



COPIED FROM THE GROUND PLAN OF CAMP INDEPENDENCE, IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT

Camp Independence---An Owens Valley Outpost

by HELEN S. GIFFEN

THE OWENS RIVER VALLEY situated within the shadow of the Sierra Nevadas afforded an ideal hunting ground for the Indians. Here they fished the turbulent streams, stalked their game along the higher ridges and sought protection from their enemies among the crags and crannies that served as natural fortresses. In the more gracious climate of the valley they established their camps and went about the business of daily living quite undisturbed by the fact that the presence of precious metals in the vicinity of their cultivated acres would some day lead to bloodshed and the utter destruction of their rancherias.

It was therefore, with a sense of dismay and a not altogether unjustifiable feeling of resentment that the Indians watched the gold-seekers and other settlers begin to disrupt the quiet ways of their existence. The Indian troubles that swept across California in the 1850s and 1860s were due in most instances to the encroachment of the miners on the Indian's habitat, and it was this condition that made necessary the establishment of various military posts throughout the State.

Camp Independence in the Owens Valley was one of these establishments whose history has faded and whose once thriving post has vanished completely. The traveler through the valley may pass and re-pass the site of this camp quite unaware that it once flourished amid a garden in the wilderness four miles north of the town of Independence and about a mile below the State Fish Hatchery. Here the soldiers sweated in the close heat of mid-summer and froze in the icy blasts of winter that swept down from the snows of the Sierra. Here Uncle Sam's fighting men (the hard-bitten campaigner and the raw recruit) chased the Indians from their retreats, killing and being killed in the age-old struggle for supremacy that has not yet found a solution on the broader battlefields of the world.

The *Silver Age* of September 17, 1861, carried the following notice the writer of which probably did not realize that he was heralding the beginning of the long and bloody feud between the whites and the redskins in the Owens River Valley: "The Indians about there [Owens Valley] are reputed to be a quiet and well disposed class of people for savages. They have, for the last few years (copying after the Indians of the Tejon Reservation) been in the habit to a certain extent, of raising vegetables on a tract of land by irrigation. They

have succeeded irrigating these lands only after extraordinary labor and patience, the ditches to convey the water to the section desired being made with a sharp pointed stick with which they loosen the earth, afterward scraping and dragging it with their hands. They also managed to raise a fine crop of grass. The origin of the supposed trouble is as follows: four drovers, wishing to change the pasturing of their stock concluded to run it down to Owens Lake and feed it on the meadows claimed by the Indians. One man, Raymond, saw the injustice of turning stock loose on Indian fields without recompense, and remained on Walker River. The others, Van Sickle, Van Vliet and Mass went down and put their stock on the Indians' grass fields. The Indians asked them to shift their animals. The drovers refused, and one morning some of the cattle were missing and the Indians were accused of having stolen them. The whole transaction has raised considerable ill blood and it was expected that some lives would be lost on one side or the other at an early day."

The prediction of the *Silver Age's* correspondent was not long in being realized. Bad feeling flared intermittently between the Indians, settlers and miners, and finally the flame of hatred began to burn so brightly that the whites called for government aid.

The first military expedition to the Owens River Valley started from Camp Latham, near Los Angeles, March 19, 1862, and was reported by Lieutenant Colonel George S. Evans, 2d Cavalry California Volunteers,⁽¹⁾ commanding the expedition: "I started out from Los Angeles on the 19th day of March, 1862, and arrived at Owens Lake on the 2nd day of April. On the 4th day of April I reached Putnam's store,⁽²⁾ or what is known as The Fort, situated on Pine Creek, forty-three miles above Owens Lake. Here I found some twelve or fifteen men and some women and children, and learned for the first time something of the real condition of affairs in the valley, and of the difficulties with the Indians."

Lieutenant Colonel Evans also learned that the Owens Valley represented a section of California that was entirely divorced from the more populous areas of the State by the rugged barrier of the Sierra Nevada, and that here the hardy and adventurous whites who had come to make their fortunes, one way or another, in the rich soil of the region, had come to mortal grips with the Indians who not only claimed the Owens River Valley for their own, but also all the land east of the mountains. Those settlers who had fled to the protection of Putnam's store had been surrounded by the Indians and were facing the prospect of annihilation when Evans and his company arrived; while in the lower end of the valley houses had been burned and two

white settlers massacred. The very day of Evans's departure from Camp Latham forty Indians and a number of miners from the Aurora district had entered into an engagement at Lone Pine; and on April 1st, sixty men had started for big Pine in pursuit of the fleeing savages.

Hearing of this on the day of his arrival at Putnam's, Evans prepared to push on and join them in the hope of being able to dislodge the Indians from their strongholds. This was a futile hope, however, as the Colonel soon found out when he sent his men into the region of Bishop Creek, where the Indians had entrenched themselves against the coming of the troops. Realizing that to follow them into this well buttressed stronghold would be suicidal, Evans withdrew to Putnam's store, where he found the food situation acute. He had, upon his arrival, given his supply of flour to the hungry settlers, and as a result he was now facing a complete lack of provisions; with the source of supply, Camp Latham, four hundred miles away. Prudence forced Evans to consider an immediate return to Los Angeles; but when his decision became known a mighty cry of protest rose. The settlers demanded security and protection from their government, and the poor Colonel was face to face with a dilemma which he partially solved by agreeing to remain until the stock was rounded up, and he would then arrange escort to those parties wishing to go either to Aurora or to Los Angeles. This was accepted, and after some delay the military found themselves back at Camp Latham on April 28th.

As the result of this trip the Colonel made an estimate that there were, in all probability, a thousand Indians in the Owens Valley made up of recruits from the Owens River, Tejon, Mono and Piute tribes. Their depredations had extended from Walker's Pass to within half a hundred miles of Mono Lake and within this region they had killed nine persons and destroyed at least a thousand head of cattle as well as burning and destroying everything in their path. They also possessed at least one hundred guns to add to their own deadly methods of warfare.

With the entire Owens Valley practically in the grip of the Indians by May 1, 1862, all travel in that region was at a standstill, and inasmuch as this was the only route, except that via Placerville, to the mining districts of Washoe and Esmeralda it was imperative that equipment and supplies get through. Many miners enroute to the gold region had been forced to stop at Kern River, and those already dependent upon the shortest route to the diggings raised their voices in a cry for a military post in the Owens Valley. Even General Andres Pico, that old war horse of the struggle for California, again felt the sting of gun powder in his nose and sought to get authority

to organize a company of volunteers for the purpose of exterminating the Indians. The recruits were not lacking, but the authority was, and General Pico was forced to abandon his project.

There was talk of sending troops temporarily into the district to restore the settlers to power and then withdraw. Meanwhile feeling was running high and General Wright finally issued orders to Lieutenant Colonel Evans to make preparations to return to the Owens River. His departure was delayed somewhat because it was necessary to receive orders from the Headquarters of the Pacific in San Francisco regarding the establishment of winter quarters; as, in this event, considerable outlay of money would be necessary to establish barracks, as timber would have to be hauled some distance. However, on June 12th Colonel Evans and his company, made up of detachments from Cos. G, D and I of the 2nd Cavalry California Volunteers, with forty-six wagons and rations and forage for two months, departed from Camp Latham, their destination being Pine Creek where Evans recalled an excellent camp site.

When the company arrived in the Valley they encountered heavy summer cloudbursts and the Owens River, in the vicinity of Independence was running well over its banks, making it impossible to get either men or equipment across. It was therefore, necessary to make camp on Oak Creek, twenty miles this side of Evans' original destination. Finding this site as well suited to a military post as Pine Creek it was decided to remain on this spot, and Lieutenant Colonel Evans sent back to Camp Latham the following:

Headquarters Owens River Expedition
Camp Independence, Oak Creek, July 5, 1862

"Sir: I have the honor to report to the Colonel commanding Camp Latham, that I arrived at this point, 45 miles above the foot of Owens Big Lake on yesterday, July 4, 1862. Immediately upon my arrival I caused a flag-staff to be erected and the old flag with all the stripes upon it hoisted to the breeze with three times three given most heartily by the men, and a salute fired with small arms, upon which occasion I named this camp, Camp Independence."⁽³⁾

The flag pole that was raised by the cheering soldiers was fifty feet high, and was probably cut from a pine tree that flourished along the base of the sierra. As the nights in this altitude are apt to have a chill even in mid-summer, the soldiers immediately began to provide shelters for themselves, some building rude cabins and some digging caves in the walls of a nearby ravine, this probably being the only military post in California where the troops quartered themselves in this abor-

iginal fashion. A soldier of the expedition writing to the Visalia *Delta* recounted his arrival at Camp Independence and related that the Indians were showing signs of hostility. This fact was also borne out by Mr. Warren Matthews who arrived at Visalia in the early part of July. The *Delta* of July 17, 1862 carried the notice of his arrival from the Coso district. "He left Saturday the 5th inst. A detachment of U. S. Cavalry had arrived and were encamped on Oak Creek, in the Owens River Valley. The Indians had shown some signs of hostility. It was reported that 300 of them were assembled in one band, 200 in another, and 40 in a third. The soldiers had been out in pursuit of them, but the Indians had fled to the mountains where it is supposed they will make a stand and fight if they are followed."

The report rendered by Evans July 9th mentions a fifteen day campaign in the valley with several Indians killed, eleven captured and many rancherias destroyed.⁽⁴⁾ This would indicate that the troops had been busy in the valley on their way to Camp Independence. On July 14th, a dispatch to Major Drum from Colonel F. Forman of the 4th Infantry California Volunteers, said: "Major O'Neill has reported to me, and Captain McLaughlin of the same command has just arrived from Fort Yuma. The command of Major O'Neill, consisting of the cavalry fit for duty in camp and those brought up by Captain McLaughlin will number 25 men. They will be dispatched to Owens River as soon as the horses from Fort Yuma are fit to travel, which will be but a few days."

This would indicate that reenforcements were to be sent to the valley. The Official Correspondence, coupled with the General Orders, pertaining to Camp Independence tells the story of its life in the usual terse military manner; but between the lines one may read the story of the camp and of the men making up its personnel; the hardships undergone in tracking down the Indians, and their final capitulation to superior arms and ammunition. By August, 1862, many of the red men had seen the error of their ways as is brought to light by the following report:

"Camp Independence, Owens River Expedition,
Aug. 8, 1862

To Major R. C. Drum, Assistant Adjutant General
Department of the Pacific, San Francisco

Sir: I have the honor to inform you that in accordance with the instructions of the Headquarters of the Pacific, bearing the date of July 19th, I have succeeded in forming a treaty of peace subject to the approval of the General commanding said Department. . . . the chiefs have brought into camp two rifles, . . . two double-barreled shot-guns, one Sharps rifle. . . . and one colt revolver (large size) . . . In conclusion I

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

would most respectfully state all is peaceable in this valley and the troops enjoying most excellent health.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,
John M. O'Neill, Major, 2nd Cavalry California
Volunteers, commanding Owens River Expedition."

While subduing the Indians was the chief task of the men making up the company at Camp Independence, this was not the only business of the day. In the middle of summer, with the sun riding high above the towering peaks of the sierra, sixty sweating, toiling members of the 2nd Cavalry were busy getting the camp into shape against the winter. A report dated August 27th, from Major O'Neill, tells of the construction of temporary quarters and stabling for one company of cavalry. The site selected for the permanent camp was on the north side of Oak Creek some 300 yards above the location of the first, "it being the point best suited for a one company post as reported by Captains McLaughlin, Jones and Goodman." Here the terrain sloped eastward from the sierra and was practically free of any obstacle behind which Indians might lurk in ambush. It commanded a wide view in all directions, from the jagged tips of the Sierra Nevada to the crests of the White Mountains. Oak Creek, with its tumbling waters afforded ample supply for the camp. While the camp lay in the full blaze of summer it was difficult to realize that in winter it would be buried deep in snow and that the soldiers would freeze to the very marrow. This fact was to be brought home as early as October when it was reported that the weather was freezing and the men destitute of shoes and clothing suitable to such a rigorous climate. At this date (October 7th) the temporary buildings were completed and adobe bricks being made for permanent quarters.

When the cold began to creep into their bones the men all but mutinied over lack of proper food and clothing and Evans complained that one pair of boots per man was not enough. It was suggested that gloves and other equipment might be secured from Fort Vancouver, but the Department of the Quartermaster General came back with the reply that the gloves stored at Fort Vancouver had been sold at auction; so the luckless 2nd Cavalry blew on their fingers, stamped their feet and called the army all the things old campaigners are privileged to call it when their feelings are in need of relief. The situation, however, became so grave, as the cold increased, and the food in the commissary decreased, that Major O'Neill ordered tents struck and the command to move toward Los Angeles until they met the supply train known to have been sent out. Twenty-five miles below Independence they came upon the provisions and returned to camp, the

order to move forward having given the men something to do and thus avoided an outright break.

By the beginning of the year 1863 life in the post within the shadow of the sierra had woven itself into a definite pattern. Indian outbreaks were sporadic and camp routine was frequently enlivened by the change of officers and men. March 11th, 64 men under command of First Lieutenant S. R. Davis left Camp Babbitt⁽⁶⁾ to reenforce Camp Independence and with instructions not to follow the Indians into the mountains where they might be ambushed. In April it became necessary to send Captain McLaughlin's company to Owens Lake on account of outbreaks there, and in the same month Captain McLaughlin assumed command of all troops in the Owens Valley and adjacent territory.

Captain McLaughlin was most anxious to have Fort Tejon reoccupied, and in June he wrote urgently to the Department of the Pacific saying: "Since my arrival in Owens River Valley I have examined the matter thoroughly . . . and will not hesitate to state that it is the key to both the Owens and Tulare Valleys. Had it been occupied last winter the outlaws and rebels would not have dared to congregate at Tulare Lake from whence they issued to commit their depredations upon defenseless Union citizens. The Indians, too, finding themselves between two fires would not have been so apt to have renewed hostilities."⁽⁷⁾

The Captain's words did not go unheeded, and the order soon came through to remove the forces at Camp Independence to Fort Tejon. Captain McLaughlin, who had gotten together about one thousand Indians to take to Fort Tejon as per an order of June 11th, had left Camp Independence in charge of Lieutenant George B. French and was enroute to Tejon when he received, via hard riding messenger, the order of Colonel Drum's dated June 24th, to abandon Camp Independence. He, therefore, retraced his steps to Independence to carry out these orders. Before the move was completed, however, Lieutenant William Jones, commanding officer at Camp Babbitt, asked to have Co. G of the 2nd Cavalry California Volunteers remain at Camp Independence, until the following spring as repeated Indian attacks in the Owens Valley had made it unwise to abandon the camp entirely.

In this way the life of Camp Independence was prolonged for a time, but the order was finally carried out in 1864 and it was not reoccupied until March, 1865, at which time renewed Indian attacks made it necessary to send troops once more into the Owens Valley. On December 31, 1864, Mrs. Mary McGuire and her six year old son, John, had been murdered at their ranch at Haiwee Meadows, and the

Visalia *Delta* of January 11, 1865 said: "For some time we have been compelled to let the Indians do as they pleased." In March there was an attack on J. N. Rogers of Owens Lake at a spot called Hell's Gate (or Rose Springs), four miles north of Haiwee Meadows, at which time Rogers was pierced by six arrows. In May supplies were moved in to Camp Independence from Fort Churchill, Nevada, and a company of the 1st Nevada Volunteers, under Captain John G. Kelly, occupied the camp. From this time until its final abandonment in 1877 Independence was always garrisoned. After the arrival of Co. C. of the Nevada Volunteers, came a company of cavalry and one of infantry under Colonel John Devens and this was followed by Co. B. of the 12th Infantry under Captain Harry Egbert.

Almarin B. Paul made a trip from Washoe to the Owens River Valley in July 1865, and wrote up his impressions for the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*, in which Camp Independence came in for mention: "A row of buildings stood before us, it was Fort Independence. The tread of horses before the open door of the Captain's quarters brought out Captain Kelly, the commander of the post, who courteously invited us in and at the same time desired us to quarter ourselves for the night, which invitation we gladly accepted. Captain Kelly has 100 men under his command, who have been here about one year. They are retained as a safeguard for the settlers. Through the exertions of Captain Kelly a perfect understanding exists with the Indians, there are only a few of them left now, so that not the least danger is feared now.

"The Fort is in complete order, the parade ground cannot be surpassed. Perfect good feeling exists between the officers and men, and in fact Captain Kelly is not only on the best footing with his men, but universally popular among the settlers of the valley."⁽⁸⁾

The Visalia *Delta* of November 1, 1865, carried the notice "Lieutenant Hardenburg with 30 men of Co. E. left Camp Babbitt on Friday 1st for Owens River Valley, where they will probably remain for some considerable time as a detail from Co. C. Nevada Cavalry has been ordered home to be discharged." This was followed by a notice in the same newspaper under the date line December 20, 1865 "The last of Co. E. took up the line of march this week for Camp Independence in charge of Lieutenant Harriott. . . . We pity the redskins that Co. E. gets after." These troop movements were probably the result of the report of Major General H. W. Halleck who had said earlier in the month "Mining settlements of Owens River and Lake will require some military protection for a number of years. A substantial post is recommended. Camp Independence is probably the best location."

CAMP INDEPENDENCE—AN OWENS VALLEY OUTPOST

A letter from the Owens River Valley dated January 18, 1866 from Kearsarge City and signed J.T.R. was published in the *Visalia Delta* of February 7th: "The Indians still make raids on the settlers in the lower part of the valley. They cross the Inyo range and favored by the darkness of night descend and steal horses or kill beeves to supply their commissary department. . . . This stealing will continue until they are driven from their retreats. . . . Property in the upper portion of the valley is perfectly secure; the settlers there give them work. . . .

"The soldiers are safely encamped within the white lines, five of them being at Owens Lake to protect that settlement. These were used the other day to quell a negro insurrection. The darkies that came from New York to work the Coso Mine are not well pleased with their new home, whose deserts can offer no amusement to their unthinking minds . . . and they are now threatening to secede, which is no approval of life in a sagebrush region."

There were the usual troop changes at the post during the months of the year 1866 and in March the *Delta* correspondent bemoaned the fact that there had been no excitement, "not even an Indian fight. Uncle Sam's Boys in Blue are having an easy time of it, and are anxiously expecting a discharge or the paymaster." ⁽⁹⁾

In May, 1866 the *Wilmington Journal* remarked that Camp Independence had accommodations for one company but that other buildings were in process of construction that would double the size.

During the years that Camp Independence had offered protection to the miners and other settlers in the Owens River Valley the towns of Kearsarge, San Carlos, Bend City and Union Mills had sprung up and flourished under the impetus of mining ventures; and meanwhile the Indians had been thrown farther and farther back from their former happy hunting grounds. They had become victims of the white man's diseases and by the year 1866 their number was so decreased that only now and again could they descend upon their enemies in sufficient numbers to have a telling effect. However, they were an ever present menace and it was in July 1866 that the *Los Angeles News* carried the notice that "The scalp of the famous Chief, Joaquin Jim can be seen at Dick Wilson's new saloon on Main Street. The sunning of his moccasins has been a benefit to the Owens River travellers."⁽¹⁰⁾ In 1866 the town of Independence was beginning to boast permanent buildings, and there were six mills in the valley below Bishop Creek in working order and more under construction, all of which added to the sense of security enjoyed by the whites and the realization of the end of their residence in the Owens Valley by the redskins.

By 1870 Camp Independence was described as "A post located on

Oak Creek. Reservation $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long by $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide with a fall of 1 ft. in 30 ft., from west to east. In addition there is a wood reservation of 2 miles square in the sierra, 4 miles west of the post and a grazing reserve 3 miles square, 1 mile east of the post. A dam a short distance above the post on Oak Creek, and the camp is watered by 3 streams through the camp."⁽¹¹⁾ Of these streams one supplied headquarters, of men and officers; a second the hospital, and the third the quarters occupied by married men. After passing through the post the water was turned into the post garden. There was little shade, and no porches on the dwellings which were constructed of adobe, plastered and whitewashed outside and in, with roofs of shingles and all buildings floored except the storehouse. The Company barrack was 96x28 ft.; there were four sets of officers' quarters, and the hospital measured 41x34 ft. and was fitted with six beds. The post garden furnished far more in the way of vegetables than the post could consume, which spoke well for the fertility of the soil and the abundance of water.

There were the usual in and out troop movements during 1870 and 1871. The Los Angeles *Star* of August 15, 1871 carried a reprint from the Inyo *Independent* stating "General Ord is enroute to Camp Independence to pay an official visit. Lieutenant Haskell with a small detachment of troops started via the Kern River trail to meet the General at Visalia. . . . Doctor McMillen, the popular ex-surgeon of the post, is, we understand, on General Ord's staff." In this same month the *Delta* ⁽¹²⁾ carried the following: "A detachment of Co. B. 12th U. S. Infantry camped just north of town on Monday evening last. They came from Fort Independence. . . . We learn from them that Captain Wheeler is camped at Fort Independence with his expedition fitted out for the purpose of exploring the Black Canyon region of the Colorado River."

In the spring of 1872 the entire Owens Valley was shaken by earthquakes of major intensity. ⁽¹³⁾ The *Delta* of April 11, 1872 carried the report of the commanding officer at Camp Independence dated March 29, 1872, and addressed to the Assistant Adjutant General Headquarters Department of the Pacific at San Francisco.

"Sir: I have the honor to report that an earthquake of long duration commenced in this county on Tuesday morning at 2:30 o'clock and still continues. . . . Only one man, Private J. Lutz, Co. B. 12th Infantry, and his wife, a laundress, were injured. . . . The Surgeon's house, guard house, mess hall, cook house, First Sergeant's house and storehouse of Co. B. 12th Infantry, and the blacksmith's shop and two laundresses quarters were almost entirely destroyed, while the barracks, commissary, storehouse, post hospital and the balance of the officers' quarters were so shattered as to be entirely untenable and unsafe. This general

CAMP INDEPENDENCE—AN OWENS VALLEY OUTPOST

destruction arose from the fact that they are built of adobe bricks. . . . Immediately on the cessation of the more violent shocks temporary shelters were made for the troops and laundresses with the broken timber, and for their cooking and eating, while the families of the officers are under canvas.

Harry C. Egbert, Captain 12th Infantry
commanding Post."

That the army was not long in setting about to repair the damage done to the post is evidenced in the *Delta* of November 28, 1872, which speaks of the reconstruction work being done at Lone Pine. "Mr. Smith of the Black Rock Manufacturing Company had to decline orders for 60,000 feet, all that he can saw being required at Camp Independence."

By 1875 the new post was entirely rebuilt and must have presented quite a brave appearance judging from the following description:⁽¹⁴⁾ "The present buildings are located on the four sides of a parallelogram, forming the parade ground and lawns in front of the officers' quarters. These grounds are set out with trees and covered with grass. A live hedge forms the westerly boundary of the camp.

"Barracks—frame building 164x30 ft., 17 ft. high to the eaves, with a high peaked, shingled roof constructed of boards set upright and nailed to a strong frame work battened externally at the joints and the frame work lined with boards internally. A porch 8 ft. wide extends around the quarters. The building is located at the east end of the parade ground upon which it fronts. An addition 20 ft. wide adjoins the center of the main building in the rear and extends east 50 ft., it is 12 ft. high at the eaves. This is divided into a mess-room and kitchen. These buildings are well lighted and well warmed with stoves.

"Married soldiers quarters comprise four frame buildings located in rear northeast corner of the parade, each building 48x12 ft. with a porch 6 ft. wide along the front. The buildings are frame, the living rooms board lined, the kitchens lined with canvas. Attached shed about 8x10 for wood and lumber room.

"Officers' quarters, 4 frame houses with hipped roofs, shingled; the commanding officers 42x33½ ft. located in the west line of the grounds.

"1st lieutenant, north of C.O. on the same line. 2nd lieutenant, near west end of north line. Surgeon's near west end of south line. These three 27x31 ft. each house has a small hall through the center from front to rear, with two rooms on each side. A rough board building for kitchen and pantry, and servant's room adjoins the rear of each house. Porch 8 ft. wide at front and ends. The rooms 11½ ft. in height lined and ceiled with ¾ inch redwood, well lighted, warmed by stoves. Chimneys of adobe built into each house carefully braced

with wood and extended above the roofs by galvanized iron flues on account of earthquakes.

"Guard house, frame building 28x14x12 with porch 8 ft. wide along the front. One cell constructed of heavy timbers well bolted with iron, stands on south side of parade ground. Post bakery, 20x20 ft., rear north end of barracks, frame building. Hospital, north side of parade ground is frame building 40x34 with kitchen 14x16 ft., a pantry 11x6 ft. and a cook's room 14x8 ft. in an adjoining building in rear. Built of redwood lumber outside and in, with valley lumber for frame, roof and floors. Porch 8 ft. wide across front and ends of main building. Hall of main building 6-5/12 ft. wide in center running back 23-9/12 ft. to bathroom 9-3/12 ft. x 6-5/12 ft. Dispensary on east side of hall 16-3/12x13-9/12 ft. with a storeroom 16 3/12x13-3/12 ft. The kitchen adjoins the mess-room. On the east side of the hall, in front, is the steward's room 16 1/2x12 ft., in rear of it the ward 16 1/2x20 3/4 ft. The rooms of the main building are all 11 1/2 ft. in height. The kitchen is 9 ft. high. The ward has a ventilator in the ceiling, and is intended for 5 beds, affording 787 cu. ft. of air-space each. The hospital is complete, in good repair and commodious. A building 14x32x11 stands 40 ft. in the rear of the hospital. It is frame and contains a dead-room 14x16 ft. in the west end, a privy 14x8 ft. in the east end, with a passage between the dead-room lighted by three windows and a sky-light.

"All sinks at the post are placed over deep vaults to avoid contaminating the water running in ditches.

"Hospital grounds 150 ft. front by 200 ft. deep, lawns and flowers and trees.

"Storehouses, old adobe, 95x27 ft. formerly company quarters, and a new frame building of the same size located on the south side of the parade ground. Stables, s.e. of post, open shed 150x15x12 ft. fronts south and forms north side of corral, 150 ft. sq. enclosed by fence 6 ft. high, stream of water running through.

"Cemetery, 1/8 mile west of camp, 200 sq. ft. enclosed with fence. Stream of water north and south sides is fringed with willows. Post garden east of camp."

The citizens of the town of Independence were frequently enlivened by the presence of members of the company stationed at the Camp. There were drunken brawls and frequent brushes with the population. On December 31, 1873 a group of soldiers out to see the new year in serenaded the townsfolk, and ended up by wishing to crash the gates of the dance hall where a respectable citizenry were making merry. Because they were drunk the soldiers were refused admission, and a riot ensued in which fence pickets and broken heads were the order

of the day. There were other members of the camp contingent who were more soberly inclined who organized a chapter of the Order of Good Templars, that corresponded to the Dashaway Society at Fort Tejon. Whether this Lodge was responsible for the quieting down of the soldiers, or whether it was because the rowdies gradually deserted or served out their enlisted periods and were replaced by a soberer group is not known, but the guardhouse record of 1873 was one prisoner each day, in 1874 this had dwindled to one every fourth day and by 1875 there was only one every thirty days.

Company B. 12th Infantry under the command of Captain Dove left Camp Independence on June 30th, 1873 to take up the protection of telephone lines in Arizona, and Captain Harry C. Egbert, commanding the post resigned his commission and went into law practice in Independence with a partner, Patrick Reddy. Later Egbert left for the Phillipines.

The day that Company B. left Captain Alexander MacGowan arrived in command of Co. D. of the 12th Infantry who were to replace Egbert's men. Captain MacGowan having the good of the country at heart, cooperated with Independence in preserving the peace. Members of the company were sent to protect the jail against a lynching, and the Captain also led a company against the bandit Vasquez, with scant success, however.

On July 9, 1877 Captain MacGowan received orders to abandon Camp Independence and before the sun rose over the mountains on the morning of July 10th, Company D. 12th Infantry began its march out of the Owens River Valley, going south to the railroad where they entrained. Later some of this same outfit saw service with General Nelson Miles in the Nez Perce war in Idaho. As the soldiers disappeared from view the citizens of Independence who had crowded into the streets to give them a send-off viewed the retreating backs of the military with sincere regret, Company D. had been at Camp Independence four years, and had become part of the family life in that region.

While the settlers of the Owens River Valley watched the withdrawal of troops with sadness it was not mingled with fear for the future security of the region, for the Indians had long since ceased molesting the whites and had settled down to a more or less apathetic existence. There was a feeble effort made to form a company of State National Guard at Bishop, but because the lists were already full it was denied and the move was never made again.

After the Camp was officially abandoned the land was thrown open to settlers, the buildings were demolished to furnish lumber for other

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

places, and the old military post gradually fell into decay. No longer the bugle call echoes through the valley, the ghost of Camp Independence walks no more. Its site lies forlorn and deserted save for a ragged cabin or two in the shadow of the cottonwoods. The life of the pioneer is over, and so is that of the Camp which was established in the shadow of the sierra in the valley of the Owens River.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The 2nd Regiment Cavalry California Volunteers was organized by Presidential call for State troops August 14, 1861, as by a letter from Simon Cameron, Secretary of War to Governor John G. Downey of California. The companies of the 2nd Regiment of Cavalry assembled at Camp Alert, San Francisco. The site of Camp Alert was the old Pioneer Race Track whose boundaries were the present Mission, Folsom, 24th and 26th Streets. The first Colonel of this regiment was Andrew J. Smith. He later became Brig. General of Volunteers March 17, 1862 and took part in all the great western battles.
2. Putnam's store stood until 1876, when it was torn down. It was used as a fort, a hospital and a residence. Its location was in the west half of block 21, Independence, and Banhauer's store stands in front of the site.
(Historic Monuments and Landmarks of California No. 223)
3. First dispatch sent from Camp Independence by Evans to Lt. Wm. Forry, Camp Latham, July 5, 1862. *Official Correspondence of Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. L. Series I, Pt. I, pp. 147-148.
4. *Ibid* p. 145
5. *Ibid*
6. Camp Babbitt, situated one mile north of Visalia was established Oct. 8, 1862 by Lt. Col. George S. Evans from Camp Independence. It was named for Col. E. B. Babbitt, Deputy Quartermaster General of the Dept. of the Pacific.
7. *Off. Corres. Union and Conf. Armies*, Vol. L, Series I, Pt. I, P. 491.
8. These articles appeared in 4 parts of which this description is part 3.
9. *Visalia Weekly Delta*, March 7, 1866.
10. Joaquin Jim, war leader of the Mono, lived in the Owens Valley and was always an enemy of the whites.
11. Circular No. 4 War Department, Surgeon General's Office, Washington, D. C., Dec. 5, 1870. A Report on Barracks and Hospitals with Descriptions of Military Posts. Govt. Printing Office, 1870. Information furnished by Asst. Surgeon T. McMillen and Chas. Smart, U.S.A.
12. *Visalia Delta* August 3, 1871.
13. First shock occurred March 26, 2:30 a.m. lasted 3 minutes. Camp Independence noted 200 shocks from the first hour to 5 p.m. the next day.
14. Circular No. 8, War Department, Surgeon General's Office, May 1, 1875.