Rivers Woman’s Club  
 Todd’s Pizza Factory  
 Valley Oak Credit Union  
 We Three Bakery & Restaurant

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 Refreshments



**THREE RIVERS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Three Rivers Historical  
Society & Museum**

P.O. Box 162  
42268 Sierra Dr  
Three Rivers, CA 93271

Phone: 559-561-2707  
history@3rmuseum.org

[www.3rmuseum.org](http://www.3rmuseum.org)

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Three Rivers Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization

<b>2012 Historical Society &amp; Museum Events</b>			
<b>MAY</b>	12-Sat, 10am-5pm 13-Sun, 10am-4pm	<b>Redbud Arts/Crafts Festival</b>	Museum will have a booth at Lions Arena with Photography by Tom Marshall
<b>MAY</b>	20-Sun, 1pm-3pm	<b>Historical Society Annual Member Reception</b>	Refreshments, Society Updates, Confirmation of Officers and Board Members for 2012-13
<b>JUL</b>	14-Sat, 10am-4pm	<b>Hot Dog Festival at the Museum</b>	Supports Volunteer Firefighters and Museum. A&W Truck will be back.
<b>AUG</b>	11-Sat, 10am-4pm 12-Sun, 10am-3pm	<b>Silent Auction</b>	Bring your donations of antiques, furniture and/or business products to the Museum or call us and we will pick them up.
<b>OCT</b>	13-Sat, 10am-4pm	<b>Living History Day</b>	Celebrating the 1850-1900 pioneer days
<b>OCT</b>	27-Sat, 9am-5pm	<b>Sisters On The Fly</b>	Classic old vacation trailers meeting in Three Rivers with showing at Kaweah Park Resort and visiting the Museum.
<b>NOV</b>	17-Sat, 9am-4pm	<b>Senior League Holiday Bazaar</b>	Three Rivers Memorial Building, Museum will have a booth
<b>NOV</b>	17-Sat, 9am-4pm 18-Sun, 9am-3pm	<b>Museum Open House &amp; Sale</b>	Annual gift shop sale for the holidays.
<b>DEC</b>	1-Sat, 5pm-7pm	<b>Community Holiday Caroling</b>	In front of Three Rivers Mercantile