

# NUGGETS OF BOULDER COLOR

By Elton Garrett

## UNUSUAL PILGRIMAGE

An unusual pilgrimage, after 16 years, to an unusual monument on the Hoover dam project, took place Saturday afternoon.

Your scribe accompanied H. H. Wheeler of Los Angeles on this strange trip up Richards Wash, above the Hoover dam ferry on the Arizona side of the river, on his trip to view for the first time since that tragic scorching trip in 1917 the spot where Joseph Heber Richards expired in the dread heat of the summer of 1917.

Wheeler, who is now president of the Los Angeles Decomposed Granite company, driving a high class sedan and accompanied by his wife and by M. B. Clark, division engineer of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway company, located in San Bernardino, and his family, appeared far removed from any likelihood that he would be the sole survivor of a summertime trek across rocky desert stretches, which trek claimed the lives of the other three.

Yet Wheeler was just that. Never before had he seen the monument erected six tenths of a mile above the ferry in Richards Wash in memory of the man who died

there.

Your scribe, who wrote a "Nugget" a month ago about this "silt sealed tomb" of the period after Hoover dam shall have been completed, was intent upon getting more details of the actual circumstances during this pilgrimage.

"Well," Wheeler explained as the party moved down Hemenway wash in the big limousine, "we were going out to appraise a manganese property located by a prospector named Watson. Now Watson was taking Richards and a Mr. Vincent of Salt Lake to the property so they could see whether they wanted to invest in its promotion.

"I was principal of the school at Needles at the time, and did assaying work on the side. So they had me along to round out the party of four. I was to make assays and give my opinion on the property, being hired at so much a day for the trip.

"This road we're traveling now was not in existence then. We had to go down a rough, little-used road down Vegas wash, through the sand bottom of the wash much of the time, then had to drive around over some pretty rough country down near the river before we got

to the river's edge.

"Right over there's approximately where we unloaded the lumber we'd brought in the car, and commenced building our boat." And Wheeler pointed out across the Six Companies muck dump to the edge of the river beyond where Williamsville formerly stood.

"You see there was no way to cross the Colorado except to build a boat. And that took us a full day. We didn't build a beautiful craft, at all, but a square cornered box of an outfit that served the purpose. We oched up the seams to make it water tight and tried out our clumsy boat. It worked. It was evening when we loaded our camping equipment into the 'boat' and pushed off into the swollen current. For the river was high. We were deathly afraid of being unable to get across before reaching the dread Black canyon, which certainly would mean disaster.

"We battled the current and won, landing right across there on the sandbar. It's been 16 years since I saw it, but it still looks the same as then. We camped that night over there under that mesquite, pitching our tent alongside the mesquite and tying one end to the tree.

"Richards had not the remotest idea that that night in the tent

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And there aren't any wa  
And no Russian goods a  
ed.  
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Where the cities aren't bro  
Where there's dough to meet  
pay rolls  
And no bulletins from Doak;  
Where there are no daily huddles  
By commissions vacant-eyed  
And the railroads make some  
would be his last night on this  
earth..."  
(Concluded tomorrow)

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## UNUSUAL PILGRIMAGE (Concluded)

It was last Saturday afternoon your scribe accompanied H. H. Wheeler of Los Angeles on his first visit back to the scene where he and three associates last saw Joseph Heber Richards before the mining man died in the horrible agonies of heat prostration in the wash since called "Richards wash" on the Arizona side of Black canyon.

Sixteen years after the fateful trip of which Wheeler is the only survivor, Wheeler's limousine bearing a party of relatives and friends pulled around the road, crossed the canyon bottom railroad track and went down the slope to the Hoover dam ferry.

"We had crossed the Colorado in our crude boat and camped there under that mesquite all night. The next morning early the four of us started the nine mile hike up the wash toward where Old Man Watson, the prospector, had his claim.

"The sun was a scorcher from the minute it came up. We had no thermometer, but we learned later it was 118 in the shade at San Bernardino the same day. And it certainly must have been hotter than that down there—probably

about 125.

"We made it up to the manganeese claim all right, looked it over, and started back the nine miles down the wash toward camp. Well, I had dropped several cans of tomatoes along the way, so we could eat them and drink the puice on the way back. We used some of these and all the water we had. We were within less than a mile of the river when Richards got deathly sick. He and the prospector sat down and Vincent (of Salt Lake City) and I kept on down to the river.

"We made it to the river and got ourselves into the muddy water, drinking our fill. We worried about the other two, and I loaded a canteen and went back to see if I could help them."

The big car had been taken across the river on the ferry, and now was moving up the winding road up the canyon. . .

"I remember this canyon now, just as it was then. It's about three quarters of a mile from the river. we'll find the monument. That's where I came upon Richards. He'd got himself up under the cliff on the south side of the wash, to get a small amount of shade—and there he was dead.

"But where was Watson, the old prospector? I found tracks, and I followed them. I got up on top to the south and after awhile found the old man where he'd laid down to die. Well, I poured water over his head and gave him enough to drink, and got him moving. So we made it down to camp. But he died that night. I had walked over hot rocks so much the skin had blistered from the bottom of my feet and my toenails came off.

"But we got into the boat and made it to the Nevada side to meet the car that was to meet us the next morning. Well, we made it on into Las Vegas, 3 miles or so. Had to go out to get the other body. I knew where it was, and word came from a relative, George T. O'Dell, in Salt Lake, urging that the body be sent there. So I went back out with Dr. R. W. Martin and others and we carried the body down the wash, took it across by boat into Las Vegas and sent it on to Salt Lake. Vincent died later as the result of exposure.

"The next winter Doctor Martin and O'Dell went up Richards wash and put up this monument. . . ."

And there it was, in the side of the cliff, a short distance above the floor of the wash in a niche in the cliff—a small white marble spire planted in a sack of hardened cement, with Richards' prospectors pick, which was found by his body, planted in the cement beside it, On

the marble monument was engraved the name "Joseph Heber Richards," and the date, "June 1917."