

WHEN MOTORISTS DARE CALIFORNIA'S VALLEY OF DEATH



Top view shows part of the Funeral Range looking toward Death Valley from the Nevada side. On the left is a bit of Titus Canyon with the Reo Flying Cloud in the foreground. The center picture is of an Auto Club sign erected on all roads entering Death Valley. The right hand picture shows one of the old Borax wagons near Furnace Creek ranch. Below is another view of the narrow-walled Titus Canyon.

By M. C. Borland "Into the Valley of Death Rode the Six Hundred."

Tennyson's poem immortalized a Valley of Death that volleyed and thundered and reaped its grim harvest violently amid the noise and confusion of battle.

California's Valley of Death is no less grim, but it earned its title in horrible silence, with a clear sky instead of hovering cannon smoke, and with its victims slowly weakening instead of rushing with drawn sabres to their fate.

Into this Valley of Death rode an emigrant train instead of the Light Brigade, and out of it crawled a few parched, half-crazed stragglers who paused at the top of Emigrant Wash long enough to shake puny fists at the vast, silent stretches that lay behind them.

They are trying to make a playground out of this Death Valley of ours, but a playground it will never be in the humble opinion of a few of us who started from M. J. Flix and Company the other day in a Reo Flying Cloud, and made a complete tour of the valley.

Like a Lion It is like a lion. It has been caressed and hand-fed and taught to sit on an overturned tub, but it is still a lion. One doesn't keep it around the house for a pet, although it is nice to look at it through the bars and hear its snarling roar of defiance—from a safe distance.

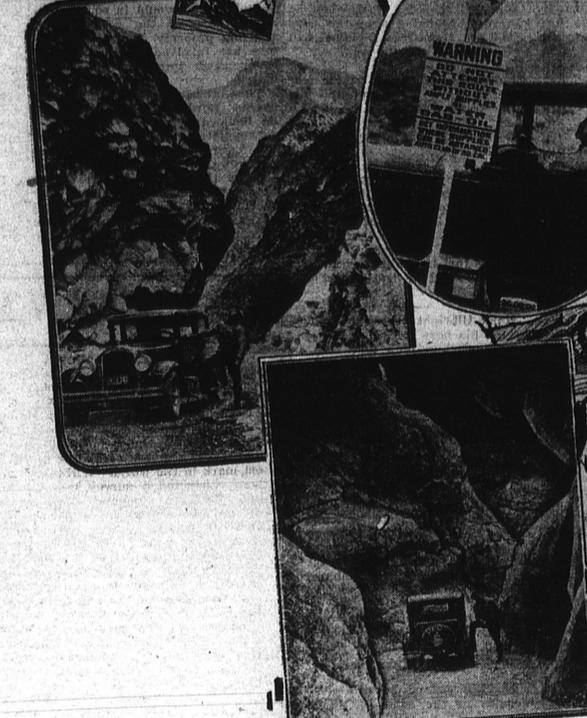
Death Valley, as the Reo Flying Cloud party found it, is safe to go and see. But don't get too familiar. Take along a wholesome respect for the place and you'll be perfectly safe and have a good time. The Automobile Club has sign-posted practically all of the roads and trails. There is water and gasoline to be had at well defined spots on your Auto Club map. And excellent accommodations are available at two places in the valley itself.

Equipment should include a 5-gallon can of gasoline stowed away somewhere, a set of running board cans for gas, oil and water, a gallon canteen for drinking water, and some "emergency rations" of some kind (cheese, hard bread, canned beans, etc.) and a full complement of tools including tire repair kit.

Don't let this imposing array scare you. We in the Reo Flying Cloud never touched our 5-gallons of extra gasoline, nor our tool kit, but it gave us a wonderfully comfortable feeling to know we had 'em.

To properly tour Death Valley requires at least four days, and even this doesn't give you much time and sit by the wayside and marvel at the purples, blues, reds, saffrons, indigos and other shades which are painted on the mountains.

The ordinary route of travel is to go in by the new Eichbaum toll roads, which is reached via Olancha and Darwin, and come out the same way, or drop down the valley and crawl out the other side by Furnace Creek Inn and Death Valley Junction. But we of the Reo Flying Cloud wanted to be different, and we planned our trip so as to enter the valley the way the original emigrant survivors escaped from it—by Emigrant Wash.



Starting from Torrance at 5 o'clock one evening, we drove to San Bernardino, over Cajon Pass, and down the long, straight power line road to Adelante and Randburg. Here we loaded our extra 5-gallons of gas into the back of the car, filled our tank, checked the oil, and headed out over the rolling desert toward Trona and Ballarat. Trona, the Potash and Borax camp belonging to a big English syndicate, was snoring peacefully under a full moon as our Reo passed through. Soon we were picking our way up the State Range over a none-too-good road which led us over the summit and down the other side toward Ballarat.

It was 2 a. m. when we climbed out of the Reo at Ballarat and proceeded to make camp in the front room of one of the deserted adobe dwellings that stand as stark reminders of the days when this city was bigger, better, noisier and more vivacious than San Francisco. Their roofs sagging, or entirely caved; their windows broken; their walls partly melted by the onslaught of fierce rains, the houses at Ballarat squatted in the pale desert moonlight like a group of dismal beggars at a Cathedral door.

The next morning we breakfasted early, building our camp fire in a roofless house across the street from our sleeping quarters, and continued our trek to Death Valley. It was a long, rough trail but it finally brought us down the Emigrant Wash and connected with the Elchbaum toll road that leads to Bungalow City. This is one of the two places in Death Valley where meals and a bed are available. The toll is ordinarily \$2.50 per car, but because we had used the road only from the Emigrant Springs Junction, they charged us only 70 cents.

It was about 3 p. m. We had been on the road since early morning with only one stop for a bite of emergency rations, and yet the distance covered was not great. The reason will be learned by anyone who follows our trail through Emigrant Pass. In most places there was no semblance of road.

We picked our way down the wash, zig-zagging to miss the larger rocks, rolling out of our path those that we couldn't dodge, and climbing over those that wouldn't roll. It was 5 and 10 miles an hour traveling for many, lurching miles.

Climb Funeral Range Bungalow City lies in the northern central portion of Death Valley. It is about 30 miles from Scotty's which is the northern extremity, and about 60 miles from Bardbury Well at the Southern End. The road which takes you to Bungalow City continues across the Valley, climbs the Funeral Range on the other side, and eventually lands you at Rhyolite and Beatty. It was growing dusk as we passed through Rhyolite and the ghosts of this famous desert ghost city were just awakening to their evening prowls. We hurried on to Beatty, five miles away, where a hot meal and a "civilized" bed could be had.

The next morning, with our gas tank filled again, we started back toward Death Valley, planning to spend a little time in Rhyolite, take in Leadville where thousands of Southern California investors have money sunk in a mine shaft that echoes to the whirr of bat-wings instead of the blast of dynamite, and re-enter Death Valley via Titus Canyon. Then we would swing South, cross our trail of the day before, and continue Southward as far as possible, spending the night on the floor of the Valley.

It would take more space than we are allowed, and more words than we can command, to draw a word picture of the awe-inspiring scenery we beheld that day. It would take a week of intensive looking to even see all that we passed hurriedly by. Suffice it to say that we would return the entire distance just to behold the unfolding of two glorious mountain panoramas encountered at the summit of two divides are reached on the way to Leadfield. And when our Reo bade goodbye to the watchman at Leadfield and dropped down between the towering rocks which walls Titus Canyon, we had reached the conclusion



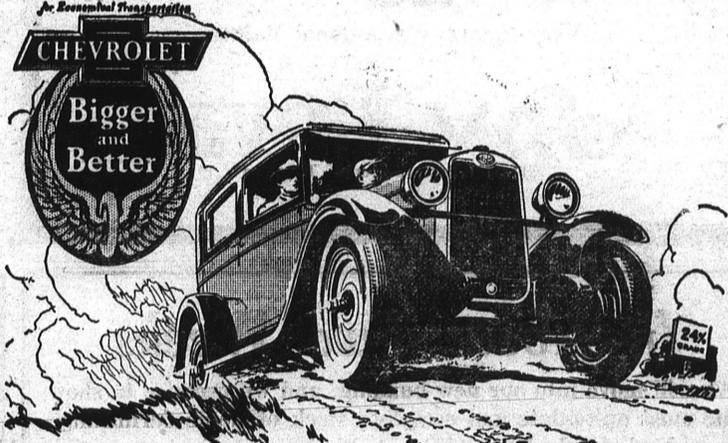
than 60 miles since morning. We were hungry and the thought of a dinner of cold canned food wasn't cheering, so we pushed on Southward to Furnace Creek Inn, 20 miles or so ahead.

Unshaven, tousel-headed and begrimed, we marched into this famous resort hostelry and after a few moments spent in removing some of the more obvious dirt, sat down before a full complement of glow-white linen, gleaming silver and glittering crystal. Dinner was \$2 per plate, and worth it. To have unlimited quantities of ice water after a day of drinking from a lukewarm canteen is worth \$2. Look at it that way, and the dinner is free.

It was a big temptation to stay at the Inn that night and sleep between cool, clean sheets, but we had promised ourselves a night on the floor of Death Valley, so out into the moonlight we went and found a bedding-down place beside a sand dune. We built a fire of mesquite, spread out our blankets, and tried to sleep. It was no use. It was like a night out of a book. The clouds had been marcelled and fingerwaved and fluffed up into proudest shapes. The moon tinted them with delicate colors. The stars, paled into insignificance, took an occasional nose-dive to attract attention. Across the way the Funeral Range lay in uneven, indigo heaps like the discarded cloak of a God. Never was such a night in real life.

The next day we breakfasted at dawn and headed the Reo homeward. All day we rolled down the Valley floor, passing the Devil's Golf Course, numerous wayside graves and several water holes with their inevitable retinue of wild donkeys. It was growing dusk again as we finally completed the climb which takes you out of the valley by way of Cave Springs, Bicycle Lake and Barstow.

that the only way to see all of the scenery would be to travel in a glass-roofed car. Look Like Pioneers Sunset overtook us at Stovepipe Wells. We had not traveled more



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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION The Seventh Annual Meeting of the members of the Torrance Hospital Association of the Jared Sidney Torrance Memorial Hospital, Torrance, California, will be held on Wednesday, February 8th, 1928, at 7:30 P. M. in the Episcopal Guild Hall, opposite the hospital. MINNIE S. BROOKS, Secretary, Torrance Hospital Association.

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