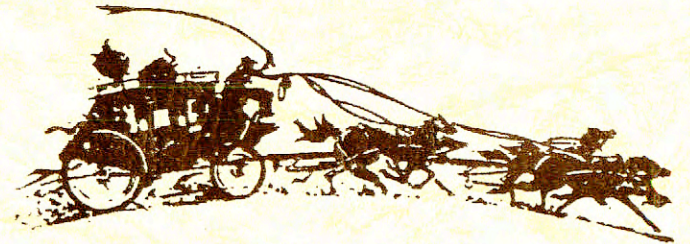
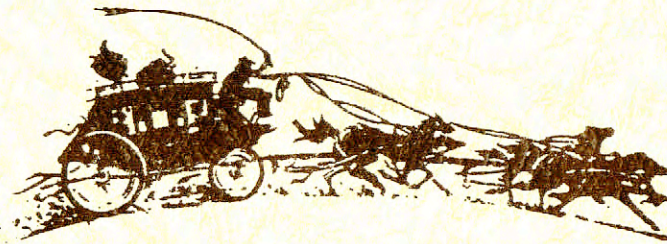
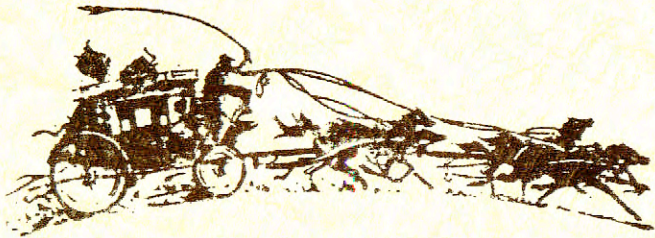


Banning

California



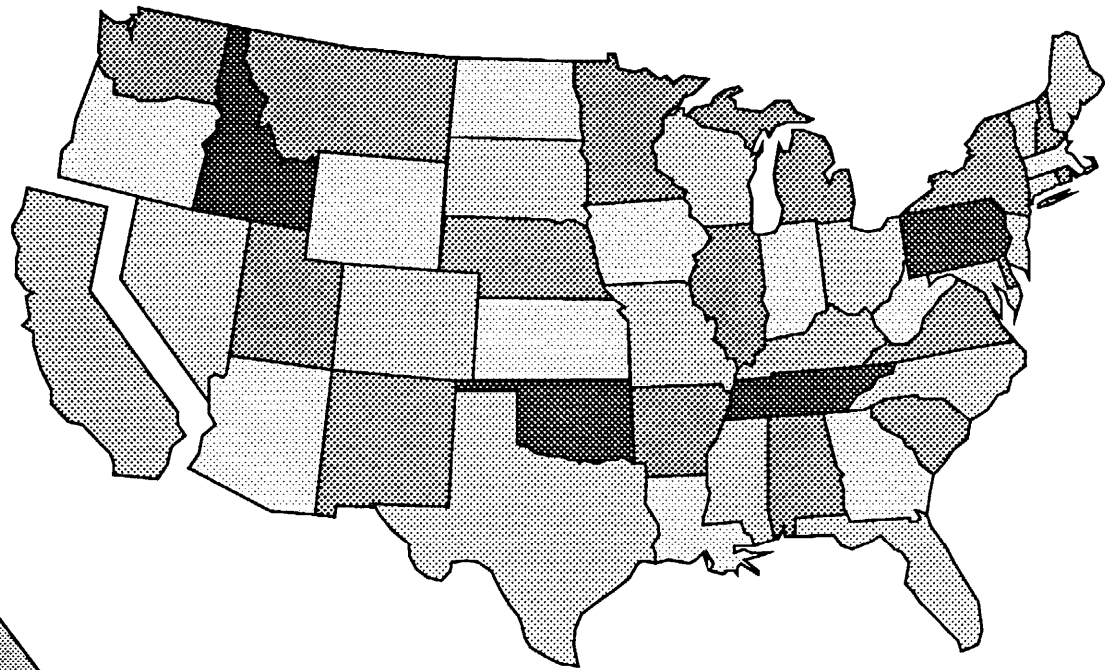
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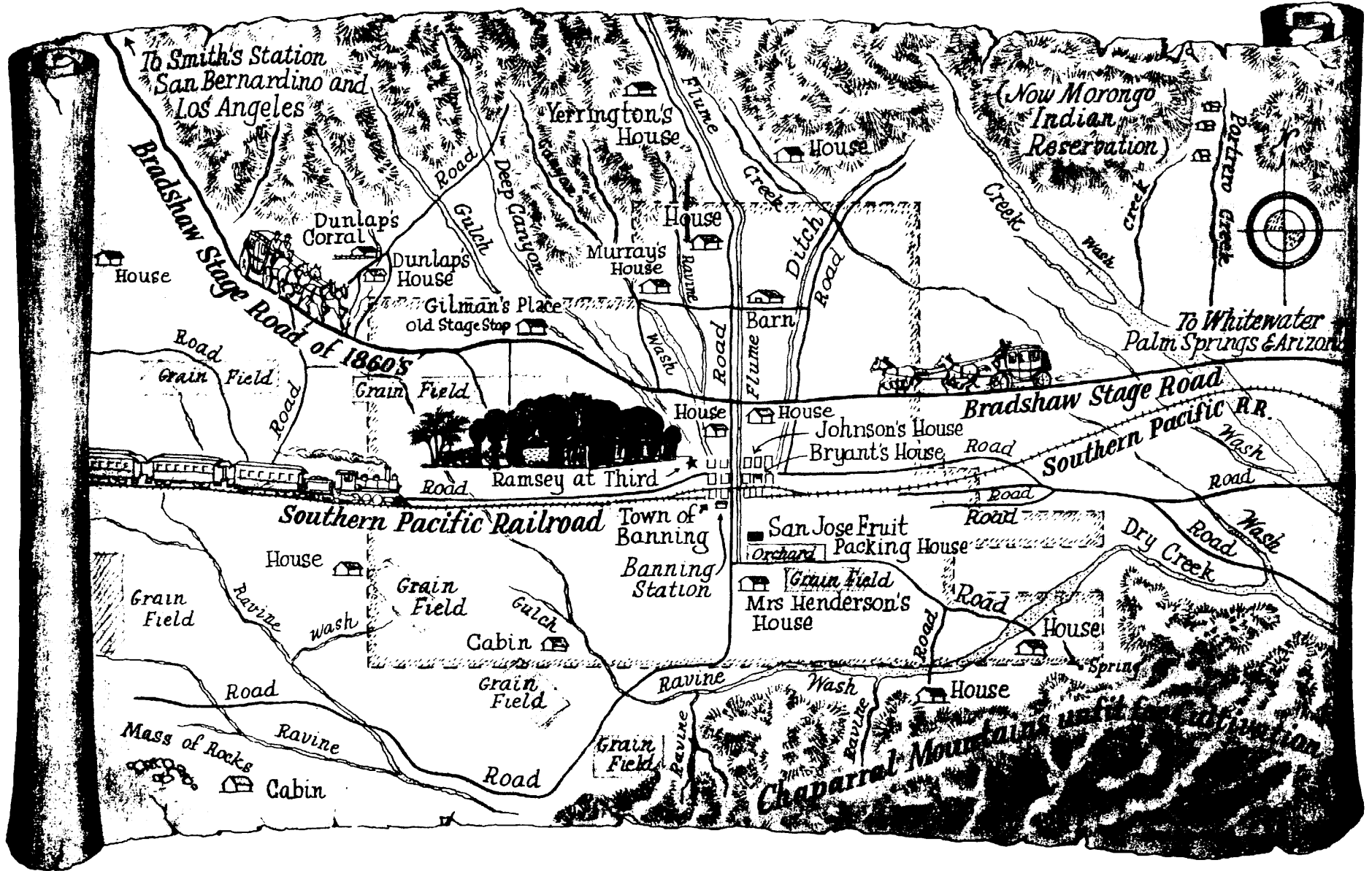
United States of America





United States of America





This map shows how Banning looked in 1886

Banning Unified School District

Dave Long *Superintendent*
Larry Phelps *Assistant Superintendent*
Con Oamek *Assistant Superintendent*
Dick Bray *Director of Curriculum*

Board of Education

Carl Sparks
Dr. John McQuown
Don Foster
Estelle Lewis
Adolfo Mediano, Jr.

Banning

California

Stagecoach Town U.S.A.

compiled and written by

**Joya Baker
Geradine Ekblad
Robert Price**

First Printing, September, 1991

PUBLISHED BY
Banning Unified School District
161 West Williams Street
Banning, California 92220

Forward

This book is an ongoing history of the Banning Pass Area. It is not meant to be a final, conclusive book. The information has been compiled from many sources. We have laid out the skeleton allowing the teachers and students to fill in the rest as they do their own research about particular areas of interest. After using this book, if there are any additions or corrections that may be added, please contact Dick Bray at the Curriculum office.

We would like to thank the following people and sources for their invaluable help: McCulloh Photo Studio for their knowledge, photo archives, and processing all the photographs in the book; Banning Public Library staff; Waunnell Marlar at the Banning Chamber of Commerce; Maricarmen Ruíz at the Gilman Ranch Museum; *History of Banning* by Tom Hughes; Katherine Siva Saubel, Lowell Bean, and Harry Lawton at the Malki Museum.



“Edom to Banning with the trees popping up everywhere. Banning to Beaumont, with fruit hanging all over the trees and groceries all over the ground, and people all over everything.”

Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory*, 1943

◆ Almond trees in bloom with Mt. San Jacinto in the background.

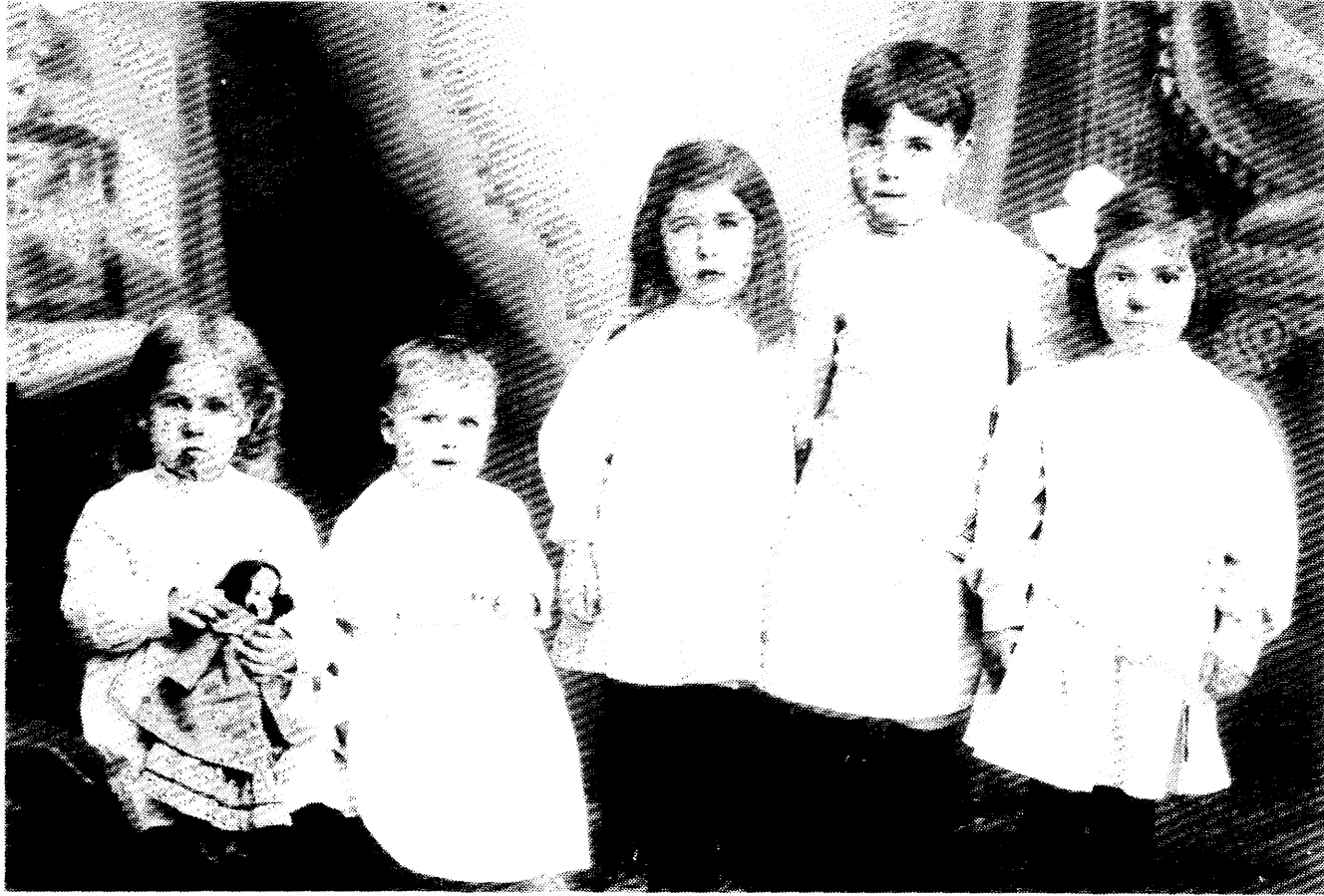
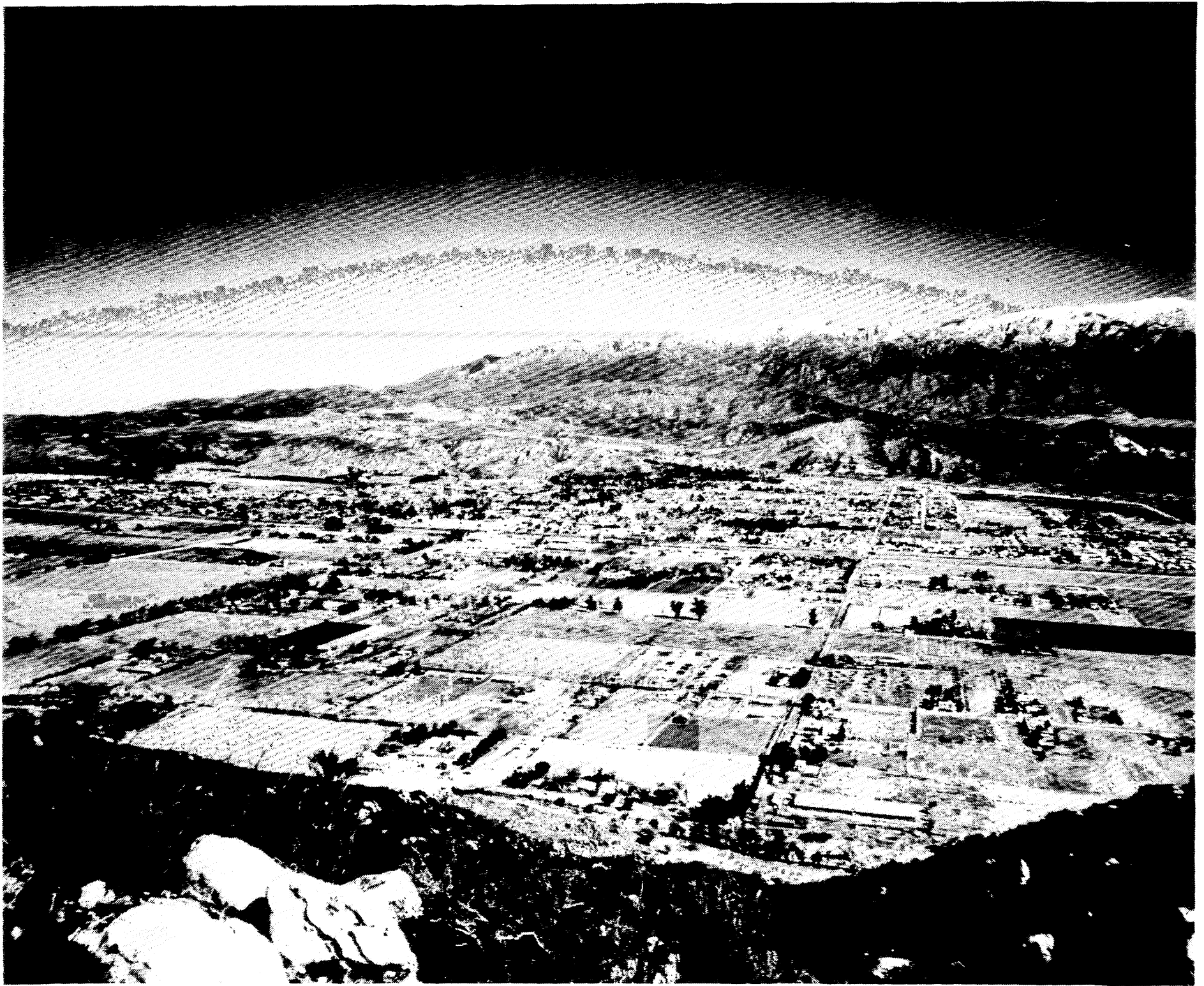


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We Live in a Pass

Banning is located in the San Gorgonio Pass. The Pass has Mt. San Gorgonio on the north and Mt. San Jacinto on the south. Both mountains are approximately two miles high. Mount San Gorgonio rises 11,499 feet. Mount San Jacinto is 10,804 feet high.

San Gorgonio has been described as the tallest hill in the United States, even though it is a mountain. This is because its peak resembles the rounded knoll of a hill. San Gorgonio was named after Saint Gorgonius.

San Jacinto has the fifth highest rock wall on the North American continent. With its feet in the blazing desert, it rises abruptly to over 10,000 feet. San Jacinto was named for Saint Hyacinth, a Polish noble man who became a monk.

The San Gorgonio Pass is the deepest pass in the continental 48 states. It exceeds the Grand Canyon in depth by 2,000 feet.

Banning is about 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It is 2,350 feet higher than the level of the ocean (sea level).

The Pass opens up in the east to Cabazon and is the gateway to the desert. To the west past Beaumont is an area known as the *badlands*. They are called the *badlands* because there is little water and it is difficult to travel through.



Climate

Banning is close to the desert and above the fog layer creating a climate that is moderately dry air and free from extremes; the summer heat is not excessive and the winters are not severe.

Because of being in the Pass, the prevailing winds are west and east. In late fall, the east winds, called Santa Anas, bring hot, dry, crisp air.

Banning has four distinctive seasons during the year. Winter is wet and cool but rarely below freezing. Summer temperatures may go over 100° F with low humidity (dry air).

Banning gets about 18 inches of rain during the year and usually a sprinkling of snow each year. July is the driest month with less than 0.1 inch of rain. December and February are the wettest with about three inches each month. Usually about 300 days are wholly or partly sunny. The driest years were in 1863 and 1864. The drought was so bad that the pass was choked with swirling dust and sand. The cattle business never recovered. The wettest year ever recorded was in 1884 when 40 inches of rain fell after Christmas. There were five washouts in the Pass and no trains were able to go through for two weeks. Food had to be hauled in by wagon from Colton. In January of 1916, Banning had 12 inches of snow causing a lot of damage to the pepper trees. In January of 1930, 20 inches of snow fell breaking roofs and trees.

◆ Early 1900's snow scene in Banning.



Climate *continued*

In the winter of 1862 a great flood occurred throughout the Southwest. Following week after week of continual rain, a 48 hour downpour sent many streams pouring across the valley bottoms in chest deep torrents. The flood wiped out the town of Agua Mansa, a Mexican period community. Aqua Mansa was located south of where the town of Colton is today.

In January of 1912, it was so cold that Hemet Lake froze over and in January 1913, the temperature in Banning fell to 13° F. All the citrus groves in Southern California suffered a killing frost.

◆ Winter view of Banning in 1920's.



Vegetation

When the first people came to the pass area they found deep, lush, native grasses covering the plains. Most of the trees now growing in the pass area were planted by early settlers.

Wildlife

The canyon and mountain areas of Banning were home to grizzly bears in the 1800's. In 1840, Daniel Sexton, a local settler, counted many of the grizzly bears eating fruit while he was cutting timber in Edgar Canyon near Banning. Frank Smith, an uncle of the Gilman family, was a successful bear hunter. When Frank was young, he shot a grizzly in Bear Valley that weighed 1,160 pounds. One night Frank was camping with a friend in Hathaway Canyon. They slept in trees to be safe from the bears. That night they counted five different bears walking underneath them.

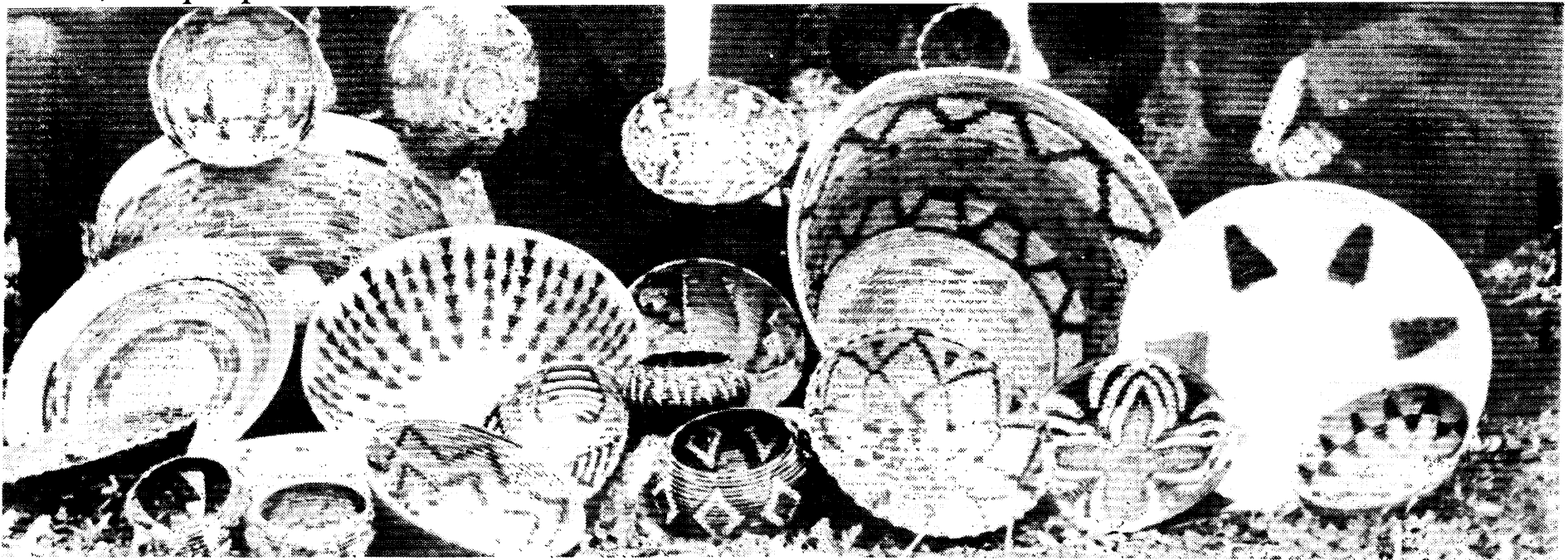
Deer and herds of antelopes were frequently seen moving about the Pass area. Cattle from the mission and settlers competed with antelope for grazing land, causing the antelope to move away. There were many mountain lions in the Banning area. In 1890, mountain lions were killing horses and calves in the Big Cienega area. In 1912, Frank Wiefels captured two mountain cubs alive. He exhibited them in his shop window with a warning to the public not to tease them. In 1914, John Gay, who was living in the hills, was saved from the attack of a mountain lion by his dog.

◆ Gilman Ranch house surrounded by vegetation at the foot of Mt. San Gorgonio.



Indians

There have been as many as 11 Cahuilla Indian communities in the Pass area. They were living on both sides of the Pass and some distance to the north and east. To the north, east, and west of the Cahuillas lived the Serranos, most of whom came to the area in the 1870's. Beyond the Cahuillas lived the Chemehuevis. Near the Colorado River lived the Mojaves. Cahuilla Indians also lived in the San Jacinto Mountains, Colorado Desert, and Santa Rosa Mountains. The Diegueños lived south, east, and west of the Pass area. The Yumas lived along the Colorado River. Westward from the mountains to the ocean was Luiseño land. The Cahuilla population was between 6,000-10,000 people. The Serranos numbered more than 3,000 people.



Beautiful Indian baskets from the Morongo Indian Reservation.

◆ Indian grinding acorns or mesquite beans.



Indians *continued*

The early Indians' food supply had great variety, including several hundred types of plants and animals. They all used acorns and mesquite beans as a major staple of diet. Besides these staples they had yucca, stalks and blossoms, cactus buds, stalks, and blossoms, native date palms, pine and juniper nuts, chia seeds for flour, wild plums, berries of the manzanita, elder and sumac. Game such as antelope, deer, rabbit, quail, and birds was abundant in the Pass area.

All wove very fine baskets from rushes (tall marsh grasses) and made extremely useful pottery. The Cahuillas and Serranos lived in comfortable houses. They built sweat houses for body cleanliness and health as well as ceremonial/community houses. They also put up ramadas (sunshades). They used bows and arrows and nets to hunt game.

The Potrero Ajenio was one of nine small reservations set aside by President Grant in 1865. It remained unsurveyed and had no official status for many years. The native name of the reservation was Malki. In the 1870's the Serrano people began joining the settlement. They brought with them the Morongo name, which came from the Serrano name for their people, Maringayam. The reservation has a total of 31,724 acres.

In 1863, there was a smallpox epidemic among local Indian tribes. It has been estimated that one half of the Indian population died.



Indians *continued*

There were several prominent chieftains among the Cahuillas: Cabezon who “ruled” the desert tribes and Juan Antonio who ruled from the Ajenio's Potrero westward. Juan Antonio's respect of justice was striking and the punishment he dealt out for crimes was swift and hard.

Captain John Morongo, a full-blooded Serrano, was born in 1846. As a boy he ran the trail between Los Angeles and San Bernardino carrying messages. At 21, he was working in a livery stable at San Bernardino. He made friendships with men who afterward became prominent and were able to help him. When the Indian Bureau was established at Colton, John was appointed interpreter to the Indian Bureau agent. He came to the reservation in the 1880's. In 1892, he was appointed police chief of the Morongo Reservation. He translated many Sunday sermons at the Moravian Mission on the Reservation. He died July 18, 1898. He had one son and three daughters.

Fig Tree John (born Juan Razon) was a leader of the Palkawsinkela clan of the Desert Cahuillas. He was born about 1830 and lived on the edge of the Salton Sink (a depression in the land's surface). He was named for the fig trees he planted around a spring near his house. He made frequent visits to Banning where he paid for the things he bought with gold dust. This started rumors about the lost gold mine of Fig Tree John in the Santa Rosa Mountains. He died on April 11, 1927. He was buried in his full regalia of a blue army brass buttoned uniform and high silk hat.

◆ Fig Tree John and Captain John Morongo.



Early Pass History

Until 1809 the Pass area was known only to the Cahuilla Indians. In 1809, Cahuillas from Whitewater Canyon were baptized at the San Gabriel Mission. In 1819, a sub-mission was established near San Bernardino. Many Cahuillas helped the priest build an irrigation ditch and learned farming. Later in the 1820's, the San Gabriel Mission maintained a cattle ranch in the Pass where Cahuillas worked as cowhands. In 1823, the Romero expedition passed near the present sight of Malki Museum on the way into the Colorado Desert.

In the 1840's, Paulino Weaver and Daniel Sexton settled in the Pass. They traded with the Cahuilla and hired them to haul timber. Another early settler was Dr. Isaac Smith who moved to the Pass area with his family in 1853. He came for his health because the climate was so good. He built his ranch on the stage line near Highland Springs and it was known as Smith's Station. The first white child born in the Pass area, a girl, was born to the Smith family in 1859.



Early Pass History *continued*

Banning's first permanent landmark, an adobe house on a tract of land now known as the Gilman Ranch, was built in 1854 by José Pope.

James Gilman came to the Pass in 1869 and bought a sheep ranch from Newton Noble. It became a cattle ranch and stage stop where meals and fresh horses were provided.

The early days of the Pass area from 1855 to 1865 were devoted to cattle, horse and sheep raising with some lumbering in the mountains. Later from 1865 to 1880, the Indians and white settlers tried dry farming of oats, barley and wheat. Finally, from 1880 onward, irrigation was built for water and orchards were started.

For many years Banning was known as *Nature's Sanatorium* for its dry desert air that is tempered by cool mountain breezes. At one time Banning had eight health sanatoriums.

◆ Old adobe stage stop at Gilman Ranch.



Jessie Baker

March

Schools

The San Gorgonio School District was formed in 1877 and kept that name until 1901 when it became the Banning School District. The first school opened June 3, 1877 in a one room shack near the present street corner of First and Livingston with Mrs. J.R. Sanderson as teacher. There was no blackboard or chalk the first year. Fourteen children of various ages attended the school. The alphabet was learned by singing songs as were the names of counties and towns.

In 1879, the school building was moved to a spot on Repplier Road and the teacher was Lizzie Wagner. This is where the children had camel rides at recess. In 1882, a larger one room school building was put up near the American Legion Hall. The building was later moved and became a wagon paint shop. The two room school at the Murray Street Wash was built in 1885 and used for 18 years. In 1903, a five-room structure was built at First and Williams. One night in 1907, the engineer of a passing train whistled the citizens of Banning out of bed to watch their new school burn to the ground. A new stucco building was finished in the fall of 1907. It had seven classrooms, a small library, and a teacher's rest room. The building is still in use today as the Banning School District office. Also in the fall of 1907, the high school was started as a separate unit. In 1914, the high school was unified to include Banning, Cabazon, Edom, Palm Springs and Oakhurst. Central School, located on San Gorgonio Avenue, was completed in September of 1928. In 1921, if the students heard three taps of the fire bell at 8:00 a.m. on a stormy day, it meant there was no school that day!







Schools *continued*

In 1889, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions bought land in the northwest corner of Banning from Dr. Welwood Murray. The land was purchased for the purpose of building a boarding school for Indians to be called St. Boniface. A crew of Chinese workers made the bricks for the three-story school building. The school was self-supporting including a kitchen, laundry, print shop, and bookbinding shop. The school owned 40 acres of irrigated land and 210 acres of grazing land.

Girl Scouts & Boy Scouts

Boy Scout Troop 31 was organized in 1924. The troop was originally sponsored by American Legion Post 129.

A Sea Scout Troop 102 was established in 1932. It maintained a 24-foot whale boat and a 15-foot sailboat at the Salton Sea.

The Girl Scout Troop 1 was organized in 1929. The Banning Brownie Pack was set up the following year in 1930.

Girl and Boy Scout troops continue to be active in our community today.



Street Names of Banning

When a new town is growing, the people living there choose names for their streets. Sometimes they name the streets after themselves, their family or friends, trees, presidents, or states.

Many of the streets in Banning have an interesting reason for their names.

Grove Avenue is named for a eucalyptus grove that grew on the border of Sylvan Park.

Park Avenue is named for Sylvan Park.

Aguila Street (águila is eagle in Spanish) is named in honor of the Mexican Eagle.

Alessandro Road is named for Ramona's husband in the famous book *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson.

During the years when Banning was famous for its fruit and nut orchards, many streets were named for the fruit and nuts.

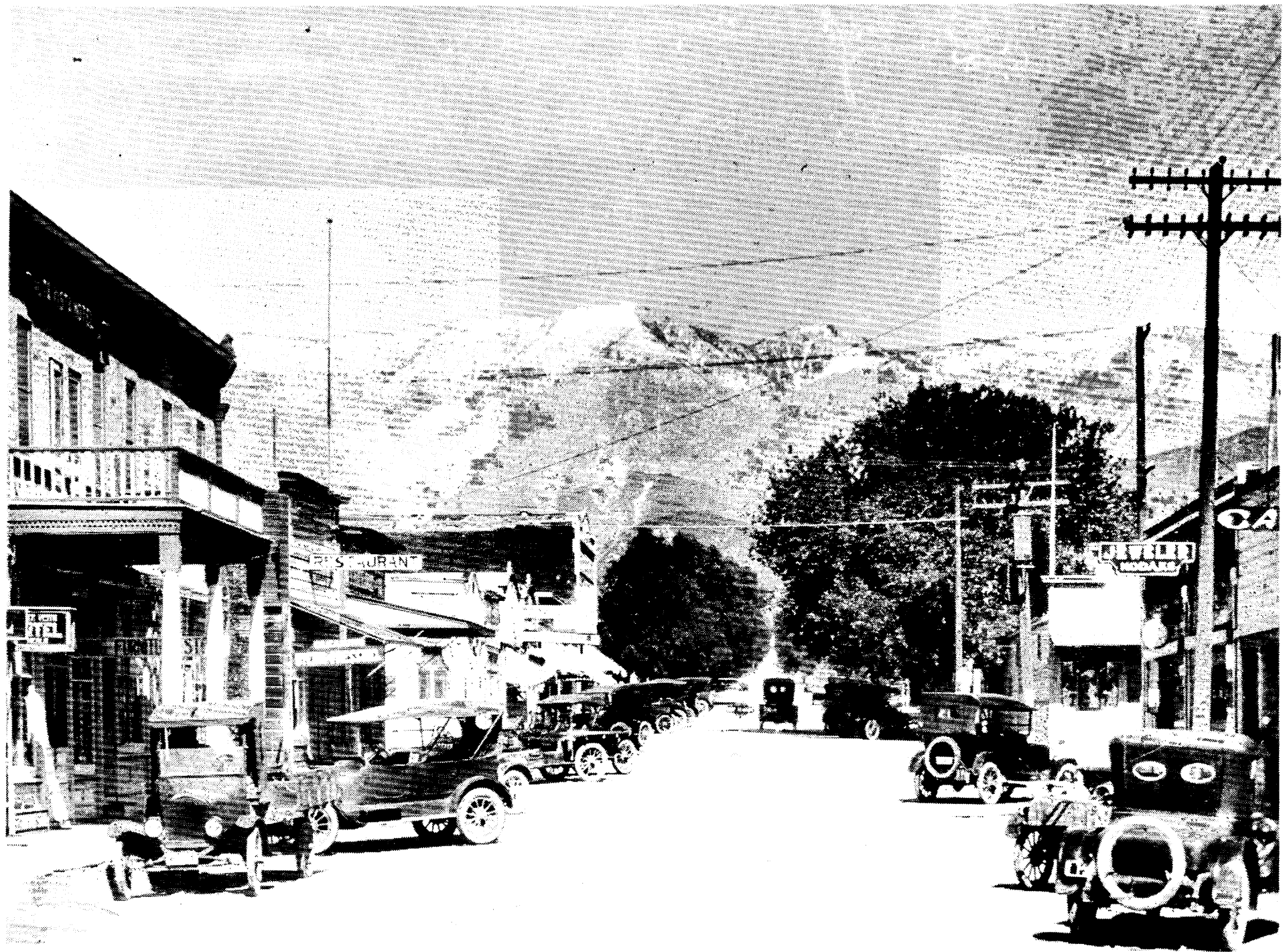
Almond, **Nonpareil** and **Excelsior** are named for the almond.

Hale, **Lovell** and **Crawford** are named for the peach.

You might think **Cherry Street** was named for a fruit, but it wasn't. It was named in honor of the Nathan Cherry family.

Livingston Street was dedicated to the famous African explorer and missionary by his nephew who lived in Banning. **Livingston Street** was the main east-to-west road in Banning until 1921 when **Ramsey Street** became the main thoroughfare.

◆ San Gorgonio Avenue looking north in the late 1800's.



Street Names of Banning *continued*

Other streets named for early towns' people are: Allen, Barbour, Blanchard, Ensign, Fay, Durward, Gilman, Hargrave, Hathaway, Jacob, Kelso, King, Lancaster, Lane, Martin, Murray, Omar, Phillips, Prince and Repplier.

Sometimes people would have more than one street named after themselves. Mr. Theodore Hofer had a street for both his first name and last name, as did Mr. George Bryant. Mr. Charles Wesley Filkins had three streets named for each of his names.

Much of the above place name information was compiled by pupils of the Banning Grammar School in the 1930's.



Trees

In 1891, E.E. Pierson moved to Banning. He bought ten acres on the street corner of San Gorgonio and George. He was a nurseryman and planted trees on that corner. Pepper trees were set out on Second and Hays by the Banning Land and Water Company. The American Eucalyptus Company bought 200 acres west of town in 1910. They planted eucalyptus trees to be used commercially. They hoped to sell them as railroad ties. John George Replier was put in charge of the project. However, after five years the trees were merely crooked saplings and the project was abandoned. From 1910 to 1913 John Replier planted the stately evergreens that line North San Gorgonio Avenue and the crossing streets. By 1915, seven miles of streets were planted with trees, many of which continue to line our streets.

◆ San Gorgonio Avenue heading north with young cypress trees in 1950.



Phineas Banning in his 40's, in the early 1870's.

Phineas Banning

Among the daredevil stage and freight drivers of an earlier day was Phineas Banning. Banning settled in Los Angeles in 1851, pioneering transportation in Southern California. He revolutionized staging in Southern California by importing Concord coaches, faster and more comfortable than the rough wagons in use at that time. Before Banning was 30 years old, he owned fleets of horses, mules, stagecoaches, steamers, tugboats, and freight wagons to move passengers and goods. He transported them from the San Pedro Harbor to Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Arizona. The town of Banning was one of his stage stops.

Phineas Banning, known as the transportation king of Southern California, later used his influence as state senator to ensure construction of the first railroad to Los Angeles and San Pedro.

Welwood Murray, a prominent citizen of the Pass area, was a friend of Phineas Banning. He was persuaded by Phineas to name the new settlement Banning in return for a donation to a local church.

The home he built for his family in the 1800's is now a museum located at Banning Park in the city of Wilmington.



Dr. John C. King

Dr. John C. King arrived in Banning in September of 1883. Very ill with tuberculosis, he had been told by doctors in the East that he had about six months to live. Because of Banning's healthful climate, Dr. King lived fifty more years, becoming one of Banning's foremost citizens. He was doctor to most of the Indians on the Morongo Reservation. King was well thought of by the Indians. He founded the Banning Hospital and Sanatorium where through medical and surgical treatments the fame of Banning traveled even to foreign shores. Riverside County Public Library has a Dr. King Memorial Library named in his honor.



DR. JOHN C. KING
Pioneer Physician

◆ Southern Sierras Sanatorium in 1912 on Theodore Street.

Banning

Riverside County
CALIFORNIA

The Health City

Recognized as "The Health Center of the Southwest"
by the All-Year Club of Southern California



Snow-capped Mt. San Geronimo (Old Grayback) in the background, the Highest Peak in Southern California, and the source of Banning's Abundant Supply of Pure Water.

Have you heard of a kiss from the desert sun,
And the breath from the snow-crowned hills
As being the finest of all cures
For man and his many ills?

There's nothing to take from a bottle—
Just a dash of climate—no more!
You enter the city of better health
The day you tap at our door.

—Gladys Connelly.

Gilman Ranch after a snowfall ►





JAMES G. GILMAN

James Gilman

James Gilman was born in 1842. Gilman bought the Noble Ranch in 1869 from Newton Noble. He started with 59 head of cattle, 88 horses, two stallions, one mule and one saddle horse. His first planted crop was barley. He later planted irrigated crops of almonds, apricots, prunes and olives.

In the 1870's, he and X.Y.Z. Ackers built a small sawmill in Water Canyon. They also started the first general store at the Gilman Ranch and later added a post office. With partners in the 1880's, Gilman supplied surplus waters of the Whitewater River for use at Palm Springs.

Mr. Gilman, always active in civic and political affairs, was clerk of the local school board for more than twenty years and was deputy assessor for the Pass District for several years.

He married Martha Smith in January of 1871. Their first child M. French was born in November of 1871. The Gilmans had seven other children. James Gilman died in 1916 at the age of 74.



Mr. and Mrs. W.S. Hathaway.

W.S. Hathaway

W.S. Hathaway was a resident of Banning for 54 years. For 41 years he was an important merchant. He came to Banning on Christmas Day of 1883. He opened Banning's first lumber yard and owned a general store. He also had a bee ranch in the canyon with 120 stands of bees, exporting the bees' honey to Europe. W.S. Hathaway became Banning's first mayor in 1913, serving until 1916.

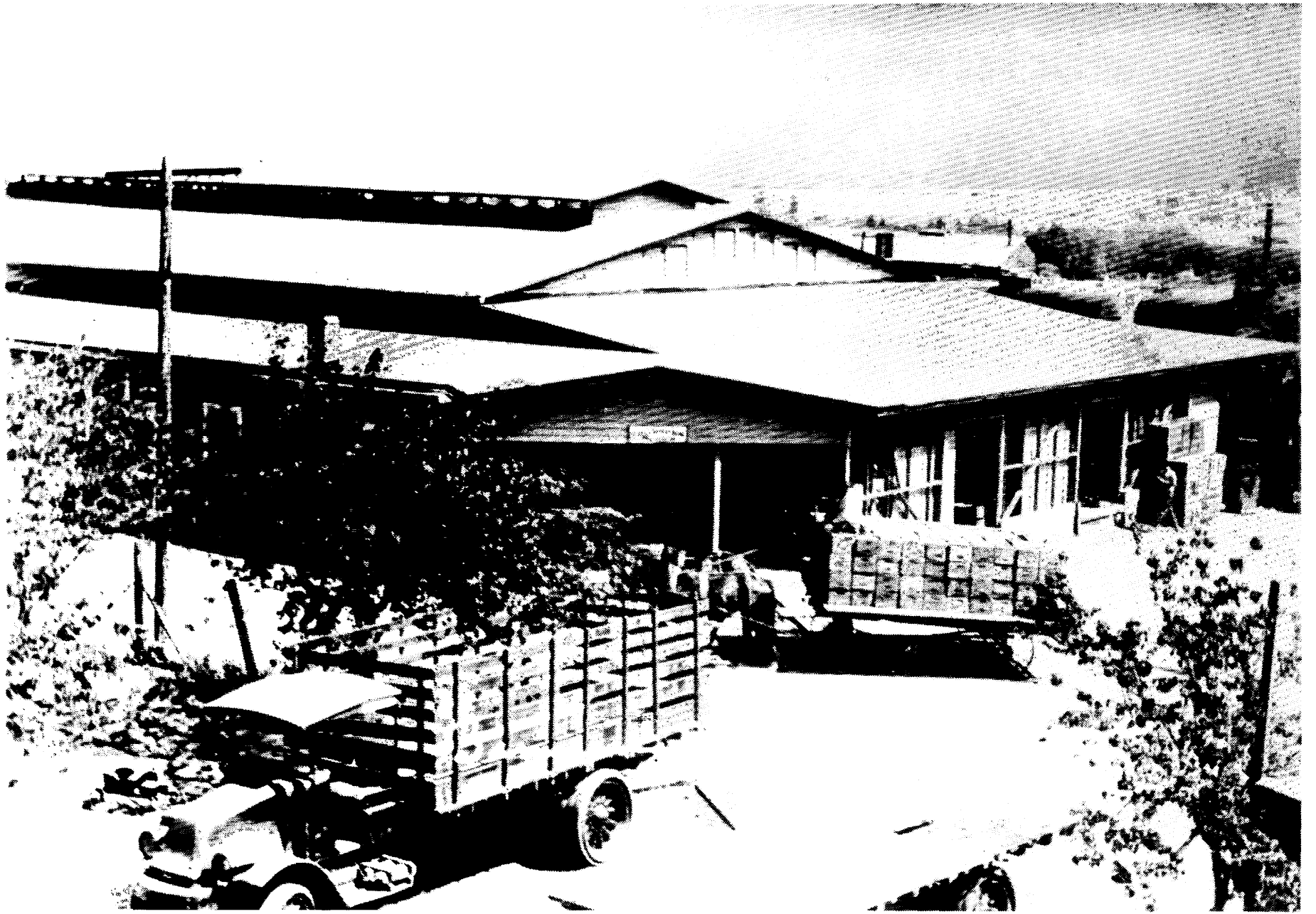
C.O. Barker

C.O. Barker was a very prominent Banning citizen involved with many areas of the community. He arrived in Banning in 1884, teaching school his first two years here. He then became the manager of the Land and Water Company. Later Barker was elected to the state assembly.

In 1893, through Barkers efforts, 5,000 trout were placed in a local water canyon. In 1904, he was the first vice president at Banning State Bank. Later he became involved with the start of the cannery in Banning.

Cochraner out the mesa







Pass scene looking toward Mt. San Jacinto.

Presidents

President Grover Cleveland and his wife, along with former president U.S. Grant and his family, traveled through the Pass area in 1884. They stayed overnight at the town's only hotel, The Bryant House.

President Benjamin Harrison also stopped in the Pass area. Banning was festooned with flowers. The editor of the local paper, Louis Munson, welcomed them to Banning. Miss Sarah Morris brought her Indian students from the Malki Reservation, carrying loads of flowers. The President left his car to shake hands and someone gave him a box of Banning fruit. As the train pulled out, it was bombarded with desert blooms thrown by the Indian students.



Grover Cleveland



Ulysses S. Grant



Benjamin Harrison





The General Store

Before there were many different small stores, there was one general store in Banning. The first store opened in 1877. It was a general store that provided all the needs to the local population. The first post office also started in 1877 located inside the general store. Also around this time the first saloon opened offering food and drink to the public.

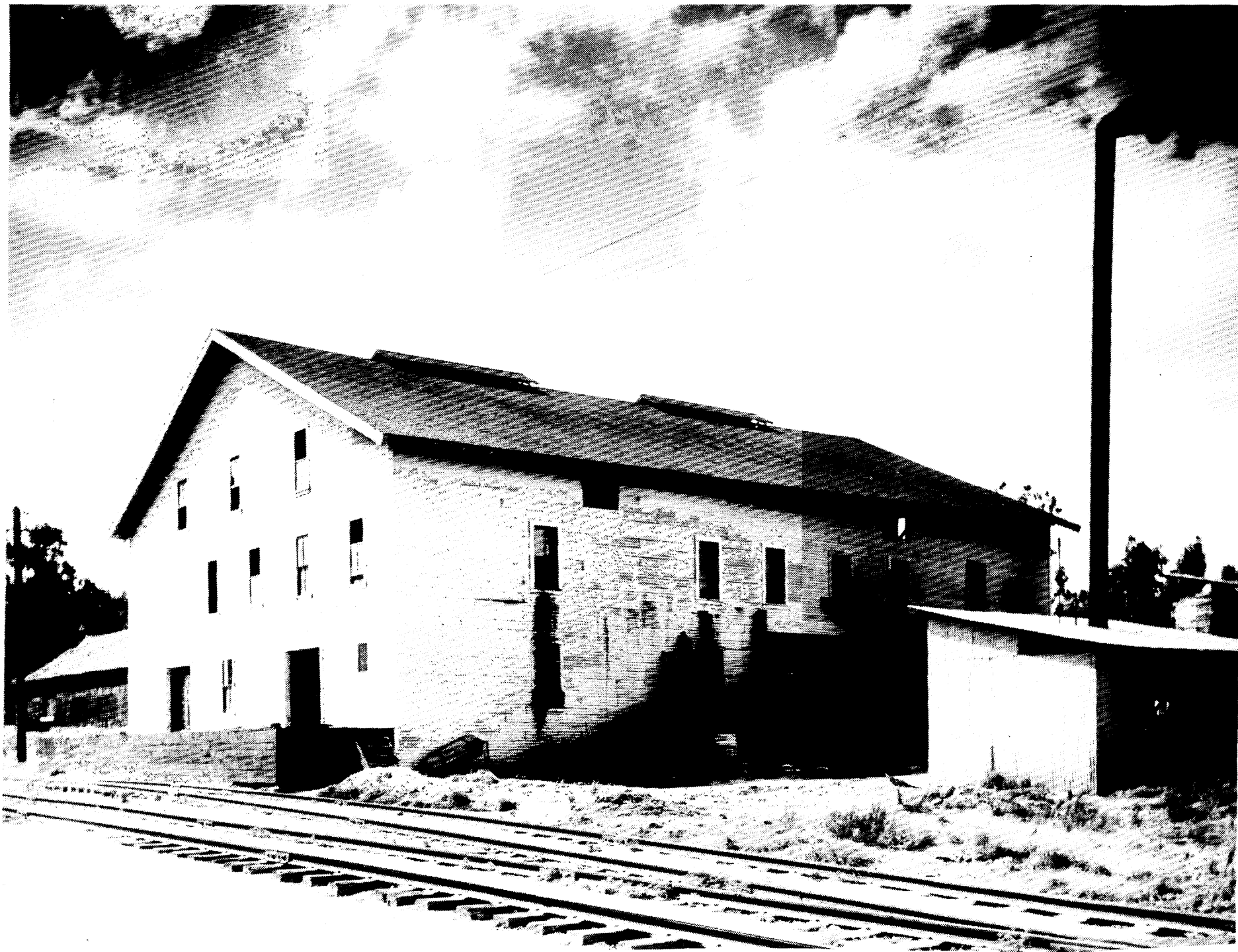


Apricots in the Banning dry yard.

Cultivated Vegetation

Growing fruits to sell has been an important part of the Pass area growth. Many of the trees were first planted in the late 1800's. Crops included apricots, peaches, pears, prunes and almonds. In 1893, Banning fruit won a prize at the Chicago World's Fair. A cannery was started in 1913 to pack fruits for selling and shipping to distant places. Many fruit producing trees still stand in Banning, but are no longer a big business.





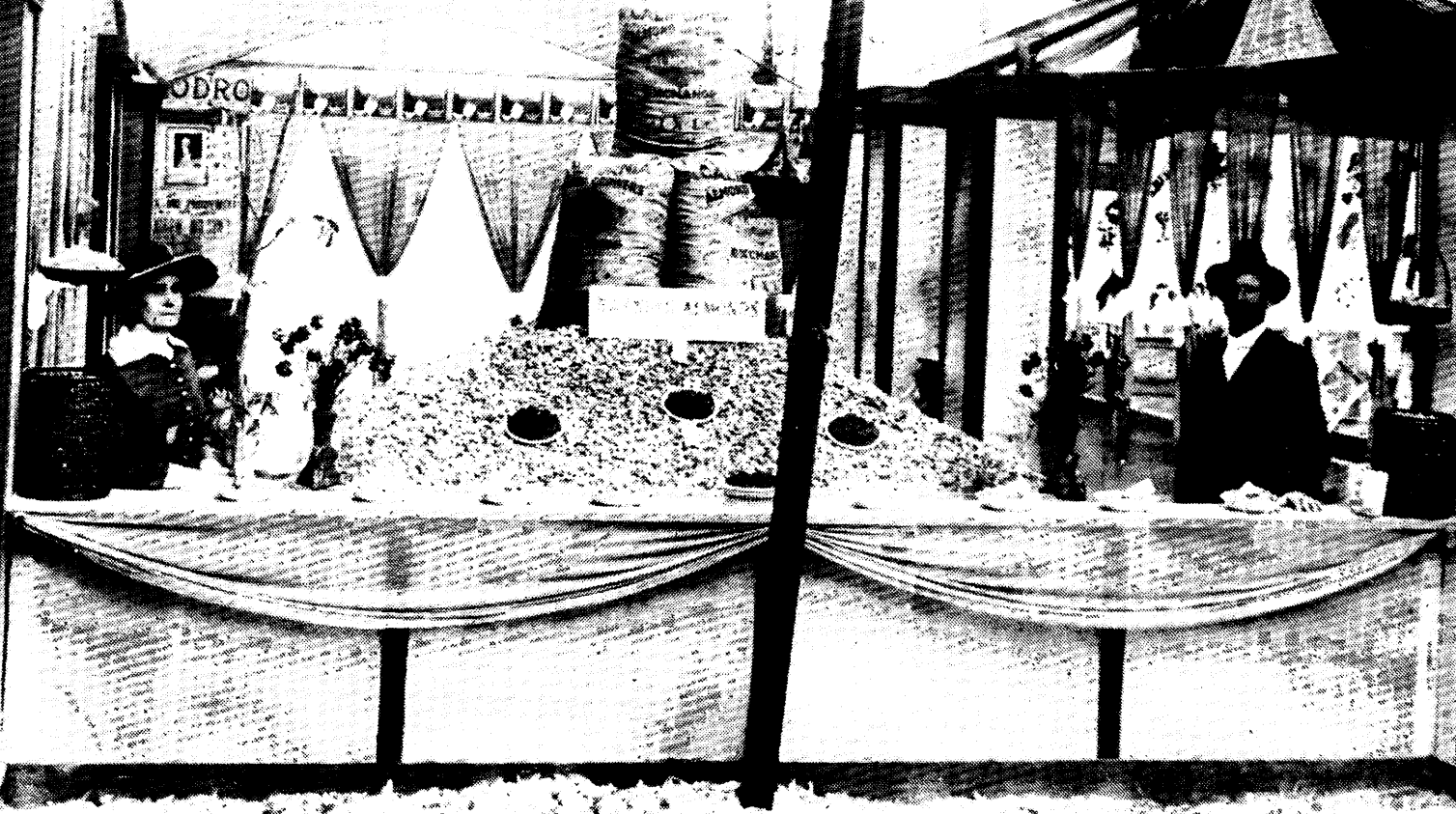
BANNING



BANNING
PRODUCTS

100,000
200,000
300,000
400,000

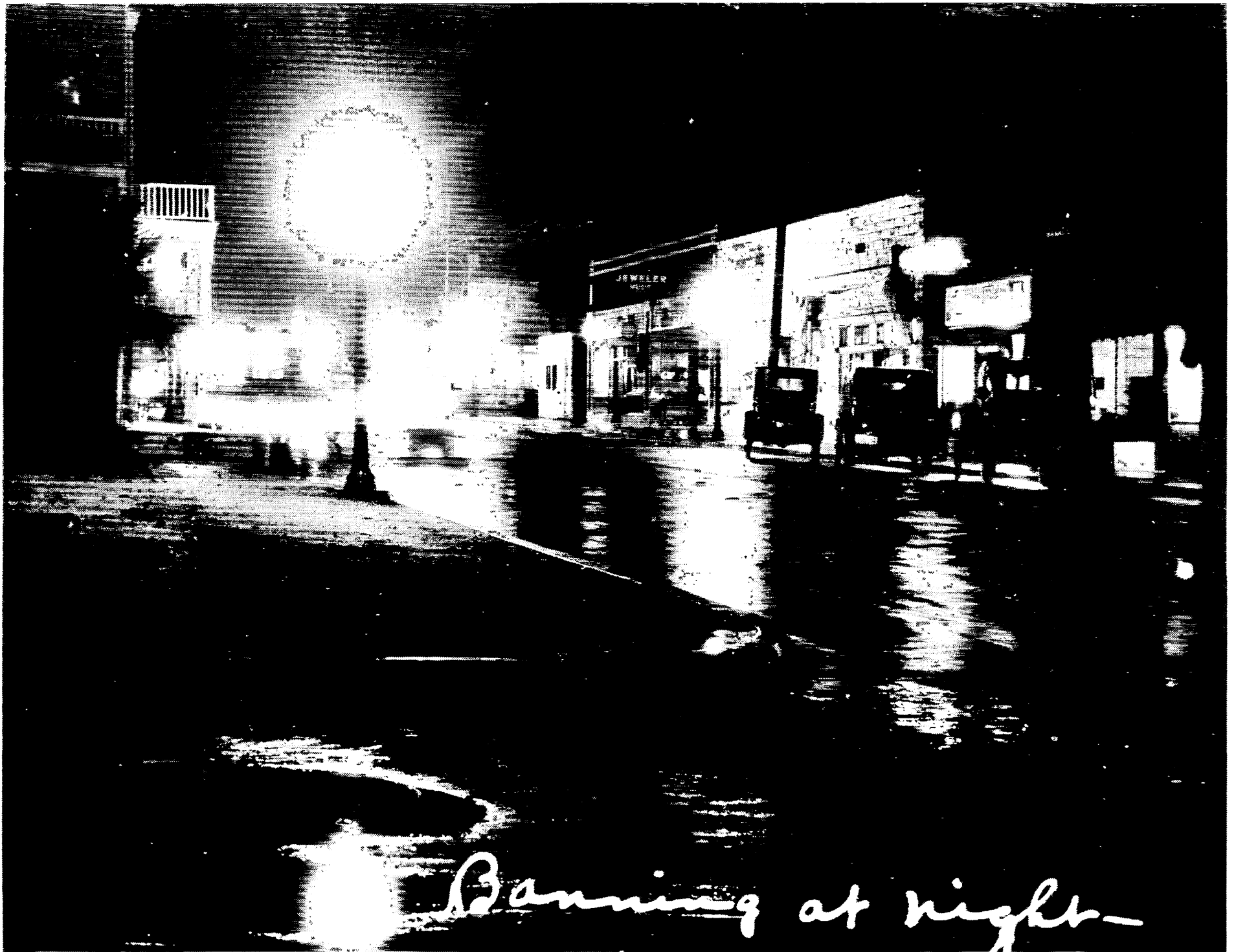
LARGEST
ALMOND
GROWING
DISTRICT
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA



BANNING
ORCHARDS

ALMOND ORCHARD
BANNING, CALIFORNIA
ESTABLISHED 1900

WATER
ABUNDANCE



Banning at night

Movies

Before Banning ever had its first movie theater, the town was the location for filming a movie in 1914. Hobart Bosworth filmed the western thriller *Buckshot Johnny* throughout the Banning area.

The first movie theater in Banning opened with a silent comedy by Buster Keaton in 1928. The next year, in 1929, the Banning movie theater had its first talking motion picture, *The Rainbow Man*, starring Eddie Dowling.

Most of the film *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*, starring Robert Redford, Robert Blake and Katharine Ross, was filmed in the Banning area. The movie, released in 1970, was based on a famous manhunt that ended in several tragic deaths.

- ◆ Page 48 - Banning Cured Fruit Associate warehouse.
- ◆ Page 49 - Mr. and Mrs. French Gilman at Riverside County Fair in 1910's.
- ◆ Banning at night in the 1920's.



Transportation

Stagecoach

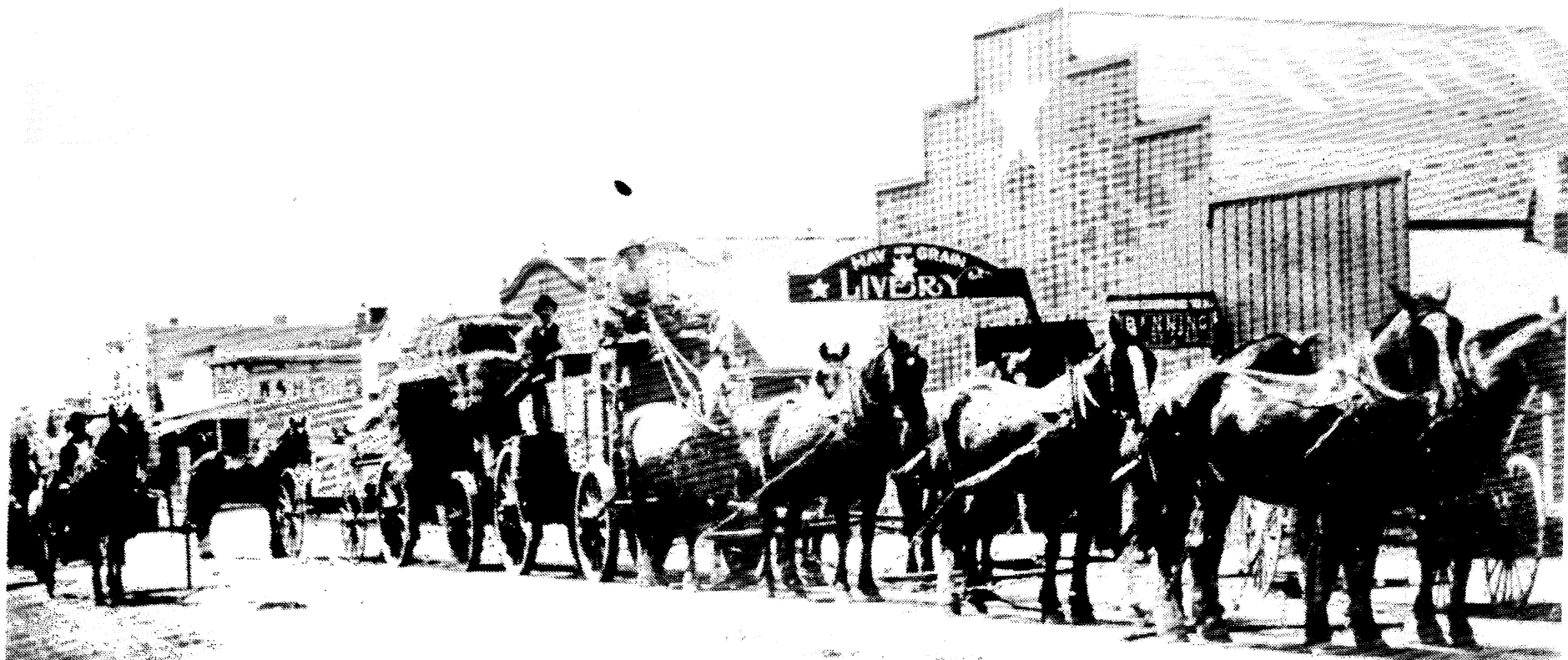
Gold was discovered by Paulino Weaver on the Colorado River in 1862. People needed a fast way to get to the gold from Los Angeles. They had to come through the Pass - but how? William D. Bradshaw was going to the gold mines with 150 men and he called the road he was traveling on *Bradshaw Road*. He told everyone it was a good road. After that a stagecoach line was started and it was called the *Colorado Stage and Express Line*. It was used for taking passengers between the Pacific Coast and the Colorado River providing a safe transport for gold dust, letters and other valuables.

The first stage left the Wells Fargo depot on September 6, 1862, with six horses and six passengers. The cost of the twelve-day ride to the river was \$40.00. The stage was back in Los Angeles four days after it left the river, the quickest time ever made between these two points.

The driver reported plenty of water in the desert at places averaging thirty miles apart. The strongbox in the *boot* held more than \$5,000 in gold dust. In order to lighten the load for the horses the passengers often had to get out and walk the sandy ruts.

Between 1869 and 1871 three different companies had their turn in carrying the mail and passengers to the Colorado River.

◆ Hauling freight in early Banning.



I don't know, starting out from Baunung to the mine
in 1908 which you often watched
the scene. Baunung 1908.

Transportation

Stagecoach *continued*

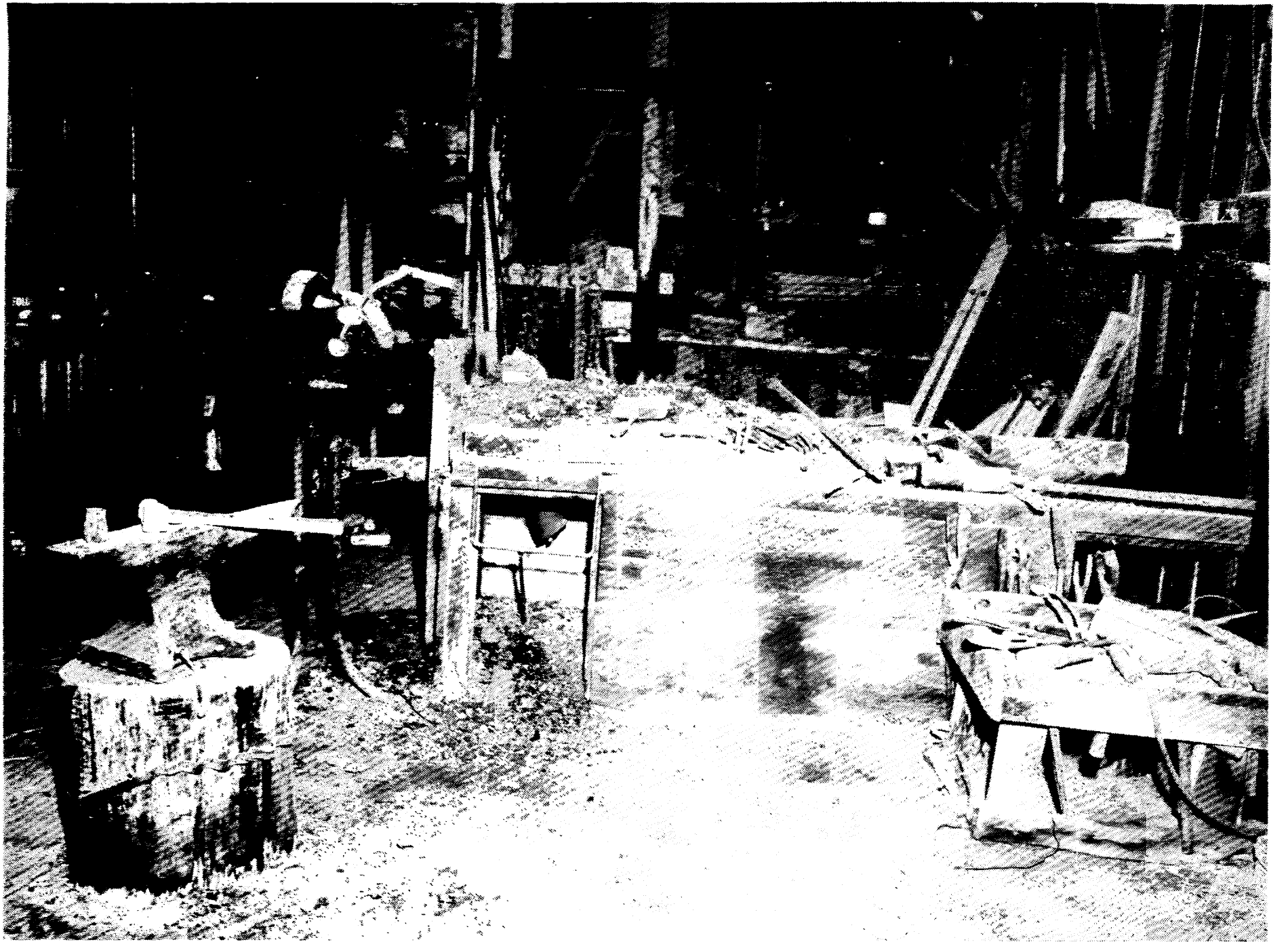
Wyatt Earp, once a sheriff of Tombstone, Arizona, for a time drove a stage between San Bernardino and Arizona. The stage ran through the Pass.

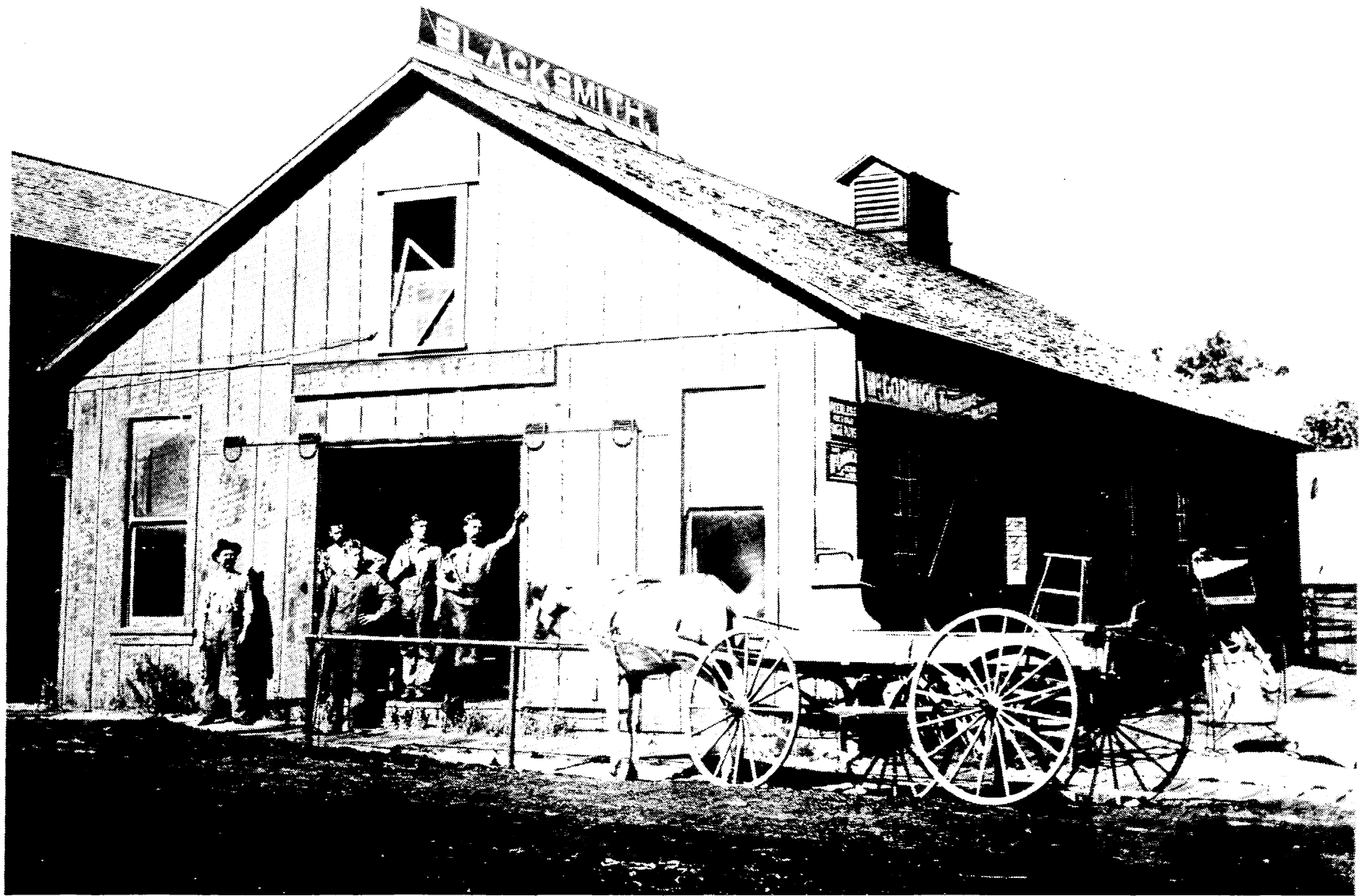
The largest of the Concord stagecoaches was built to hold nine passengers inside, and six more could sit on the deck. On one trip it was reported thirty-six persons on top and inside in addition to the driver.

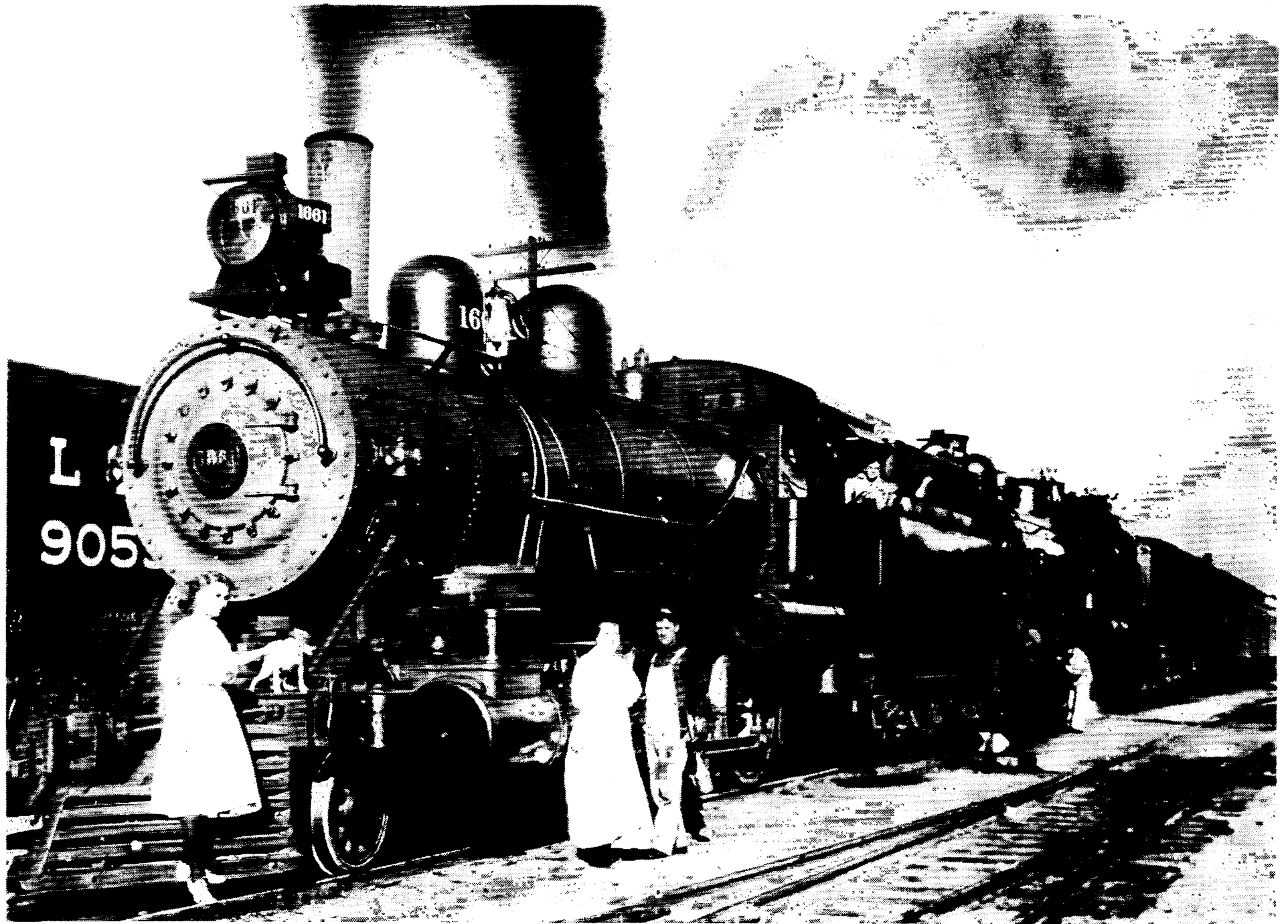
The stagecoach lines ran until the coming of the railroad. The last remaining stagecoach that ran between San Bernardino and the Colorado River was sold in 1910 to a movie director. It was taken to Yosemite for use in motion pictures.

◆ A desert team starting out from Banning to the mines in 1908.

Page 56 - The inside of the blacksmith shop on the Stewart Ranch. ➤
Page 57 - Blacksmith shop in the late 1800's. ➤







Transportation

Railroad

In 1860, a dream was taking form in California that would shape the future course of San Geronio Pass history. Four merchants, Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker, began the project of a Pacific railroad. It was the idea of a brilliant young engineer, Theodore Judah. Although at the beginning of their venture not one of these storekeepers knew anything about railroading, they eventually became known as the *Big Four* of the railroad world.

In July of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad bill. This meant that the Central Pacific Railroad was going to be built eastward from the Pacific Coast.

Toward the close of 1864 Southern Pacific conducted its first survey on the route of a railroad. A second survey took place in 1869. In 1871, building of the railroad began. It took several years to build. Much of the building in the Pass area was done by Indians and Chinese.

In 1876, the first passenger train came chugging up the summit of the Pass. With the coming of the railroad, a new era dawned for the Pass. Many businesses started as a result of the railroad.

◆ A train making a local stop at the Banning Depot.



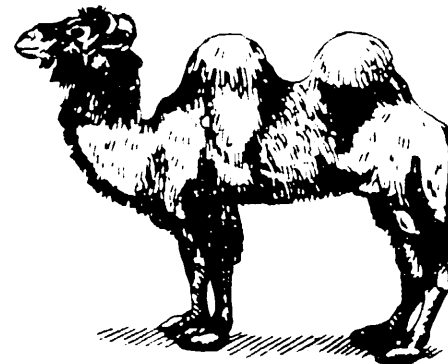
Transportation

Camels

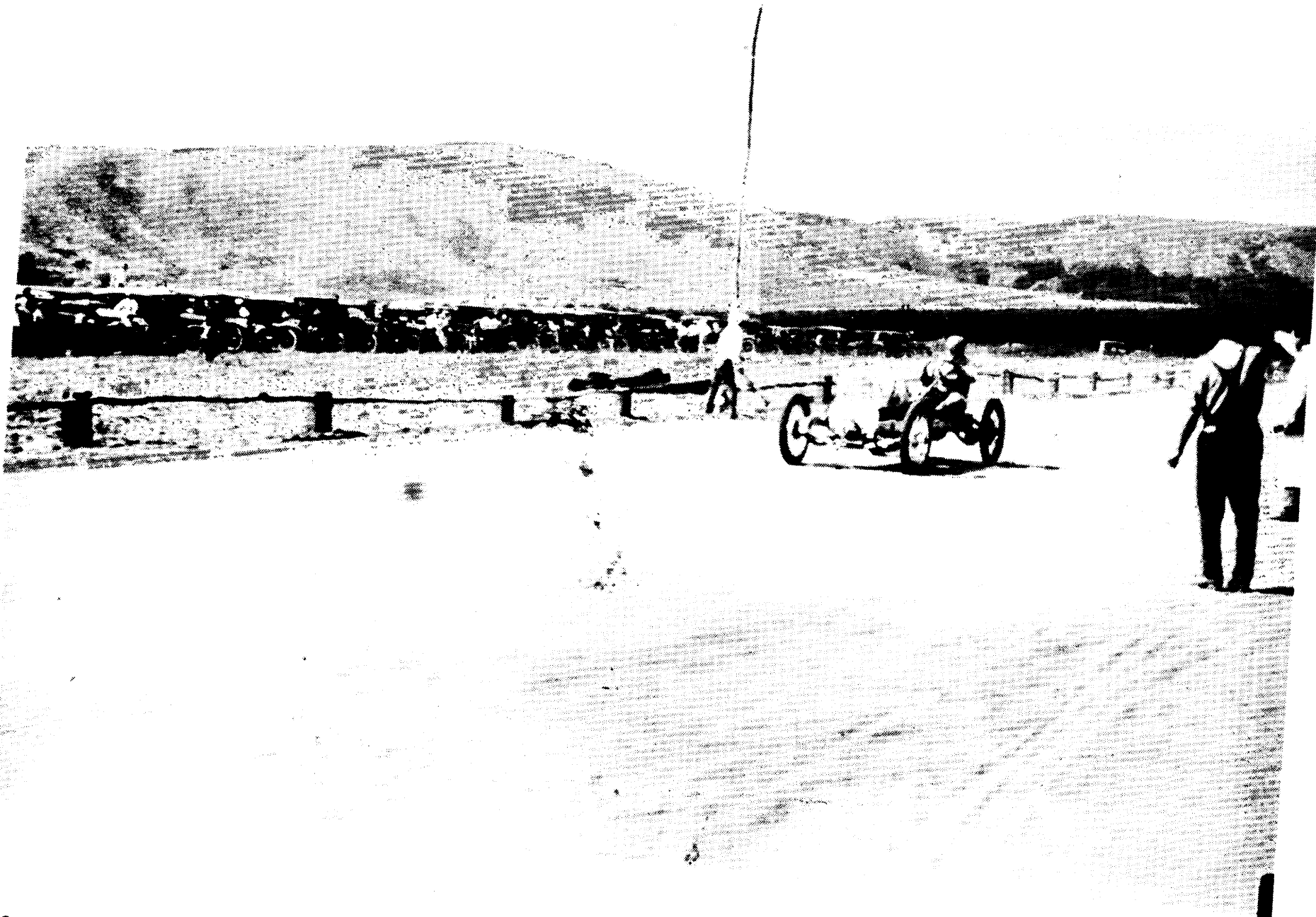
Imagine having a camel ride at recess! That's just what a group of school children did in the 1870's in Banning.

Back before the Civil War in 1855, the United States decided to import camels from Egypt to use in the military. Camels were cheaper than horses, lived longer, and traveled with little food and water.

In 1876, a large herd of camels was driven through the Pass on the way to Arizona. In Banning, one of the camels gave birth and the mother and baby were left behind. Ransome Moore found them and took the camels to his ranch where he kept them for years. His ranch was near the school and the camels often wandered there during the day. Many of the 14 children in the school would take turns riding the camels at recess.



◆ The Banning train depot in the 1940's.



Transportation

Cars

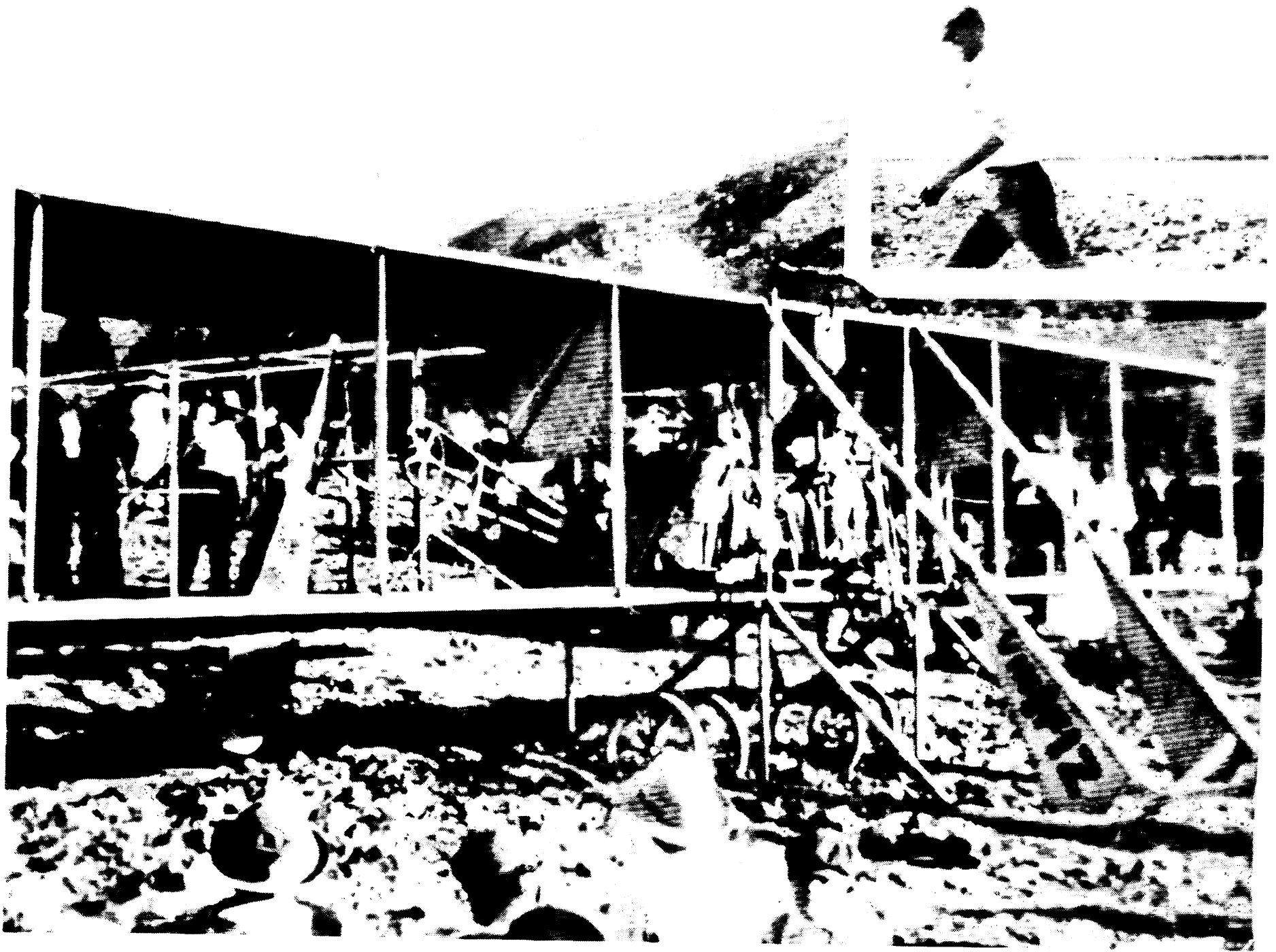
In 1908, the first Los Angeles, California to Phoenix, Arizona automobile racers used Banning as a relay station where they changed drivers and tuned the motors. The winning car, a White Steamer, made the trip in thirty hours, twenty eight minutes, beating the next fastest car by two hours. The average speed of the winning car was 16 miles per hour.

In 1910, a car made the first round trip to Twentynine Palms from the Pass area without any problems. An auto stage line began operating between San Jacinto and Idyllwild in June of 1910.

The livery business (buggies and horses) sold out in 1919. That same year the first garage was opened in Banning. In 1912, Banning had 17 automobiles. Automobiles were here to stay! The first paved highway from Beaumont to Redlands was opened in 1925.

Racing cars came to Banning in 1925. The American Legion half mile oval speed track was advertised as the fastest dirt speedway in the world.

◆ American Legion oval dirt track in Banning.



Transportation

Airplanes

The first airplane landed in the Pass in October of 1911. The pilot was forced down in a field with engine trouble. Flying a biplane, he was trying to make a transcontinental flight from San Francisco to Florida. It took him 80 days to make the trip.

In November of 1911, Calbraith P. Rodgers, on the first transcontinental flight from New York, landed in Banning with a dead motor. After repairing it, he made it to Pasadena, 49 days after he began his flight. He was followed across the country by an automobile and a freight car of repair parts, which he needed almost continuously.

In April of 1929, land was donated to Banning for building an airport. The first air ticket was sold to Walter Hathaway for a flight from Banning to Los Angeles in 1932. Originally called Rodgers Airport Subdivision, the airport is known today as Banning Municipal Airport.

◆ The landing of the first transcontinental flight in Banning.

Communication

Mail

In the late 1800's, the U.S. Mail began weekly service between San Bernardino and La Paz through the Pass. Newton Noble and Mr. Waters were the drivers and the Pass station was located at Noble's home.

Telegraph

Before 1895, Banning had its own telegraph system. Mrs. Ida Bird inspired the installation. Charley Hamilton and Bert Yerrington set up poles along roadsides, fitting them with insulators made of glass bottle necks. Through these ran wire. Four stations were installed at Mrs. Bird's, Hamilton's, Yerrington's and Summer's store. Bert Yerrington became a professional telegrapher, learning how by practicing with his friends.

Telephone

In 1900, a 12-line telephone switchboard was installed at Dr. Shibley's office. The wire was strung on 14-foot poles and served 20 to 25 phones.

Communication

Newspapers

The Banning Herald was the first newspaper in the Pass region. The paper was first published in 1888 and lasted until 1895. In the late 1800's, *The Banning Herald* published the news of the Salton Sea forming from a break in the Colorado River. The discovery was made by Harry Patton, editor of *The Banning Herald*, who was paid by another newspaper to visit the area of the newly forming sea. His discovery of where the water was coming from helped solve the mystery of the newly forming sea.

Banning was without any local newspaper from 1896 until 1908 when *The Banning Record* began publication. *The Banning Record*, which later became *The Record-Gazette*, continues today bringing local and distant news to our homes.

Radio

In 1923 one of the first radios was brought to Banning. It was installed by Wiefel and Son. It was able to pick up stations as far away as Atlanta, Georgia. Today radio station KMET (1490 on your AM radio) is located in the Pass region bringing music and news over the airwaves into our homes.



Second grade with Miss Filkin in 1915.

Population

Census

Every ten years our country counts all the people. This is called a census. Back in 1890, Charles Bigley got the job of census taker for the desert corners of San Diego County. On May 30, 1890 he started eastward with two ponies and a light covered wagon. Between Indian Wells and Indio, among the sand dunes, the wagon tongue broke. A telegram to Banning brought a new tongue. Then farther out in an arroyo near Volcano Springs a wheel collapsed. He shipped it to Banning where it was repaired and sent back. He finally reached Ogilby located near Yuma. He left the wagon at Camp Muchachomine, where the blacksmith overhauled it. He rode one of the ponies 180 miles into the northeast corner of the county where temperatures soared as high as 131° F. He arrived home in Banning July 3, with six hundred miles of desert behind him and 30 names in his book.

In the 1890 census, Banning's population was 207. Thirty years later in 1920, the population was 1,810.



Water

Water is a necessity for building a community. So in 1876, it was decided to build a flume to carry the surface waters from the nearby San Gorgonio mountains to Banning. A flume is an inclined channel for carrying water from a distance for power or irrigation. This flume was ten miles long, an 18-inch V-type, down the canyon which gave the water a high speed. They planned to float locomotive firewood to the railroad tracks. Dr. Welwood Murray was the manager of the flume for three years. Because the flume also provided the community's water supply the settlers kept it in partial repair.

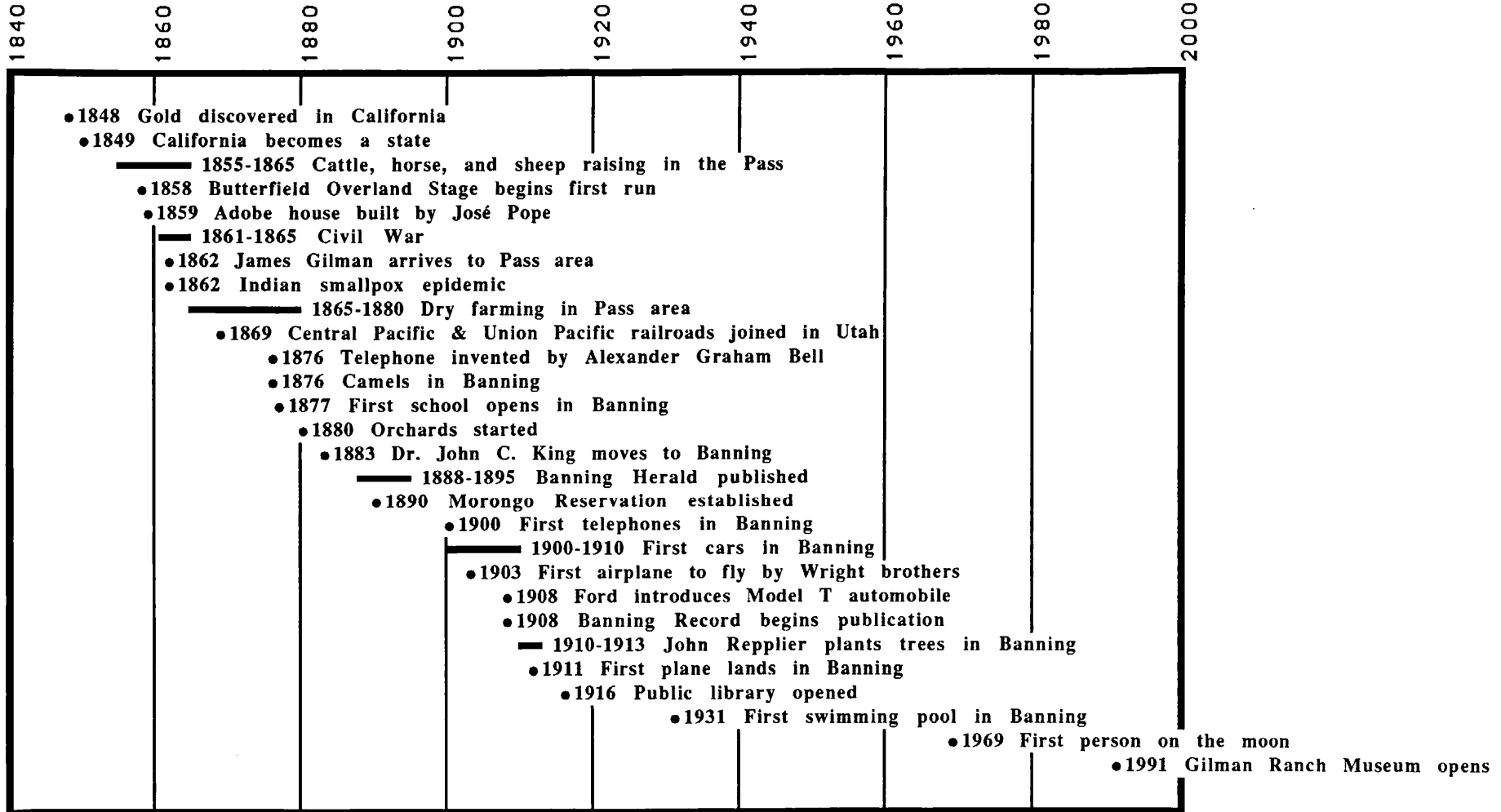
Later a rock ditch was built. Then a pipe line carried water to two reservoirs to be used for irrigation.

In 1898 the first well was dug near the head of a canyon. It was 48 feet deep. Five more wells were dug between 1912 - 1925. The deepest was 132 feet deep.

The Metropolitan Water District's aqueduct had its field headquarters in Banning in 1930 while building its pipeline.

Banning's first swimming pool was opened in August of 1931.

◆ Union Ice wagon delivering blocks of ice to businesses and homes in Banning before refrigerators.



Cityhood of Banning

In the 1870's, where the city of Banning now stands, there was only a railroad track and telegraph wires. The Banning townsite dates from the year 1884. In 1913, with a population of 500, Banning became an incorporated city. In 1927 about eight acres were donated to the city for what became Sylvan Park.

Citizens voted for a public library in August 1916. It was first housed in Banning Union High School.



The stagecoach continues to travel during Stagecoach Days.

Preserving History

The past remains alive because of the efforts of the citizens to preserve their history.

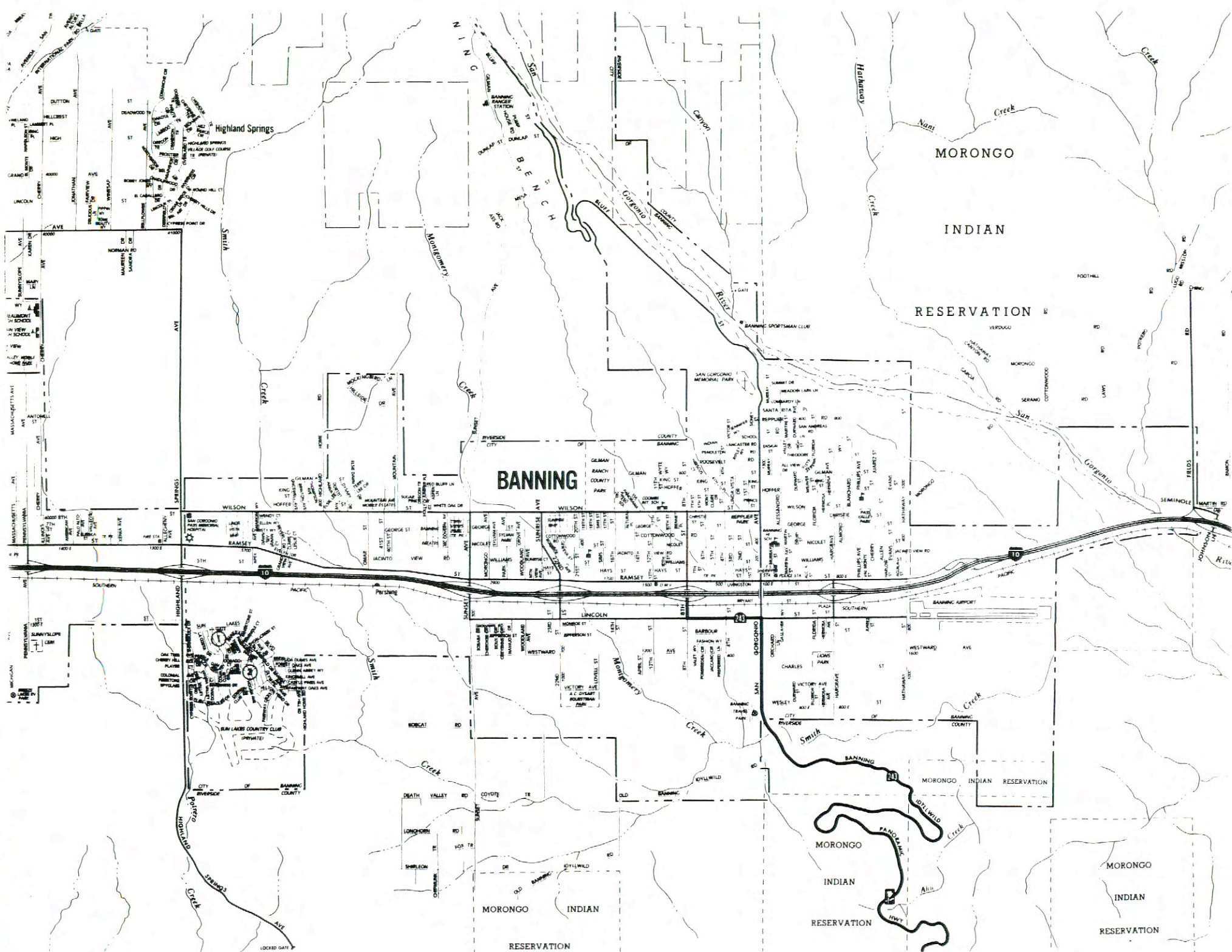
Malki Museum is located on the Morongo Indian Reservation. It features collections of baskets, pottery, arrowheads, beads, feathers, and photograph books of the Southern California Indians. On Memorial Day each year, the museum holds an Indian Fiesta with a barbecue, food and craft booths, and features colorfully costumed Indian dancers and singers.

Gilman Ranch (one of the stage stops along the Bradshaw Trail) was designated a historical site in the 1970's. The oldest attraction on the ranch is the remains of an old adobe built in 1854, the first known Anglo settlement in the San Gorgonio Pass. The adobe collapsed in the late 1930's. There are also five buildings built by the Gilmans in the 1870's that house artifacts from that era. The ranch is located north of Wilson at the end of Sixteenth Street.

Banning Public Library is located at the corner of San Gorgonio Avenue and Nicolet Street. The library maintains a collection of materials on local history.

Banning is called *Stagecoach Town U.S.A.* Each year, usually the first week in October, the early days are remembered with a celebration. The celebration lasts a week with contests, a carnival, parade, rodeo, dinners and dances. Citizens dress in Western, Indian, Pioneer, or Spanish outfits. The businesses decorate their buildings and the town, and special badges are on sale. A traveling jail *arrests* those without badges.





Highland Springs

BANNING

MORONGO

INDIAN

RESERVATION

BANNING

MORONGO

INDIAN

RESERVATION

MORONGO

INDIAN

RESERVATION

MORONGO

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