



Three Rivers Historical Times



AUGUST 2011

(Written by Joe Doctor,
and in the May 14, 1986
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Grace Alles was known for tens of years to everyone who traveled the Mineral King road, as from early spring to late fall she lived in her cabin "in the middle of the road" at Atwell Mill. She was not only a friend to acquaintances who passed by, but also to strangers who might be in need of some assistance. She even was a stand-in for the park ranger when his presence was required elsewhere.

Grace was the wife of Phil Alles who, with his brother Dan, on occasion ran the sawmill at Atwell's. She was the daughter of Isham D. (Doc) Mullenix, a Civil War veteran who homesteaded the Atwell area in 1879, the height of the Mineral King Silver Rush. She was also a friend and benefactor of fabulous Ben Harris, "the biggest liar in the Sierra," and with this account we'll tell you some of Grace's Ben Harris stories. Ben

The Lady Who Lived In The Middle of a Road

was for a time the sawyer at the mill when, to hear him tell it, "the boards just flew."

Doc Mullenix was quite a personality himself. He was a veteran of the Civil War who settled south of Hanford with his brother, John, in 1875. He had been a U. S. marshal in Tennessee before coming to California. He moved to the mountains to rid himself of malaria, a common malady in the valley in those days.

Doc made shakes at Atwell's for the cabins being built at Mineral King. He was not a miner. He may have had some skills in treating the ailments of horses and mules, hence his nickname, Doc.

Doc built a log cabin "over by the burned stump," according to our notes made during an interview 20 years ago with Mrs. Alles, and in 1886 or 1887 he sold out to A. J.

Atwell, prominent Visalia attorney and businessman who had served as district attorney and also in the legislature. The two men had one thing in common: both liked their booze.

Shortly after selling out to Atwell, Doc went back to his old home in Tennessee and married Suzanna Moore. They had three children, Grace, the oldest, Rose, and a son Luther. Atwell provided Mullenix with a cabin at Atwell's and Doc became the first ranger there for the park service. Col. John R. White, when he was superintendent gave Doc a life estate in a cabin next to the ranger's cabin.

Suzanna Mullenix died in 1895 and Doc kept the children with him for a couple of years. Atwell, according to my notes, built a school "over by the prison camp road" for

the children of the mill hands and probably for his own eight children when they were at the mill.

For five years, the Mullenix children lived in the Good Templars boarding school in Vallejo before returning home. From his military service in the Civil War, Doc would receive a military pension in his later years.

Atwell Mill, which was a patented land, was leased by the Kaweah colonists in 1891, but they soon ran afoul of the federal government in cutting government timber. In 1899 and 1901 the mill was leased by the Mt. Whitney Power company to produce redwood and pine lumber for the company's first flume.

Conrad Alles and later his brothers Dan and Phil ran the mill for Atwell and for the power company.

In 1902 Grace Mullenix and Phil Alles were married.

They built a cabin "on the ridge" near the cabin of Jack Hayes, who had been a lumber sealer for the power company. Doc worked as a teamster.

THE LADY. CON'T

Henry Alles bought the mill and his sons ran it. The mill was steam powered until 1929, when Phil bought a Caterpillar tractor for power. The mill cut much of the lumber for development of cabins at Mineral King, Camp Conifer and Silver City during the boom in summer cabins in the 1920's and 1930's.

The story of Grace's cabin "in the middle of the road," came about in the following way: Hamilton Moffett, the county supervisor for the area, had a daughter who was in frail health. He believed mountain air would be good for her so he tried to buy a lot from Mrs. Atwell; she refused to sell him one on the grounds that there were already too many cabins at Atwell's. Moffett was not to be denied. He carried lumber on his back from the mill and built a cabin in the middle of the road right of way, then he built the road around the cabin. Grace ultimately gained title to the cabin and she also had a lot across the road. Her cabin was built in 1901.

In 1916, while Phil and Dan were running the mill, the Alles family had control of the house at Lake Canyon which had been built by the parents of Armin and John Grunigen. Luther Mullenix had been staying there with a friend and when he failed to report for work at the mill one Monday morning, one of the Alles brothers went to Lake Canyon and found Luther's body in a bed. He had been shot to death and the rifle that had been used was leaning against the fireplace in the front room. His friend disappeared and was never seen again.

The Lake Canyon place served as a way station on the Mineral King road and for a time Rose and Grace alternated operating it for those who wished to take lodging or meals there. Phil ran the stage to Mineral King. At one time Orval Overall, the Visalia athlete who became a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs, wanted to establish a country club at Lake Canyon and asked Grace, who was an excellent cook, to run it but she declined.

Grace and Rose were both skilled as mountain packers and would often pack a string of mules and

go back into the high country on their own. Rose was employed in the movie industry for a time but often returned to serve as fire lookout at Cahoon Mountain for ten seasons and at Milk Ranch peak for three seasons.

Grace told about the episode in which the park service tried to keep cars out of the park. John Ball was the ranger at Cold Springs and he was instructed to place a chain across the road and keep automobile traffic from going to Mineral King. Adolph Sweet, a prominent Visalia businessman and property owner, was a frequent visitor to the mountains and believed the park service had no right to close the road to traffic. The road was and is a county road which passed through park property although Mineral King was in the national forest.

Sweet came to Cold Spring and demanded that Ball remove the chain. Ball refused and threatened to shoot Sweet. Sweet said he planned to ram his car through the obstruction. Ball, a friend of Sweet, declared he could not shoot a friend and took down the chain, permitting Sweet to pass. Ball then went to his telephone and called the park superintendent, Walter Fry, and said he guessed he was fired for letting Sweet pass through, but Fry just laughed at him and Ball heard nothing more of the incident. The chain remained down. For a while other means were tried to block the road, but the county managed to keep it open.



President's Corner



The time has come says the wise old owl to look at our daily operations and expenses. We are in the position of having to reduce our operating hours and projects in order to keep the doors open. Some projects like our pond remodel is on hold. We have been working with Native-American groups for the past 8 months at developing an Indian Village next to the Museum. There is almost no cost to the museum and that is why we are continuing with this project.

Within the next week I will be sending out a letter to all our supporters asking for help. We are continuing our efforts to obtain grants but almost always grants are for a specific project and what we need is operating monies. So please look for the letter in the mail, determine what you can give to keep our museum alive and not become part of history.

Other cost reducing areas are printing and postage and therefore starting in September our newsletter will be going out to life members and paid memberships. We will continue to provide an 'email' electronic edition and encourage everyone that has an email to use this service and help us reduce our costs even more.

DID YOU KNOW!

- The Museum has an "extensive" reference section concerning Three Rivers, Mineral King, Sequoia & Kings Canyon and Visalia, plus Indian history and lore, animals, flora fauna, cookbooks and photo albums from the Woman's Club and Lions Club. Also albums and file drawers full of news articles, some dating back to the mid to late 1800's.



OLD FAMILY RECIPE

SPICED POT ROAST

(recipe about 100 years old)

- 2 onions, chopped
- 1/4 c. fat
- 1 4-lb. Beef chuck, rump or bottom round roast
- 1/4 c. flour
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 1 2/1 c. cooked tomatoes
- 1/4 tsp. Pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 tsp. Whole cloves
- 1/4 c. vinegar
- 2 tbsp. Brown sugar

Cook onions in fat in Dutch oven until tender. Dredge roast with flour; cook in Dutch oven with onions until brown on all sides. Place rack under roast. Combine salt, tomatoes, pepper, bay leaf, cloves, vinegar and brown sugar; pour over roast. Cover. Simmer for about 3 hours until roast is tender. Yield: 8 servings.



You Must Be A Museum Buff if you!

- Stop by the Museum more than once a month and you are not a volunteer docent.
- Stop by the Museum and can tell us where a certain item is located in our reference section.
- Start talking to a visitor to our area while you are looking over the Museum again this month.

Does this tell you that you really want to be a volunteer docent and don't know how to go about it. Will, just contact Susan Wolff, our volunteer coordinator, and she will give you all the information. You don't have to be a history major.

Coming Events

OCT	1	Winter hours for museum, 9:00am to 3:00pm daily
OCT	7	Living History Days. Native-Americans Student classes Friday
OCT	8	Living History Day. Native-American Celebration General Public Day
NOV	19	Holiday Bazaar, Memorial Building
DEC	17	Community Caroling, location TBA, 5pm to 7pm

COMING SOON
to the newsletter

- ◆ History of the Woman's Club
- ◆ Trembley's Drive In
- ◆ Excerpts from local writers books that we have in gift shop

Visitor Count At The Museum

We thought you might like to see how many visitors we get during the year. January 2010 and part of February 2010 we were remodeling.

	YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Visitors	2010	closed	379	764	848	902	922	1002	947	767	431	317	198
Visitors	2011	199	206	375	870	889	856	835	999est				

CONTACTING THE MUSEUM

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

Open daily 9am to 5pm until Sep 30th.

Winter hours to be announced

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The Board of Directors meet monthly at 9am on the second Tuesday of the month. Members of the Society are welcome to attend. If you have something you wish to bring to the attention of the board contact Tom Marshall at history@3rmuseum.org



CONTACTING THE MUSEUM