

Collectors Edition

TOPOCK 66



Souvenir Magazine



Becoming a

ROADIE

A trip down Route 66 can start anywhere, but why not from Jackson/Adams & Michigan Ave, in Chicago? Yes, the road goes in both directions, east & west, but for most folks, their first trip starts at this location and heads west.

Chet wanted to understand, in more depth, the culture of this old road, meet its people (roadies-business owners-civic leaders). Our journey, one that is still ongoing, began one morning walking around downtown Chicago. A pattern was set from the start, we would drive, then walk and do it all again, as we moved west to our final destination, the Santa Monica Pier in CA.

As with all tourists, Chet bought souvenirs, took many photos, spent time with the people we met, and never wanted to hurry to leave at each stop. If there had been daylight and places open 24 hours, we probably would have never slept.

These photos were taken on that trip.



Chet and Jim at the world's largest Route 66 neon sign located at the Elk City, OK museum complex.

Chet and Jim spending time with Scott Cameron at his Route 66 Mr. "C" gift shop in Lebanon, MO. Scott was the longtime manager of blues legends, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, and others. Scott was also involved in Route 66 Root Beer.



Pulse Custom Magazine is a subsidiary of Mother Road Enterprises who published the Route 66 Pulse newspaper.

Our mission is to become a partner with **YOU** in Marketing, Promoting and Advertising you the client, by creating a Souvenir Magazine for your customers.

This copy, you are now reading, is a sample of the kind of material we can do for you. When we say CUSTOM we mean the content will be all about you with other articles/photos that give your customers a true Collectable Souvenir of their visit to your business or event.

This concept can be used by businesses, events, communities and individuals that want to showcase themselves with a professional magazine in both print and digital format.

Contact us for more information on how you can get started.



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Editorial

Of all the places and people we highlight in these Pulse Custom magazines, a few of them we have been privileged to have been involved with from the start of their becoming an ICON on the road. One such place is TOPOCK66 & CHET HITT.

Chet's journey to buying, recreating and opening Topock66 came about as a challenge to both his personal and professional lives. The word VISIONARY fits him to a tee. The West was tamed and created by just such people.

Chet and his TEAM have created a very unique establishment. In fact, it is the only place I know where you can view old Route 66, new Interstate 40 (one of many highways to replace Route 66), the Colorado River and the Santa Fe Railroad tracks (BNSF), all while enjoying a drink, food, and entertainment. You can arrive via vehicle, boat or ATV by Trails.

Add to this the gift shop where you can add to your collection of unusual and creative merchandise, some items not found anywhere else.

The phrase, "YOU HAVE COME A LONG WAY" followed by "WE AIN'T DONE YET" are both compliments and predictions.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following for allowing us to have access to their archives.

Sean Evans, Cline Library, NAU, Flagstaff, AZ

Karen Gardner, Topock Topics, Golden Shores/Topock

Staff at the Mohave Museum of History & Arts, Kingman, AZ

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The History of



In 2004, Chet Hitt received a phone call that the Topock Marina where his family had their vacation home had been sold to a developer. Chet immediately drove to Topock to discuss the developer's plans for the Marina. When he asked the new buyer for a long term lease, he was told that the park was to be demolished to make way for a private marina and condominium complex. Obviously, this was bad news for Chet and the rest of the folks living in the park. The next morning, Chet saw the developer in the restaurant, and again asked for a long term lease. He was shocked and angered by the response. "Didn't you hear me?" he was told, "I'm kicking all of you out and tearing the place down, and I'm moving into your house!"

Chet next went to the Owner of the Marina and told him "If this guy can't close escrow in 30 days, I'll buy the place myself". To his surprise, the deal with the development company fell through, and Chet found himself stuck with a Marina and Restaurant, a business he knew nothing about. Determined to make lemonade out of lemons, he started putting together a team to help him run all facets of the business, Restaurant, Bar, Retail Store, Gasoline and Mobile Home Park.

In 2008 Chet determined that the old Restaurant and Bar was sliding into the river and began the two-year permit process with the Army Corps of Engineers for a new Seawall and River Walk. During this period, several of the mobile homes were condemned due to age and other tenants had to be relocated. Chet used this time to begin the design of a new Hotel Resort.

In 2010, with construction permits acquired and financing in place, the old Topock Marina was demolished after 50 years as a tradition on the River. "If I had any idea what was heading our way", Chet says "I would have never torn down the old Restaurant".

Chet is referring to a visit from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that immediately halted any plans to start construction. After the project had been cleared by Mohave County Building & Safety, Arizona Fish & Game and the Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA determined that a portion of the project fell within a federally recognized flood

plain. What followed was two years of re-engineering, re-permitting and of course the beginning of the worst economic downturn in history. During these two years, the Topock project was the source of much gossip including stories making the rounds about all sorts of disasters befalling the property, celebrity partners, and even the bankruptcy of the project.

Never one to give up in the face of adversity, Chet essentially began his project over from scratch. He had a Seawall designed and made the decision to begin the project with the Restaurant, Bar, and Retail Space since it needed the least re-engineering. New financing was lined up and finally in 2011, the Seawall required to raise the property out of the flood plain was approved by the Army Corps of Engineers and construction began on the New Topock66.

Of course, a project of this size is not without challenges and Topock66 had its fair share. Anonymous calls to OSHA, Mojave County Building & Safety, Arizona Dept. of Transportation, the Local Fire Department and the Contractor's License Board kept Chet and the crew on their toes and ensured that Chet got to know the Inspectors quite well. Arizona's weather can also be an issue, in the face of cold weather and extreme heat the Subcontractors worked diligently to meet nearly impossible deadlines.

Finally, on July 19th 2013 the first phase of Topock66 opened to the public. The history of Topock Marina is such that the moment the doors opened, everyone on The River (it seemed) came to check out the new place. The very young and inexperienced staff performed gallantly and learned from every mistake and customer comment. Today we couldn't be prouder of our food, our staff and our customer service. We are glad you are here and appreciate your business. Many of you have been coming here for years, and we are happy that we have been able to bring the Topock tradition back to the River. If you have any questions or comments we would love to hear them.

You can usually find Chet Hitt on the property, but if not, any member of our staff would love to talk to you. Of course, you can always find us on Facebook, Yelp, TripAdvisor or Instagram.

TOPOCK

in the Movies

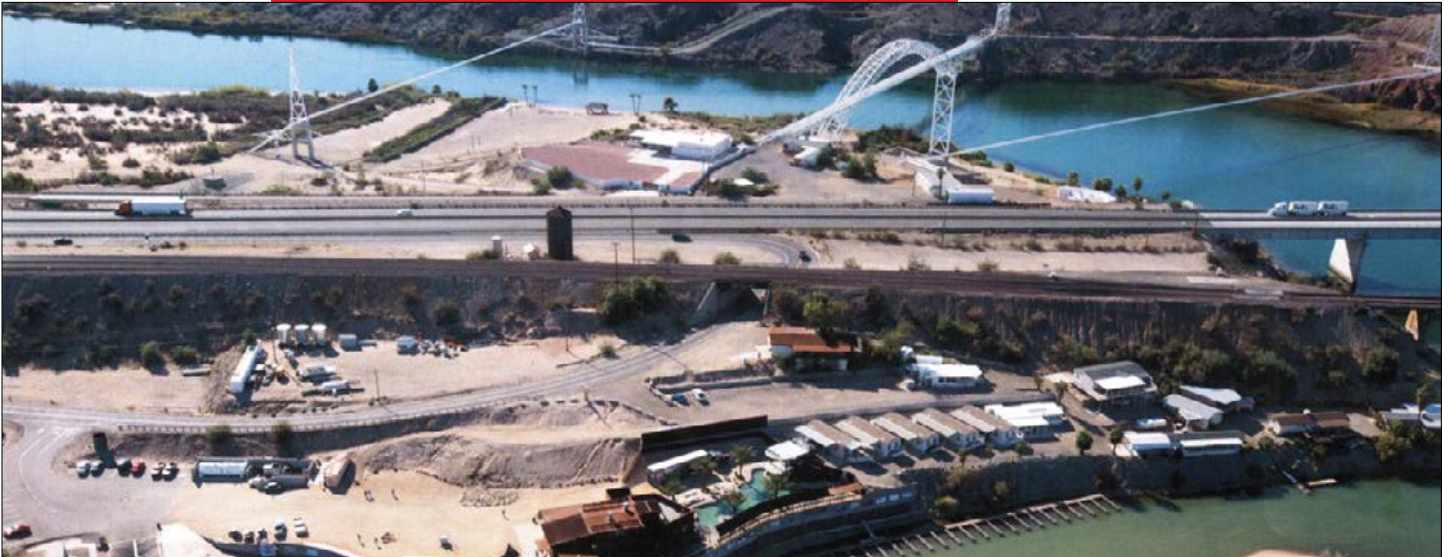
Two of the more famous movies that featured Topock are *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, 1940, and *EASY RIDER*, 1969. The first starred Henry Fonda and the second his son, Peter Fonda.



The opening scenes of *Easy Rider* feature the Colorado River at Topock, where you will see the 'water tank' as the two motorcycles cross the bridge.



The Red Rock Bridge



Aerial photo of Topock66

The Red Rock Bridge was designed to carry two 94 ton engines pulling 3,000 pounds per linear foot. Trains grew heavier and longer. The bridge was strengthened in 1901, but by 1911 the situation had become critical. A pier and support was added in the middle of the span and the bridge was no longer cantilever.

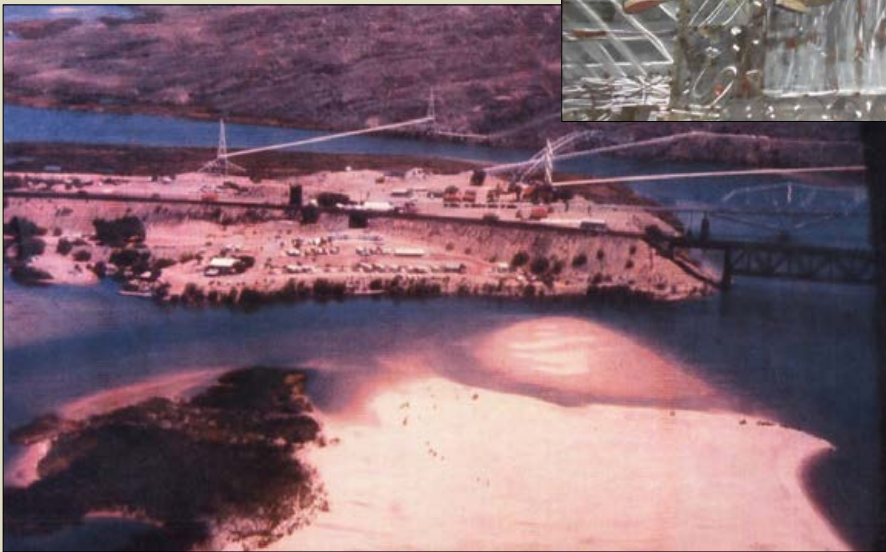
Trains and cars share a bridge. The Needles Ferry began moving

travelers across the Colorado in 1890. The National Old Trails Highway which followed the Santa Fe trail through Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona crossed the Colorado river via the Needles Ferry. In 1914, a flood took the ferry out of service. As an emergency measure, planks were put on the Red Rock Bridge and motorists crossed the bridge between trains. The Red Rock Bridge continued to carry motor vehicles until the Trails Arch Bridge was completed on February 20, 1916.



The first bridge to cross the Colorado River along the alignment of Route 66 was a wooden structure built by the railroad in 1883. They replaced the wooden bridge with the Red Rock Bridge in 1890. A daring and expensive project at the time, the bridge was one of the first steel bridges. Santa Fe's trains would pass over the longest cantilever bridge in America.

The Trails Arch Bridge crosses the Colorado. The Trails Arch Bridge was located 800 feet downstream from the Red Rock Bridge, and like the Red Rock Bridge was a groundbreaking event in bridge building. For 12 years, it was the longest three hinged arch bridge in the nation. When Route 66 came into being in 1926, many parts of the National Old Trails Highway became part of the new route, and Route 66 crossed the Colorado over the Trails Arch Bridge. **The Interstate spells the end for the Red Rock Bridge.** In 1966, Interstate 40 came to the Colorado. A four lane steel girder bridge was placed on five concrete piers immediately south of the 1945 Santa Fe girder and truss bridge. Time had run out for the Red Rock Bridge. It was abandoned as was much of Route 66 with the coming of Interstate 40. It sat rusting and unused for over a decade until it was dismantled in 1978.



Aerial view of old Topock area. Notice the sand bar blocking the entrance to the channel.

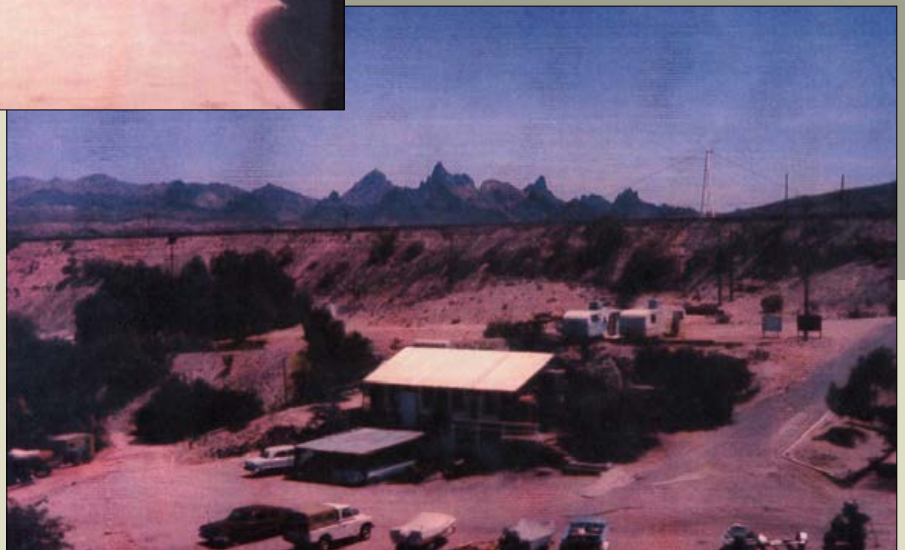


Photo of the old Biker/Bikini Bar.

Old news that had an impact on Topock

**Road Bulletin, Automobile Club of Southern California
September 17, 1925**

National Old Trails Road (later Route 66)

Needles to Kingman, 69 miles

From Needles a fairly good gravel road, although showing the lack of maintenance work and getting somewhat rutty and wash-boarded in places, to the Colorado River bridge. After crossing the Colorado River bridge, an excellent gravel road is had though Topock to within one mile of Oatman, followed by a rough, narrow road into town. From Oatman to Gold Road, the road is very good with the exception of a few short stretches. The remaining distance into Kingman is an excellent gravel road.

Dam \$40,000,000 Less Than Boulder Urged AP Los Angeles Evening Express 20 Feb 1924

Washington, Feb 19,—A flood control dam near Topock, Ariz., instead of the proposed Boulder Canyon Dam, was urged in an address here by E.C. Large, hydraulic engineer of the geological survey.

Mr. Larue, who recently surveyed the the Grand Canyon, said the dam at Topock would eliminate the fold menace and cost \$40,000,000 less than the Boulder Canyon project.

Editors note: If this dam had been built, there would be a lake covering all of the refuge, Golden Shores, the area of Park Moabi. There would be NO Topock, as we know it today.

The Long Beach Telegram 10 Aug 1924 MOON TOURING CAR SHOWS THE WAY IN TRANS-STATE DRIVE. Article goes into detail of the trip a MOON Touring Car took, along with other non MOON cars.

*Editors note:
Made a stop in Topock*

Walt Disney famously had to sell his MOON ROADSTER, like the one in this photo, to help finance the production of Steamboat Willie in 1928.



San Bernardino County Sun 06 May 1964 Route May be Shifted North

Referring to Interstate 40. Discussion of moving the highway north from its current plans to cross the Colorado River at Topock.

Editors note: Proposed plans did not share where, but it seems north of Golden Shores/Topock. Major reason this idea was never carried out was the funds that had already been spent on the bridges.

OLD ROADS, TRAILS, WATERWAYS AND BACK COUNTRY BYWAYS

Before there was an I-40 and before RT66, there was National Old Trails Highway, and before that there was the Colorado River.



The stretch of road from Topock to south of Kingman is the only BLM Back Country Byway on Route 66.

Topock is also the end/start of the longest undisturbed stretch of the original road still in use today. Eastern terminus is east of Seligman at Crookton Road.

Barstow Printer Newspaper, February 14, 1929

"Re-decking and surfacing of the old Topock Bridge across the Colorado River on the National Old Trails route, 16 miles southeast of Needles has been completed according to J.E. Stanton, district maintenance engineer of the division of highways. The bridge, a 632 foot, three-span structure has been in bad shape for some time, the wooden decking having been splintered, several fires have been started in this splintered deck-wing from cigarettes and cigars dropped from passing motorists. The work of re-decking and surfacing with asphalt has been carried out jointly by the States of Arizona and California Highway Commissions with each sharing half of the \$12,000 cost."



This is a billboard that greeted people crossing into CA from Topock, AZ. It was meant to convey to the Oakes/Arkies that if they did not have money or a job in CA to turn back. At what was called "Agricultural Inspection Stations" but were in fact manned by state police to enforce the states immigration laws.



1926 Hudson Super six crossing the Colorado River. Could have been a scene out of the movie 'Grapes of Warth' (notice the Water Tank in the background?)



This photo depicts a "State Inspection Station" at the New Mexico & Arizona state line. Similar, but larger, to those used by California. (Notice the armed uniformed police man standing next to the inspector)



Havasu National Wildlife Refuge



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Havasu National Wildlife Refuge is a U.S. National Wildlife Refuge on the lower Colorado River in Arizona and California. It preserves habitat for desert bighorn sheep to the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher, birds and other animals. The refuge protects 30 river miles - 300 miles (480 km) of shoreline - from Needles, California, to Lake Havasu City, Arizona. One of the last remaining natural stretches of the lower Colorado River flows through the 20-mile-long (32 km) Topock Gorge.

Animal species that inhabit this refuge include peregrine falcon, coyote, fox, desert bighorn sheep, greater roadrunner, bobcat, and cougar. Thousands of bats emerge from historic mines and razorback suckers swim in the back of Beal Lake.

A large river in a dry, hot land attracts wildlife and people like a powerful magnet. Many thousands of visitors annually flock to the refuge to boat through the Topock Gorge, watch waterbirds in Topock Marsh, or hike to the Havasu Wilderness Area.

A non-profit membership organization supports and advocates for the refuge. It assists refuge staff with several of the refuge annual events, help to obtain grants to support refuge projects, conducts fund-raising activities to support environmental education programs, and helps the United States Fish and Wildlife Service operate and maintain the refuge facilities and programs by providing volunteer labor.

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Havasu/>

Pig, feds

Arizona Republic June 6, 1982

David E. Weston taught Model tourists a thing or two at Topock

Holiday Shores—The life and times of David E. Weston are just about all anybody needs to know to understand 20th century Topock, according to his grandson, Lloyd Overson.

That includes the time Weston turned loose 70 brood sows and two boars to proliferate among the cattails and mesquite growing along the Colorado River at the Topock Crossing.

It was the year of the stock market crash, 1929, 10 years before the completion of the Parker Dam and flooding of the Topock Marsh. Weston was going broke—an occasional occurrence.

"There he was, penniless with all those hungry red pigs and nobody with enough money or inclination to buy them for the slaughterhouse," said Overson, a Mohave County contractor.

"He let them go, and now, 53 years later, their descendants with big tusks scare the hell out of innocent visitors wondering around Topock."

A cowboy who had worked on railroads early in World War I, Weston came west from South Dakota, joined the cavalry, and worked in a machine-gun company. Later he was a trick rider in rodeos and a Roman-style rider in Wild West shows. He arrived at the Colorado River in 1920 and met Jack Crinklaw, who steered him off to Topock, where Crinklaw had business interests.

Man of many callings

During the next two decades in and around Topock, Weston was destined for many careers bootlegger, deputy, railroad foreman, operator of a campground and service station for courageous Model-T tourists, auto mechanic, highway builder, square-dance caller, lead baritone and pig farmer.

"Granddad was a great provider for a very large family," Overson said, "He never let any of his relatives go hungry in the Depression. Grandmother May and Aunt Beulah and Aunt Mabel, among others were totally dependent on him, and he would turn his hand at anything, including Prohibition hootch, to make a dollar for his family."

"He built the jerries in Topock Bay. He trained a burro to haul water from the river to the whiskey still. He helped lay the first blacktop on Highway 66 from Topock to Oatman and Goldroad amending Sitgreaves Pass—one of the most feared mountain crossings on the entire route of U.S. 66 in 1928."

"Motorists climbing the grade frequently ordered passengers to get out and push, and motorists descending often burned out their brake linings."

Weston had six tourist cabins and a service station, and for a time, business was good.

"At Granddad's Topock Camp, with its big "WELCOME" sign, cars stalled and broke down from the effort of getting there. Overheated radiators were retired or replaced. When drivers tried to ford the river at Sacramento Wash, electrical coils usually had to be tried in Topock.

'Granddad was eulogized in the Goodyear magazine as having sold more Goodyear tires in Arizona in one year than any other dealer, not bad for being 11 miles south of Needles and about 50 miles from Kingman. A band of wild dogs made their home at Topock, as did a lot of young men working in the Civilian Conservation Corps."

Topock Camp is bypassed

Soon there was bad news when paving started on Route 66. "Tourists began bypassing Granddad's camp and continued on to Needles for overnight accommodations if it wasn't raining, which brought occupancy of the six cabins in depressing vacancy most days."

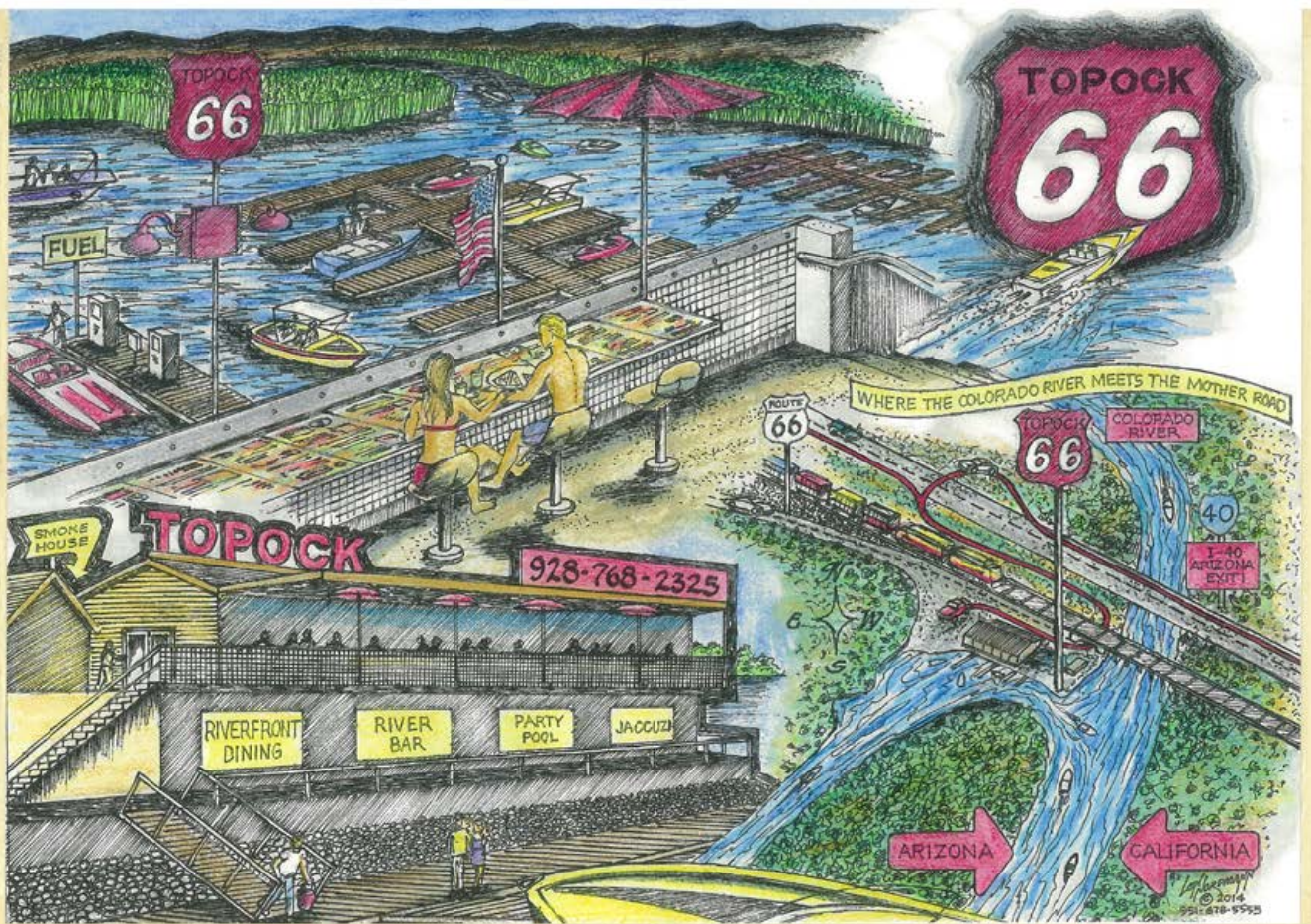
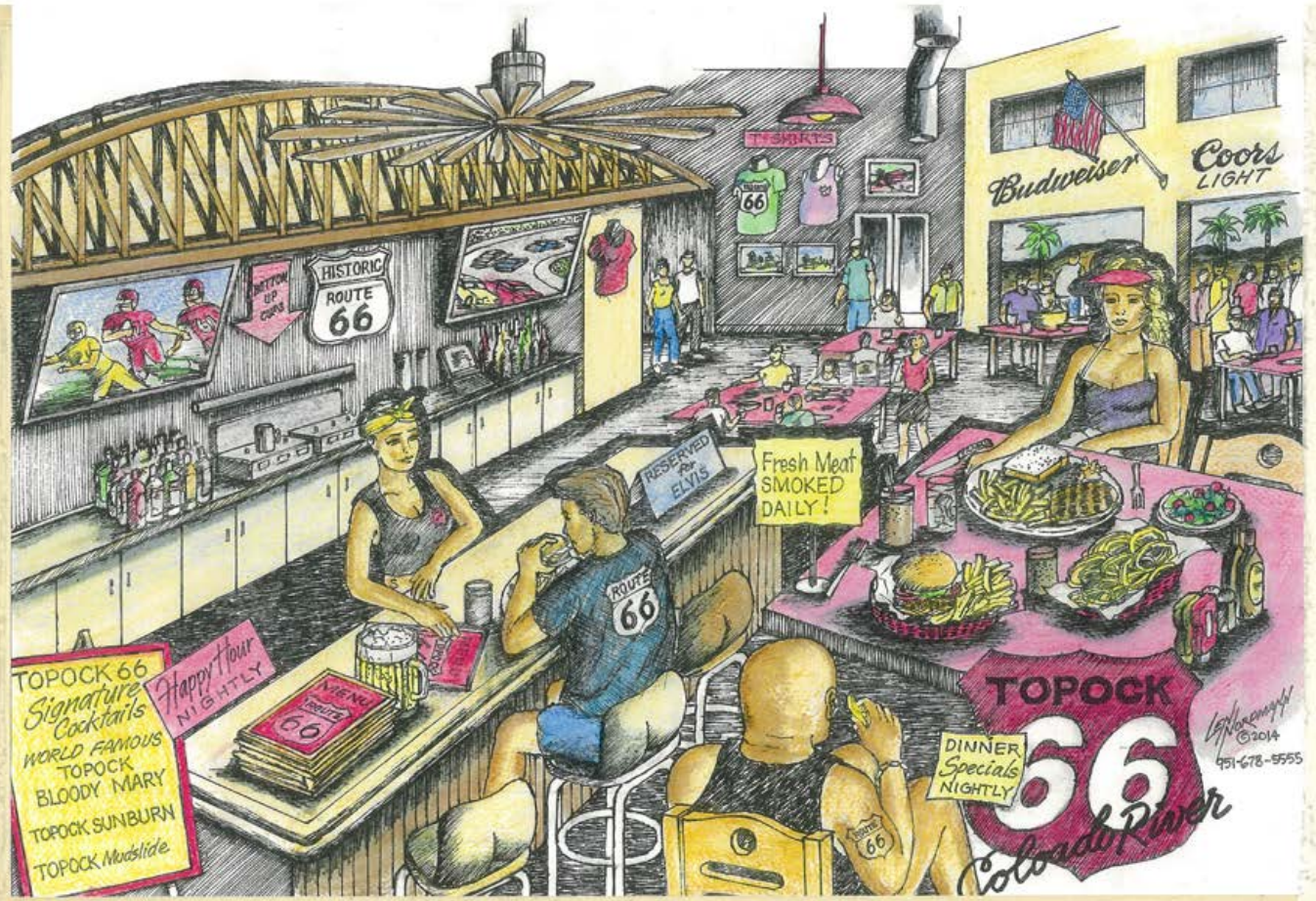
In Chloride, Crinklaw recalls the 'feds'—revenue agents—once were maneuvering into Topock to raid the still and, presumably, make arrests. But the Westons were ready for them. "The women all began speaking in broken Mexican; 'Mama may maka' 'Mama is sick' 'Pobrecita' 'Mama enferma' accompanied by sounds of lamentation and grief. The feds gallantly called off the raid and suggested that Mama go to Kingman for medical attention, and everybody went back to the business of distilling strong spirits." And "Granddad" had a hang-up, according to Overson, about "uneducated" tourists from the East who mistakenly assumed that polygamy was widely practiced in this part of Arizona.

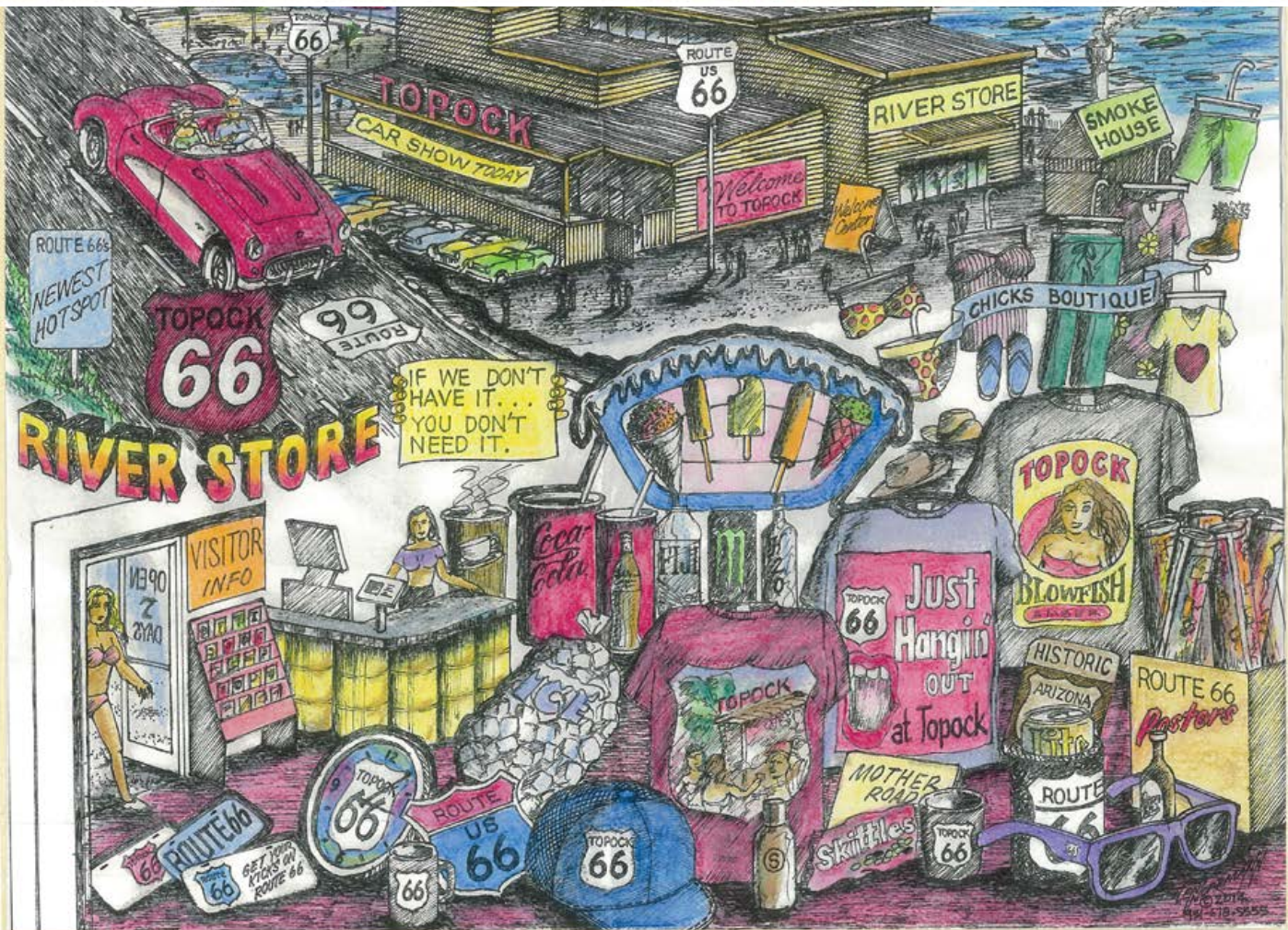
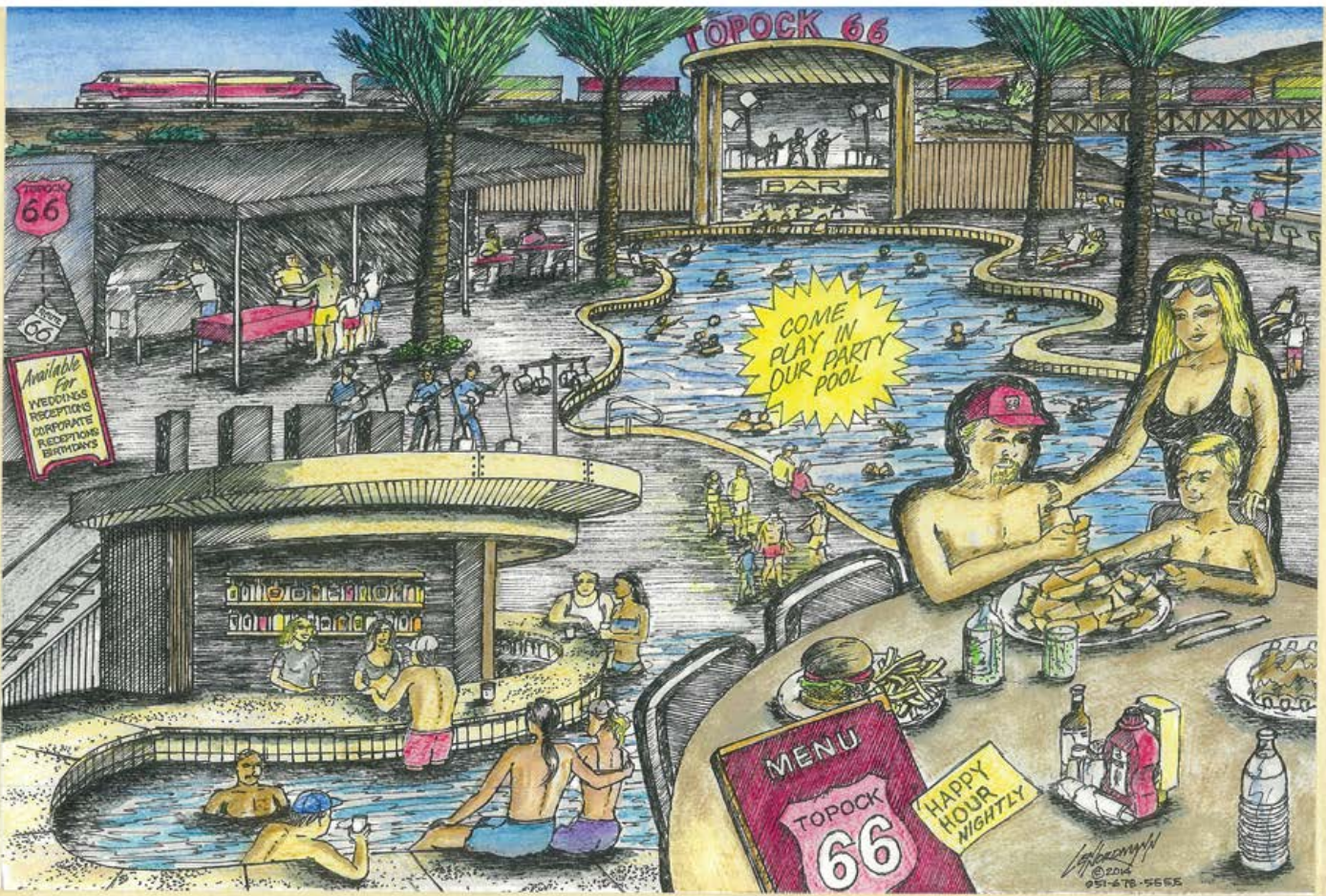
Finally, Overson said, he got tired of denials and introduced Aunt Beulah, Aunt Mabel, and other family females as "only a few of my wives," and the visitors hurried on through Topock "satisfied that one of their darkest rumors had been confirmed. He sang all that day—a Saturday."

When Granddad's health began to fail, he moved to San Bernardino, Calif., and started a chicken ranch, but then he moved back to the desert he loved, Nipton, Calif., near Searchlight, where he died in July, 1974.

(this article was copied as written by Roger A. Johnson)

Editors note: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife agency hold Swine Eradication exercises every year in the Topock Marsh areas. This program is NOT open to the public.





Golden Shores & Topock

End of Arizona 66



Descending the incline from Oatman, you will soon come upon the area called Golden Shores, after having driven Route 66 for about 20 miles. Actually, Golden Shores, not born of the Mother Road, is part of the city of Topock, but, the name refers to a development near the Colorado River north of Topock.

An attractive area to retirees, Golden Shores is also visited by numerous others due to its mild climate during the winter, proximity to Lake Havasu, and the nearby gambling mecca of Laughlin, Nevada. Here, there are numerous outdoor activities including the Lake Havasu Wildlife Refuge on the west side of the community by the Colorado River, which is home to over 200 different species of birds. Boats can be launched from the Topock Marina, fishing is ideal at the Topock Marsh, and those preferring the off-road paths thru the desert will find many opportunities to traverse the rugged terrain.

Beyond Golden Shores, just about five miles to the south is the end of Arizona's ribbon of the Mother Road at Topock, through

which Route 66 travels. Sitting at an elevation of 505 feet right at the eastern edge of the Colorado River, the settlement got its start when the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad built a wooden bridge across the river in 1883. Comprised of a railroad station and steamboat landing, it was first called Mellen for Captain John Alexander "Jack" Mellon, who was a Colorado River steamboat captain owner of the Colorado Steam Navigation Company, though it was misspelled as "Mellen."





Just a few years later, in 1890, the wood railroad bridge was replaced by the Red Rock Bridge, at a cost of almost a half million dollars. This bridge, built by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway was a cantilevered truss bridge. At about this time, the settlement's name was changed to Topock, a term thought to have come from the Mohave Indian word for "water crossing" or "bridge."

At this time, road travelers crossed the river on the Needles Ferry. However, in 1914, when a flood took the ferry out of commission, planks were put on the Red Rock Bridge, so that automobiles and wagons could cross the bridge between trains. Just two years later, the Trails Arch Bridge was completed in February 1916, to accommodate road travelers. Though it was a substantial improvement over sharing a bridge with a train, the arch bridge could only accommodate one-way traffic. At the time of its construction, it was the longest arched bridge in America. The one-way traffic wasn't a huge problem, as there really wasn't that much automobile traffic. That would change; however, when Route 66 barreled through, and even more so during World War II. The Trails Arch Bridge had a weight limitation problem of 11 tons, which created a problem for truck traffic.

Soon, engineers began to look for a new way for Route 66 travelers to cross the Colorado River. When the Santa Fe Railroad opened a new bridge for their trains in 1945, the rails were removed from the old Red Rock Bridge, reinforcements were made, and the bridge was opened for automobile traffic in 1947.

In 1966, when I-40 barreled through, replacing the Mother Road, a new four-lane steel girder bridge was built and the old Red Rock Bridge was abandoned. After 22 years of sitting rusting in the sun, the Red Rock Bridge was finally dismantled in 1988.



And what of the Trails Arch Bridge that was abandoned in 1947? It's still there – its gleaming white girders now supporting gas and utility lines across the river. The Old Trails Arch Bridge was featured in the film *The Grapes of Wrath*. Sometimes also referred to as the Topock Bridge or the Needles Bridge, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

Historic Route 66 leaves Interstate-40 at the Topock exit at Mile Marker #1 and heads north. The original town of Topock at this site no longer exists, and there are no visible remnants. The small resort-style town of Golden Shores lies about five miles north, offering a variety of recreation opportunities. The town's post office continues to be named "Topock", even though the area is often referred to as Golden Shores. The community's population is about 2,000 people but increases in the winter due to Snowbirders flocking to the area.

What a wondrous ride across the beautiful state of Arizona! Now, fill up your water bottle and your gas tank as you head on to California across the long and dusty Mojave desert.

© Kathy Weiser/Legends of America, updated June 2019.

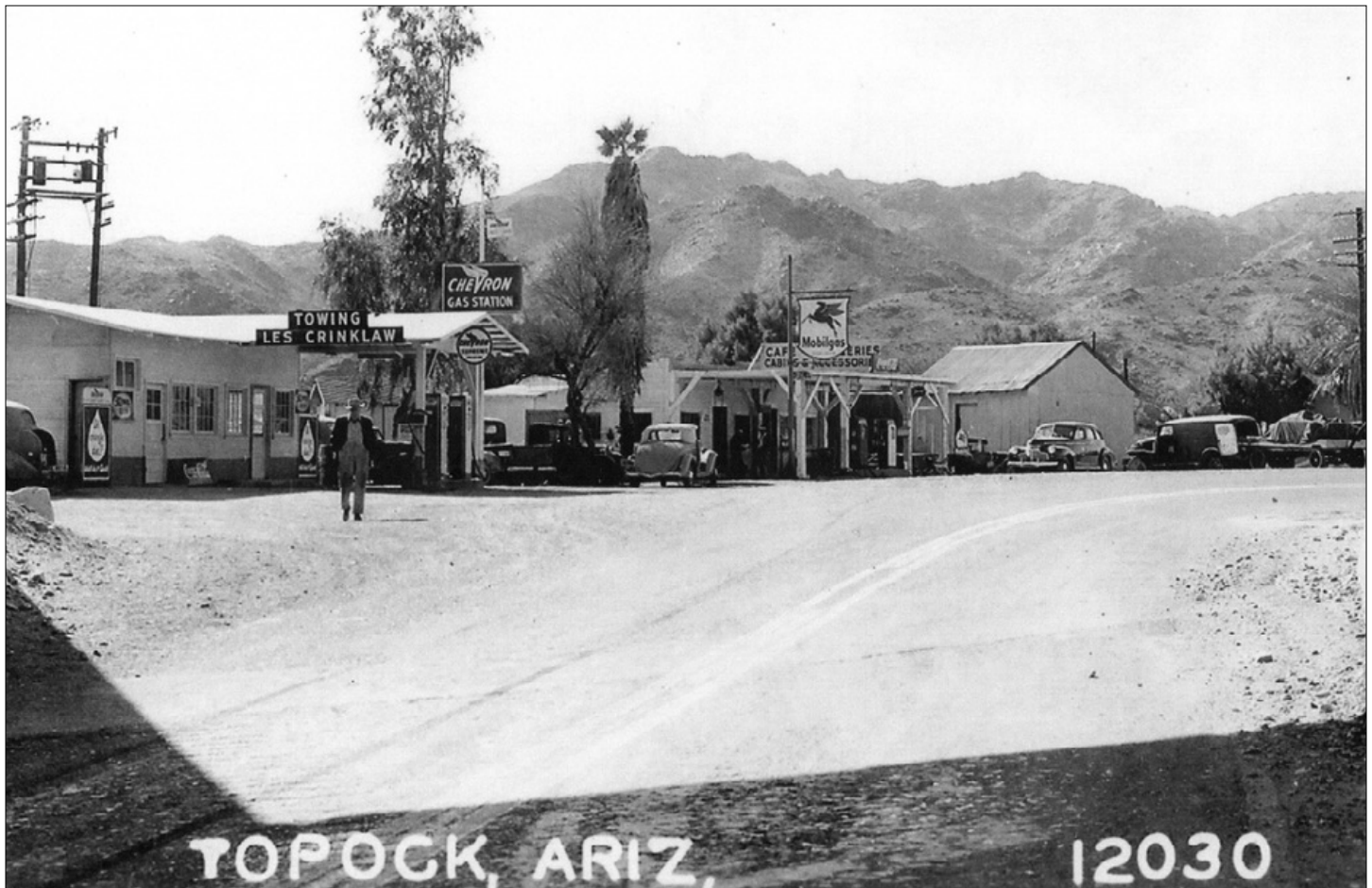


Old Town Topock & Water Tank



Topock (Mojave: Tuupak) (Pronounced *'Toe-pock'* by locals)

Topock is the site of one of Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)'s recompression stations on its super-rich natural gas pipeline from Texas to San Francisco completed in 1930.



Topock was originally called Mellen, a railroad station and steamboat landing, at the site where the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad built the Red Rock Bridge, a steel cantilever bridge across the Colorado River in May 1890. The town was named for Captain "Jack" Mellon, a 40-year veteran Colorado River steamboat captain and an owner of the Colorado Steam Navigation Company, though it was misspelled as "Mellen." From 1903 to 1909 Mellen had its own post office.



View of bridge and Route 66 from Topock. Notice how the road bed hugged the rocky area on the California side.

Topock Maze

(Mystic Maze)



I-40, exit Park Moabi Rd
Needles, CA 92363
GPS: 34.716452,-114.499617
Fees: Free

Within walking distance (or even a stone's throw) from Interstate 40 near Needles, California, you'll find a remnant of American Indian heritage and spiritual importance. The Topock Maze (Mystic Maze) is a 600+ year old geoglyph consisting of intricate patterns and paths designed by the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. The modern Mohave people believe this Maze is a part of the spiritual portal to the next life where bad souls get lost, and good souls find their portal to the afterlife. One might say the souls must complete the Maze in order to find their portal and cross over. Early experts believed the warriors returning from battle would run through the Maze, leaving any bad spirits behind.

Regardless of why it was created, the magnitude and magnificence of this geoglyph cannot be disputed. How long this geoglyph will be able to withstand the elements is unknown, so if you happen to be traveling past this area, it's definitely a must-see. The Topock Maze is within a few miles of both the Pirate Cove Resort and Topock66 Resort.

The Topock Maze is one of great spiritual significance to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe - care and consideration of the Tribe's beliefs and of the maze itself must be practiced if you decide to visit the sacred site. The area is fenced off -- please observe the boundaries and do not walk on the geoglyphs.

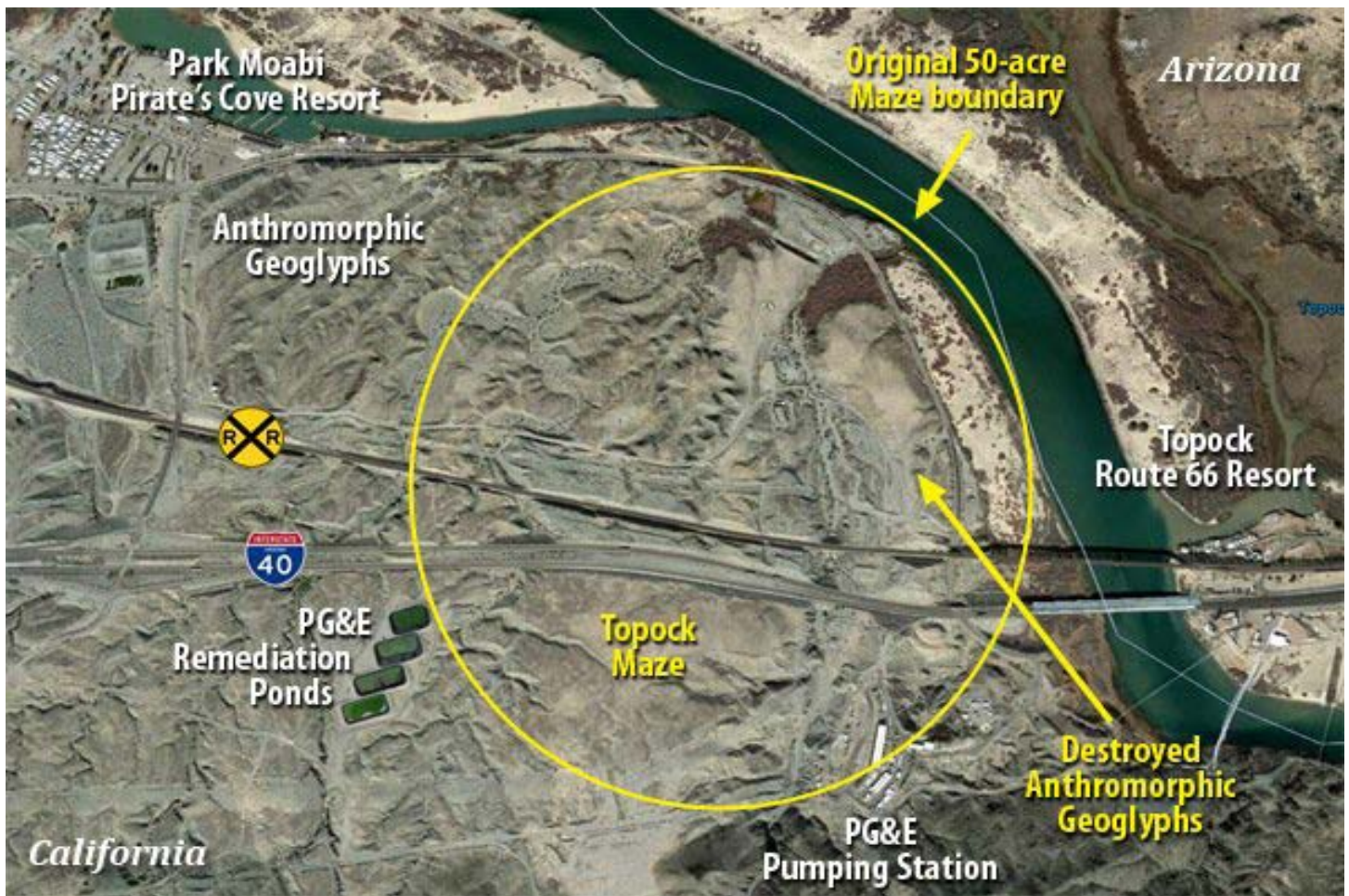


Placard

The descriptive placard, while weathered and difficult to read, says:

"Here, upon this land where you now stand, is the Topock Maze; indeed, a cultural site of much importance to the tribe. To this site the AhaMakav warriors returning home from battle first paused for purification before continuing home."

"Not a true maze, this site is a series of windrows carefully placed in an extensive geometric pattern. Today, the site covers about 10 acres. Evidence suggests that it may have originally



been only one section in a group of nearby earth images and features. Sadly, important parts of the complex were destroyed by the construction of the highway. But whether or not the geoglyphs in this vicinity were associated with one another, this was clearly an area of symbolic and ritual significance."

Geoglyph desecration

Many factors, both natural and man-made, have reduced the geoglyph to a small area. Once deep and prevalent, the windrows of this geoglyph have been reduced to mere mounds from the harsh desert winds and monsoon seasons. But human destruction has caused the most damage. During the 1880's, the Southern Pacific Railroad laid tracks right through the Maze, destroying a geoglyph of a human figure (its feet are near the bank of the Colorado River) holding a snake. With the railroad came wagon roads and paths going right through the Maze, causing further damage to the original geoglyph. Further desecration occurred in 1926 when Route 66 crossed the Maze, and

was subsequently widened to create what we know as Interstate 40.

During the 1950's, Pacific Gas & Electric built a gas pipeline in the area, just missing the sacred site. Additional damage to the Maze was created when PG&E, after constructing the Topock Natural Gas Compressor Station near the Maze (aerial map), was forced to construct a large treatment plant, as well as drill 170 wells, within the Maze area due to the compressor station polluting the groundwater under and around the Maze with hexavalent chromium (the same chemical, Chromium 6, that inspired the movie Erin Brockovich).

Sadly, the Mystic Maze, whose original size was well over 50 acres, has been reduced to a mere 15-acre area.

Getting there

From Interstate 40, exit Park Moabi Road and go south (away from Pirate Cove Resort). Follow the pavement until it ends and turn left onto a well-maintained and graded road. Continue about one mile. The Maze will be on

the north (left) side of the road in a fenced-in area.

Historical designation

In 2011, the Topock Cultural Area was designated as a historic resource under state law and the Bureau of Land Management determined the area was eligible for listing on the National Register (designating an area of traditional and cultural importance).

Additionally, in 1978 the Topock Maze is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and falls under the protection of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Aerial maps

Aerial views of the geoglyph Maze can give you a good idea of how massive this site is. Go to the map links below and mouse around the desert area to see the existing Maze, as well as where the maze used to be (remnants of the desecrated geoglyph is visible via aerial photography).

[Google](#) | [Wikimapia \(Interactive\)](#)

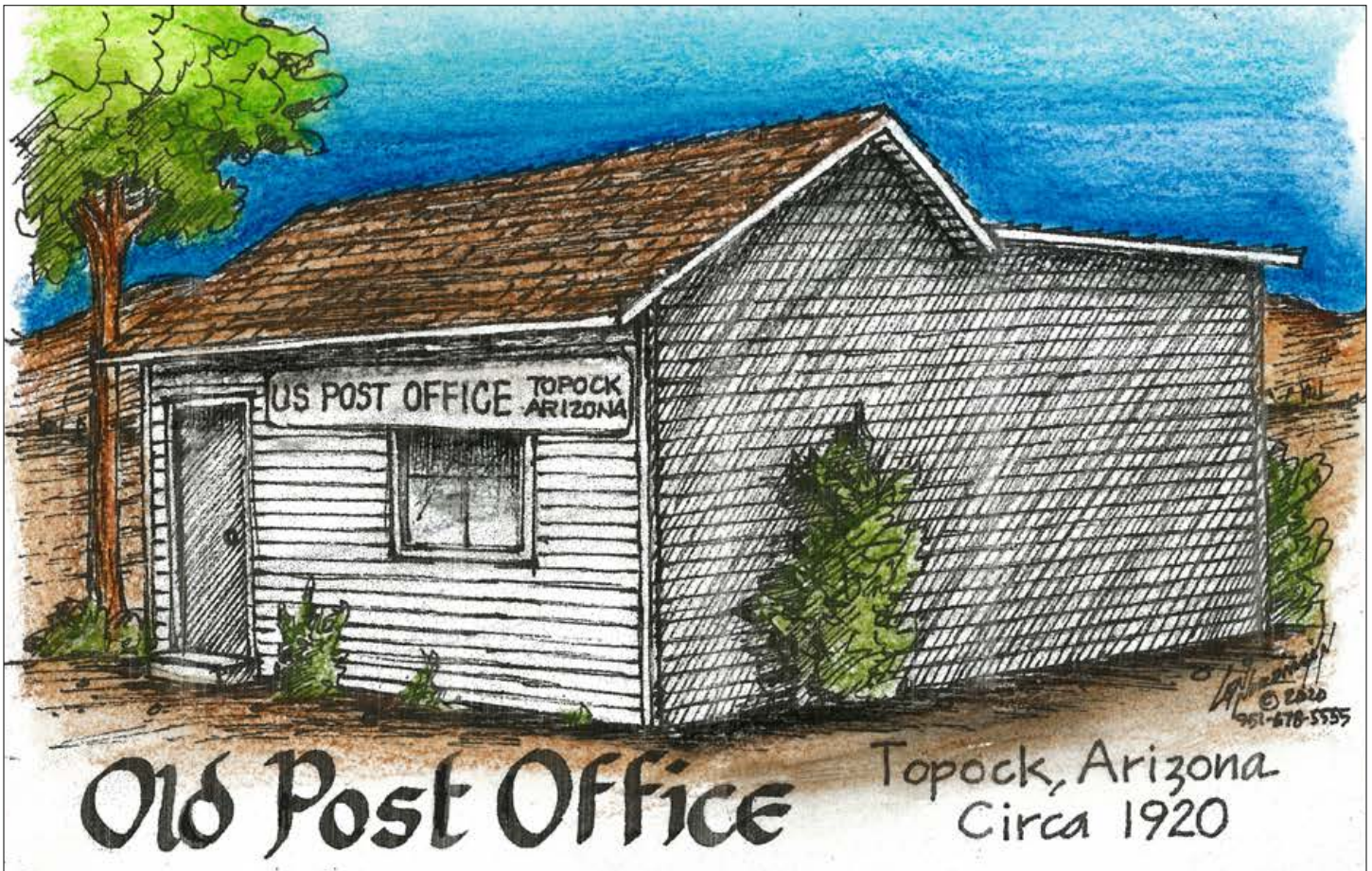
Topock Post Office History

To explain the history of the Topock Post Office, you have to explain what a RailRoad Smithman's Tool Shed was (vintage 1900-1930).

During the early 1900's when these Smithman's Tool Sheds were found throughout the United States, they were located near the railroads switching stations. They were used by the railroad switchman not only to house his tools but to stow and pick up mail, food, clothing, etc, for employees. They were referred to as a "Switchman's Shanty" and were very small, measuring 10 x 14 feet.

The front part of the Topock Post Office is a "Switchman's Shanty". An addition was added in 1973, resulting in its present configuration being 14 x 22 feet or 308 square feet.

Hazel Davis was the first postmaster beginning in 1954 to distribute mail out of the Topock Post Office. It was located next to Clyde and Hazel Davis's home which was located across from the Arch Span Bridge used to support the El Paso gas line to cross the Colorado River in Topock. The Davis's distributed mail out of their home from 1950 to 1954.





Hazel Davis's husband, Clyde, worked as a section foreman for the Santa Fe Railroad in Topock. It is believed he acquired this "Switchman's Shanty" from Santa Fe and moved it from Needles to a site next to the Davis's home in Topock in 1954.

From prior documentation, as late as 1883, postal service was handled out of the postmaster's home until the "Switchman's Shanty," in 1954, was over by Hazel Davis, as postmaster, and became the First Post Office in the Topock area.

(EDITORS NOTE: Before that time, mail was handled by different businesses located in Topock. See Postcard stamped 1940)

Bernice Painter followed Hazel Davis as postmaster. Bernice worked part time from 1964 to 1966, becoming postmaster in 1966 and continued until 1983.

In 1973 Bernice's husband, John, built an annex to the rear of the building. It measured 12 x 14 feet resulting in the Topock Post Office being 14 x 22, its present size.

In 1974 John Painter moved the Topock Post Office next to his home on Cove Parkway-Golden Shores. It remained there as the Topock Post Office until 1983 when the present Topock Post Office was opened to the public.

After 1983, the Topock Post Office was move to a site next to the present post office in Golden Shores.

In June 1987, The Topock Art Guild declared the building abandoned. Through public notice, it was deeded legally to the Topock Art Guild on June 15, 1987.



Through a letter of commitment between the Golden Shores Chamber of Commerce and the Topock Art Guild dated December 9, 1987, it was agreed by both parties they would restore the Topock Post Office to include certain conditions.

During 1988, the Topock Post Office was moved to the triangle of land belonging to the State of Arizona across from the Old Western Trader. Restoration of the Topock Post Office began. It was then determined by the Chamber of Commerce and the Topock Art Guild that the state guidelines were so stringent that the building would be moved to BLM land east of the Community Center. This was accomplished in 1988 and remains there today.

In 1997, the Topock Art Guild began a reutilization and restoration of the Topock Post Office with Donnie Harman, a member, to head this restoration project.

It is the Topock Art Guild's goal to have the Topock Post Office fully restored by the beginning of the millennium or the year 2000.

EDITORS NOTE: This article was written by Donnie Harman, Major-USMC (ret) on April 1, 1998. It was never published but is in the archives of Topock/Golden Shores.

Steamboats

traveled the Colorado River from 1852 to the early 1900s

BULLHEAD CITY—In the early 1850's, the flat-bottom steamboats on the lower Colorado River supplied the forts and gold mines with rations and machinery that used to be hauled at great cost across the desert. After making the settlement of Arizona and southeastern California possible, the increased demand for supplies increased the demand for more steamboats.

By 1864, they were making regular rounds as far up the river as Hardyville, the head of practical navigation, which was in the back of present-day Safeway. The steamboats increased in numbers, reaching their peak about 1879. With the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in Yuma in 1877, and the Atlantic Pacific (now Santa Fe) Railroad to Needles in 1883, the steamboats started to disappear from the scene. The era of the steamboat can be called the "Age of Romance on the Colorado River."

The first steamboat on the river, a tug christened "Uncle Sam." was launched in November, 1852. It was a side-wheeler 65 feet long with a 16-foot beam and 3 1/2 feet deep. It was severely underpowered, with a 20-horsepower steam locomotive engine hardly capable of fighting the swift current. The "Uncle Sam," as all early steamboats did, received its supplies from an oceangoing ship in the Gulf of California at the mouth of the Colorado River. Although the "Uncle Sam" was far from successful, it did prove that steamboats could's operate on the Colorado River and thus was born an era of activity on the river that could not be matched until dams were built, lake created and motor boars swarmed over the waters.

The second steamboat to be launched on the River was the "General Jessup," also a side-wheeler. It was much larger and more powerful than the "Uncle Sam's." The 104-foot length, 17-foot beam (27 feet, including the paddlewheel) and 50-horsepower engine permitted it to carry 50 tons of supplies in 30 inches of water. The "General Jessup" was so successful that soon ocean-going ships were rounding the Horn of South America from the East Coast and California into

the Gulf of California carrying supplies to the forts and machinery for the gold mines. Other steamboats were soon needed to carry all the materials up river.

Improvements were made to the steamboats, the most important being the stern paddlewheel. The swift water and changing sandbars made navigation difficult. With the stern paddlewheel, a captain had only to turn his boat stern first to dig his way through the shallow sandbars. After the "General Jessup," all steamboats were stern paddle wheelers, until the last few steamboats using gasoline engines and propellers. They improved in size and draft. One of the largest, the "Gila," was 149 feet long, with a 37-foot beam, weighed 236 tons and drew only 16 1/2 inches of water. Comfort improved to the point that some steamboats offered excursions for passengers.

With the arrival of the railroads, shipping by the ocean-going ships came to an abrupt end. Steamboats kept carrying supplies from the railroad centers until bridges and dams across the river sounded their death knell in the early 1900s.



*Building of the Topock Bridge, with the Gila steamboat. 1889
V103/126 The Otis Marston Colorado River Collection
"The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA"*

Colorado River Runner Recalls Colorful Life at Steamboat Helm

PARKER (AP) - AJ Preston is among the last of the steamboat pilots who outmaneuvered shifting sandbars and swirling currents of the Colorado River to supply Arizona's early mines.

The Hoover, Davis and Parker dams have sedated the once-writhing river and raised it 50 feet above the channels of 1929s. But the 72-year-old Preston still lives along the river he's been close to for well over half a century.

The lanky, white-haired riverman, now retired and living in a mobile on the Arizona side of the river across from Parker Dam, was born in Idaho Springs, Colo. in 1904. He and his father came to Arizona territory in 1909, settling first at Prescott in the mistaken belief that Indian reservation land there would be open to homesteading.

Preston moved here and "got acquainted" with the river when he was "in the sixth grade" on an outing with his Boy Scout troop at Headgate Rock, where Squaw Dam is now.

The scouts were meeting on a bank eight feet above the swirling, muddy water when the scoutmaster learned that young AJ couldn't swim.

"The scoutmaster lined the boys up in two rows and had me run between them and jump into the river" Preston recalled. "It was either sink or swim, so I learned to swim real quick. Kids were not pampered in those days."

Preston served three years as a young deckhand on steamers, then took his river pilot's license at San Pedro, Calif.

He piloted the Nellie T, which "could travel in eight inches of water with the propellers adjusted up. And sometimes we didn't even have eight inches to work in", he said.

Chemehuevi Indians were hired to wade ahead and call out the depth. "They called 'ankle deep...knee deep...hip deep'... and so on." Preston recalled "Sometimes they used other anatomical measurements."

"Once I remember, a schoolmarm passenger standing on the deck, enjoying the scenery, was so shocked that she went back to her cabin and stayed there for the rest of the trip."

Preston who suffered a stroke and "can't talk too well" but still loves to reminisce about the river with visitors, said he "saw it all," plying the river from Blythe to Needles, Parker, Topock, and Ft. Mohave.

During Prohibition, Preston said he supplemented his income by helping whiskey runners from Calzon, south of here, to mining camps in "dry" Arizona. His regular stops included Swansea, Planet, and Palo Verde—now occupied by Parker Airport.

Palo Verde was a red light district at the time, he said adding "I left the cargo with the madams at night, then got out quick."

He went to work for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District in 1926, operating power boats that transported engineers in search of a site to start an aqueduct that would carry Colorado River water to Los Angeles.

"Last year, while I was operating the ferry, gypsy used to travel cross country in caravans of cars," Preston said. "They had to cross on the ferry to get to California."

Preston said once he'd ferried four cars across and been paid when a "young, beautiful, well-built gypsy woman came back on board the ferry wanting to tell my fortune. She said it would cost me nothing. She said all I had to do was put my hand on her chest... I was a country hick...so I put my hand on her chest. She grabbed my hand and pushed it lower...She said a few words and left. After they were gone, and I had settled down, I found she had slipped \$10 out of my pocket.



Notice the workers on the shore are native Americans. This is a photo of one of the mid size rear paddle wheelers used on most waterways in the west.

