

OBSERVATIONS

By CHARLES P. SQUIRES

THESE CHANGING TIMES

It seems not so very long ago — it was the spring of 1905 — when "Borax" Smith sent our old friend, Clarence M. Rasor, civil engineer, to Las Vegas to make the survey for a railroad from Las Vegas to the booming mining camps of Beatty and Rhyolite, thence to the borax mines in Death valley.

Las Vegas was then the terminus of the freight forwarding business to those camps, the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake railroad having just been completed from Los Angeles through Las Vegas to Salt Lake City. And the great 12-, 16- and 20-horse or mule teams drawing two great freight wagons and a trailer, which required a week for the trip from Las Vegas to Rhyolite, made Las Vegas a pretty lively place with their two to six men to an outfit all drawing good wages, and many hundred horses and mules in the various corrals to be fed and cared for.

However, when Clarence Rasor appeared and told me that "Borax" Smith was going to build a railroad to the borax mines in Death valley via Rhyolite, all of us inhabitants of the recently-born town of Las Vegas were highly elated and "Borax" Smith immediately became a hero.

Clarence went out into the wilderness and surveyed a line and within a few weeks horses, scrapers and men were tearing up the desert, building the roadbed for the new railroad. Soon they had a great camp near Tule Springs, 13 miles out, and shipments of materials with which to build the railroad began to arrive in Las Vegas.

Then suddenly the heart went out of all of us. For some mysterious reason work on the new line stopped. Chief Engineer Clarence Rasor again appeared and had earnest discussions with officials of the S. P. L. A. & S. L. I asked him what the trouble was and he said:

"The railroad promised us the same rates on our construction materials that contractors had paid in building the main line. Now they want to charge us full local freight rates.

"Smith told me that if the S. P. L. A. & S. L. does not keep its promise he will not go ahead with his line. He told me to go and survey a new route for a line from the Santa Fe railroad to Death valley, and I am going down to start the survey right away."

Of course we knew that "Borax" Smith was just bluffing and that he would not deliberately abandon the many thousands of dollars he had already invested in the grade from here to Tule Springs.

Nevertheless, the men and horses and scrapers all came in, were loaded on cars, and that was the last Las Vegas ever saw of that particular enterprise, although the next winter Senator William A. Clark sent in crews and equipment and took up the work of constructing the Las Vegas & Tonopah railroad which was completed from Las Vegas to Rhyolite in the fall of 1906.

That railroad enjoyed a tremendously profitable business during 10 years of the glory of Goldfield and Tonopah. Then after business of the great camps declined, the rails of that line, which cost \$30 per ton when laid, were taken up during

the war and sold for \$110 per ton to a British syndicate for building a railroad in China.

So, the railroad being gone, we promoted a movement to get the old roadbed for automobile highway purposes and, although it was rather jolty because of the depressions where the ties had been, it served us well and became the first link in our Las Vegas to Reno highway.

But to go back to Clarence Rasor and "Borax" Smith. Clarence located a line from Ludlow on the Santa Fe to Beatty, via Death Valley Junction, naming it the Tonopah & Tidewater railroad. So Las Vegas and its railroad never did get the benefit of the great borax shipments from the mines in Death valley.

Now, I observe, the Tonopah & Tidewater, after years of money-losing, once- or twice-a-week service is asking permission to discontinue service entirely. It does not seek to abandon the line, but states that operations may be resumed when public convenience and necessity justify.

So we see that railroads are born, live their active lives, and die just as other things do. There are few railroads in America, probably, which have had so much of adventure, romance, and unbelievable hardship crowded into their lives as have those two — the Las Vegas & Tonopah and the Tonopah & Tidewater. May the souls of the two great men who created them, Senator William A. Clark and "Borax" Smith, rest in peace and the satisfaction of the victories they won over the inhospitable desert.

It seems that great railroads which the creators thought they were building for all eternity are, after all, quite transitory. Who knows but what, say 50 years hence, such great systems as the Union Pacific, New York Central and others may remain only as some dyke-like banks of earth which the grandparents of that day will patiently explain to the young folks were the ways on which the great commerce of the nation was once transported?

Officers Quiz Murder Suspect

WINNEMUCCA — While a single suspect steadily maintained his innocence, Humboldt county officers, assisted by Oscar Heinrich, Berkeley, Calif., manhunter, were seeking to reconstruct the slaying of George Hearn, an aged McDermitt rancher, whose body was found in his hotel room here last Wednesday.

Adolph Halverson, itinerant painter, was being held in jail after officers said they found a leaden bludgeon in his possession and stains similar to blood and tissue on his clothing.

Heinrich, with Sheriff Prout and District Attorney Brown, went over the death scene again Saturday, checking every detail for additional clues.

Hearn's body was found in his room with the skull crushed in, apparently by a heavy blunt instrument. Officers sought to match the size of the bludgeon found on Halverson with the head wounds on the body.

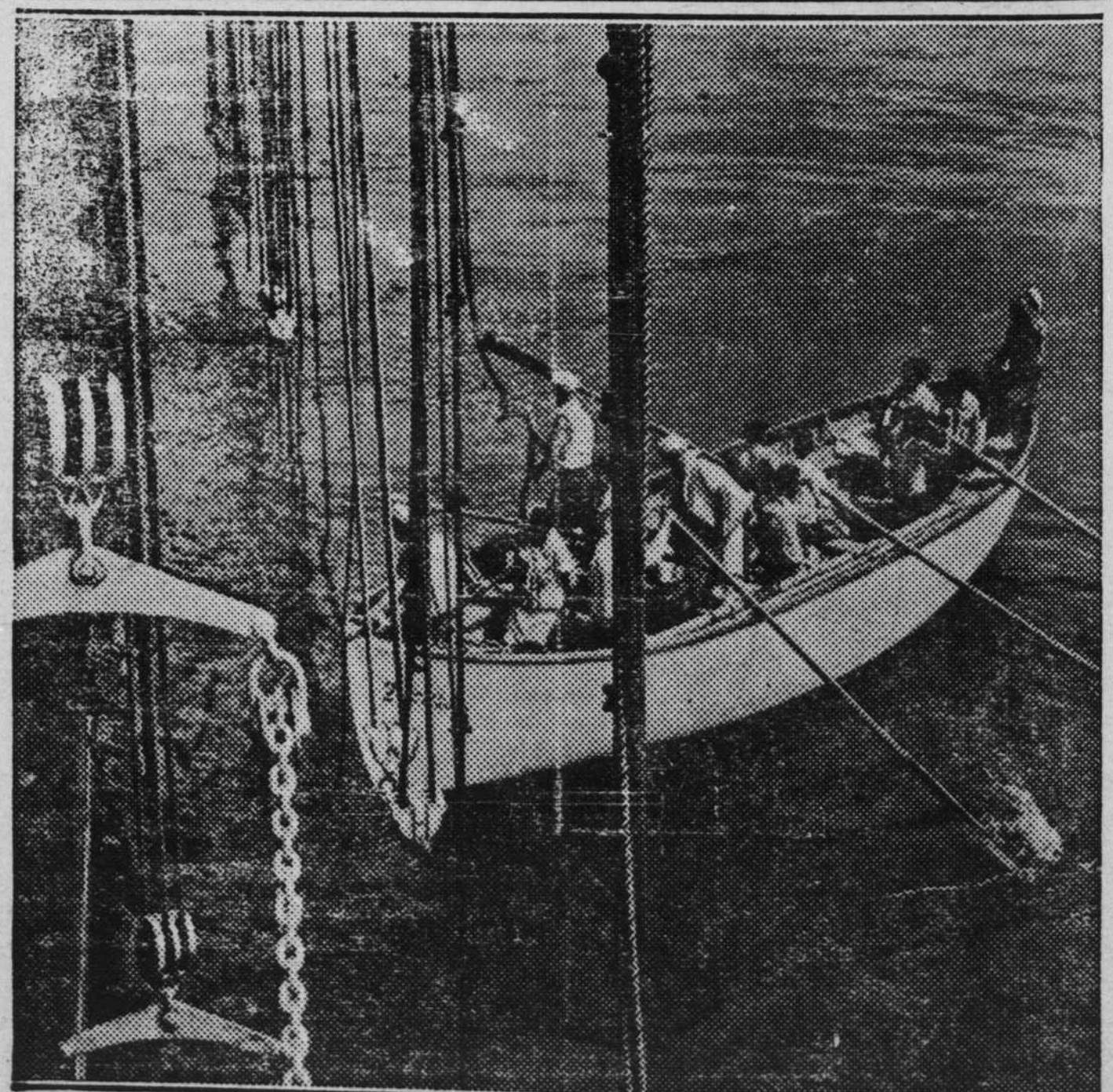
Halverson was employed by the hotel at the time of the rancher's death.

Wonder What This Is? Wonder Show In Action!

IT takes plenty of action, and expression, as well as sound, to produce the comedy and music that romp out of your loudspeaker and make staying at home a pleasure. Here, for instance, is Jack Haley (top) and his Wonder show players broadcasting one of their half-hour, Friday night programs over Columbia—7:30 p.m., EST . . . 9:30 p.m., P.S.T. They show you what goes on behind the mike. Haley's face is as expressive as if he were performing for television. The others illustrate clearly that they are putting their all into the broadcast. That's Ted Fio-Rito at the piano with Virginia Verrill, the deep-voiced songstress. The other lovely is Lucille Ball of the movies.



"A-ROWING WE SHALL GO"



At her anchorage in the Caribbean, the deck crew of the Grace Line's "Santa Paula" put over a life-boat for a practice row during a boat drill.