



WHITE PINE COUNTY

WHERE THE GREAT BASIN HIGHWAY
MEETS THE LONELIEST ROAD IN AMERICA

Text and Photographs by Andrea Graham, 2003.

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**FOLKLIFE PROGRAM
NEVADA ARTS COUNCIL**
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Looking north toward Lund
on Highway 318.

COVER:
The classic basin and range
landscape of Steptoe Valley.



Cattle ranch, White Pine County.

The folklife of a community includes traditional ways of life and creative expressions of local culture. It is usually found in such things as stories, legends, crafts, music, dance, celebrations, foodways, occupational skills and religious traditions. Folklife is generally passed on orally or in face-to-face situations within a group like a tribe, ethnic or religious group, occupational group, or just people who live in the same geographic area. It is often the intangible aspects of a culture, and it brings the physical places and things (like landscapes, buildings or historical sites) to life and gives them human connections

—ANDREA GRAHAM

INTRODUCTION

From July 2001 through June 2002, folklorist Andrea Graham conducted research and field interviews and photographed neighborhoods, ranches, mines, railroads, people, traditional arts, and artists in the many communities of White Pine County, Nevada. This digital publication documenting traditional life in Nevada, originally published as a booklet in 2003, was the fifth in a series, following Lander and Lincoln counties, and Reno and Las Vegas folklife surveys. The survey was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Nevada Arts Council, and conducted with the active support of the Western Folklife Center in Elko. This edition, also funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, contains additional pictures from Graham's original fieldwork, gleaned from the Nevada Folklife Archives, and allows us to present them in color as they were photographed.

There is a surprising variety of people, communities and traditional arts in rural White Pine County. Among the ethnic traditions are Shoshone, Basques, Greeks, Yugoslavians, Japanese, and Italians. Occupational traditions include mining, ranching, railroading and public lands management. Spiritual and religious traditions include Greek Orthodox, Catholics, and the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The area is home to two experimental communities: the School of the Natural Order in Baker and the Eskdale, just over the border in Utah.

The photos, slides and interviews that are part of this project document cemeteries, buildings, and ranch and mining lands; quilting, crocheting, Shoshone beadwork, willow basketry and drum making; saddle making and leather braiding; woodcarving, willow furniture, decorative metalwork; and narrative traditions such as local legends and character stories. The recorded interviews and transcripts, photographs and slides, and extensive field notes produced through this project are currently housed in the Nevada Folklife Archives at the Nevada Arts Council.

JEANNE HARRAH JOHNSON, *Folklife Program Coordinator (2003)*

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Driving in east central Nevada, the valleys sweep open and curve up, like a vast hammock of sage and sand. The road eases gently along the bottom of these basins, and swoops down from one mountain range and up to the next. Just when you're thinking the place is completely uninhabited, you spy a spot of green signifying a ranch or an old homestead, or a roadside saloon and gas station flashes neon as you speed by. There are those who say this landscape never changes, it's boring to drive through the basin and range country. Have they ever been here? With every mile the view of the mountains shifts along the horizon, revealing or hiding peaks and passes. The lowering sun catches a rock formation or a tail of dust kicked up by a ranch pickup heading home.

You need these things—the stand of trees, the truck dust—to put things in perspective, because otherwise you're not sure how big or small the valley is, or you are. It's the human mark on this land that makes it accessible to the human mind.

The Great Basin Highway headed south on its way to meet the Loneliest Road.



The County Line—
Elko and White Pine.



A lone wild horse roams northern Steptoe Valley.

This look at White Pine County, Nevada, is a look at the people who have made it unique and who have made it home. White Pine County is a microcosm of Nevada's geography, history and culture, but of course, the same could be said of most of the state's rural counties. With their rugged basin and range topography; their economies founded on mining, ranching and railroads; and their conjoined spirit of independence and cooperation; some might say they are all the same. Perhaps because it feels more distant, physically and mentally, from the centers of power and commerce; perhaps because its mountains are higher; perhaps because the remnants of its mining and railroad history loom so large even though both industries are gone now—for whatever reason, White Pine is different, as are Elko, Nye, and Humboldt counties. The task here is to explore this one place through the eyes of those who know it best, those with roots in its land and its communities.

It is called "The Big Empty," but those from here who use this term know how full it really is—full of opportunity and hard work and disappointment, and of ties that hold people together when the boom finally busts, as it inevitably does. Life in the small communities and remote settlements of White Pine County has the usual problems and blessings of small town life anywhere. Jobs are hard to come by, but people are resourceful and multi-talented when it comes to making a living. Everybody knows each other and each other's business, which may

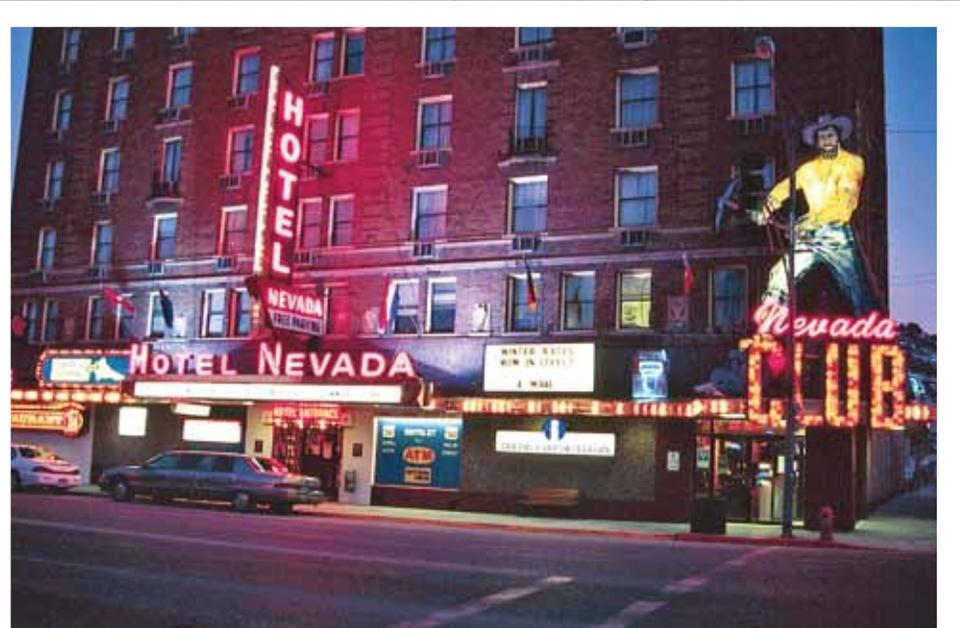
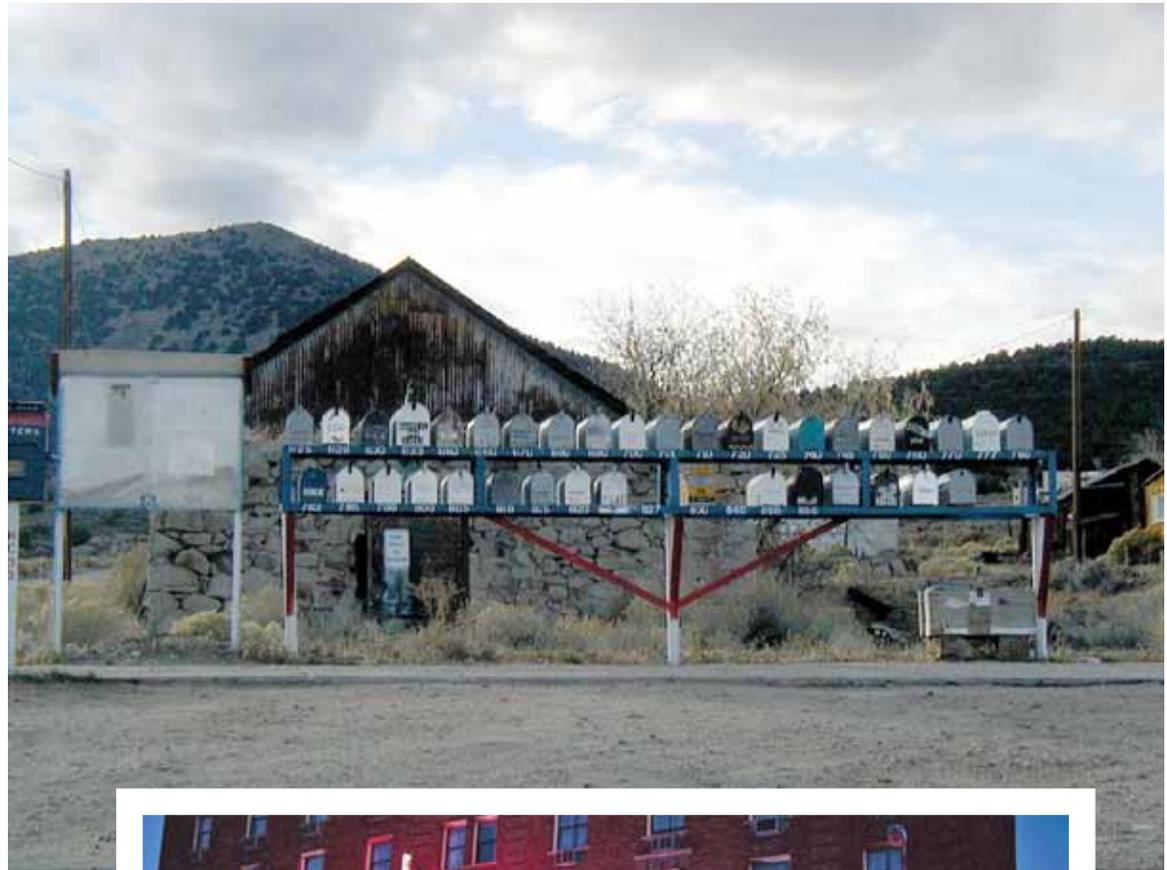
mean less privacy, but also that a helping hand is ready when needed. Through the stories of a handful of people, we hope to provide a flavor of that life and what it is like to help create it.

Many locals think of the county in terms of valleys, with Steptoe Valley in the center (where Ely is located), Spring Valley to the east, and Snake Valley still further east on the border with Utah. Butte Valley is in the northwest part of the county, and Lund Valley is in the south. Ely, White Pine's county seat and largest town at 4,000 people, sits at the intersection of the Great Basin Highway, US 93, and US 50—officially designated the Loneliest Road in America by the state after a *Life Magazine* article christened it as such. It seems a fitting junction for this most Nevadan of places. The state's mainstay founding businesses—mining, ranching, and railroads—are all key to the town's origin, growth, political power, and recent changes. White Pine has some interesting history that sets it apart from most other Nevada places of similar size and type. Its economy was dominated by a single industry for many years—copper mining and production. Consolidated Copper, succeeded by Kennecott Copper, ran the towns of McGill and Ruth on their own terms. The copper mines and smelter brought in a more ethnically diverse work force than that of most areas in early twentieth-century Nevada, and left a huge open pit mine in Ruth as a permanent reminder of their presence.

Rural mailboxes.

Ely's old downtown is reasonably well-preserved and quite well used, despite the strip mall sprawl that is taking place on the edges of town. Drug stores, restaurants, gift shops, casinos, variety stores, bars, and the JC Penney store still hold downtown on the ground and keep it from blowing away. Over the last several years the Ely Renaissance Society has been commissioning a series of murals on downtown buildings that commemorate the area's history and the people who shaped it. Local support for, and interest in, the murals display a pride in the town and a belief that it will be around for a long time to come. This is an encouraging mood to encounter in small-town Nevada.

The Hotel Nevada is a longtime landmark and gathering place in downtown Ely.





The Cononelos Furniture store was one of a number of Greek-owned businesses in McGill.

ETHNIC CULTURES

A Greek sandwich shop, a Chinese restaurant, and an old Basque hotel (although now closed) hint at the ethnic history of the place. A stroll through the large cemetery in the center of town is even more enlightening. There, markers in Yugoslavian sit next to stones with Greek inscriptions; at the far end is a section with Japanese graves. For the most part, cultures and ethnicities mingle in the cemetery as they did in life, although it is telling that the Japanese graves are all set apart. Occupations and interests are frequently expressed on grave markers, with horses, livestock, trains, wildlife, and outdoor scenes the most common subjects. Of course religious and spiritual beliefs are central expressions on many gravestones.

Sollie Cononelos, greeted by all as “Sollie” when he walks into his Red Apple Restaurant on East Aultman Street, is a cornerstone of the Greek community. He’s a natty dresser and usually wears a necktie, probably one of the few in the whole county. His father, Louis, was the leading businessman in the McGill Greek community from the early 1900s on, and helped recruit Greek immigrants to come work in the copper smelter. He owned the grocery and the dry goods and furniture stores, but he also helped new immigrants to settle and deal with the unfamiliar American institutions. Sollie grew up in McGill and started working for his father in the furniture store at age 14. After he returned from serving in World War II, he ran Cononelos Furniture until it closed in the 1970s. He also built a restaurant in Ely in 1975 and leased it to the Jerry’s Restaurant chain until a few years ago, when he took it over. The Red Apple sports a painting of a Greek dancer on its east wall. Sollie also owns the Collins Court Building in downtown Ely, where he has his office, just because he appreciates its historic 1918 architecture.



Yugoslavian headstone, Ely Cemetery.



Sollie Cononelos expresses his Greek pride in his restaurant decorations.

Sollie is also the caretaker of St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in McGill. St. Barbara is the patron saint of workers, appropriate for a company-owned mill town. The current building replaced the original structure in 1954 (no one is quite sure when the first church was built, but it was sometime after 1908), and was built with the help of Kennecott Copper. The roof is held up with big exposed wooden trusses; the original icons, pews, and light fixtures came from the old church. There is a social hall in the basement where Sollie remembers that parties and dances were held. There were musicians who played mandolins, bouzoukis, and clarinets when he was growing up, and he still speaks the Greek language he learned as a child and spoke with others in the community.

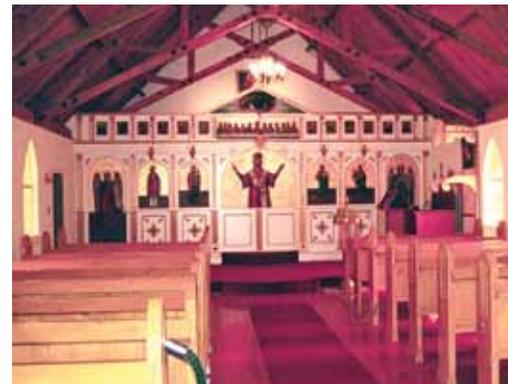
The Greeks were looked down on by the “white eyes,” as Anglo and northern European residents were known, and were relegated to the “Greek Town” neighborhood in lower McGill. Their neighbors—Italians and Yugoslavians (both Serbs and Croats)—lived nearby in “Austrian Town,” and the Japanese in “Jap Town.” However, as the town’s children attended school together, they lost some of those prejudices, and after World War II, when overt discrimination by Kennecott was forbidden, much of the ethnic tension faded. Today there has been so much intermarriage and assimilation that the Greek community has a hard time holding on to many of its traditional ways. The McGill church shares a once-a-month visiting priest with the Ely congregation of St. Alexios Church and the large annual Greek Independence Day celebration in Ely has not been held in two years.

Bessie Kulas says there are no Greek men and just “seven of us Greek women [left in McGill], that’s it, and I’m the oldest one.” Bessie turned 85 in May of 2002, but is still sprightly and chatty, and remembers the adventures of the town’s early days clearly. Her parents came from Greece to Wisconsin in about 1915 and eventually came to McGill where her father found work. Her parents later moved the family to Utah, but Bessie married and returned to McGill in 1935, when she and her late husband moved into the house she still lives in today.

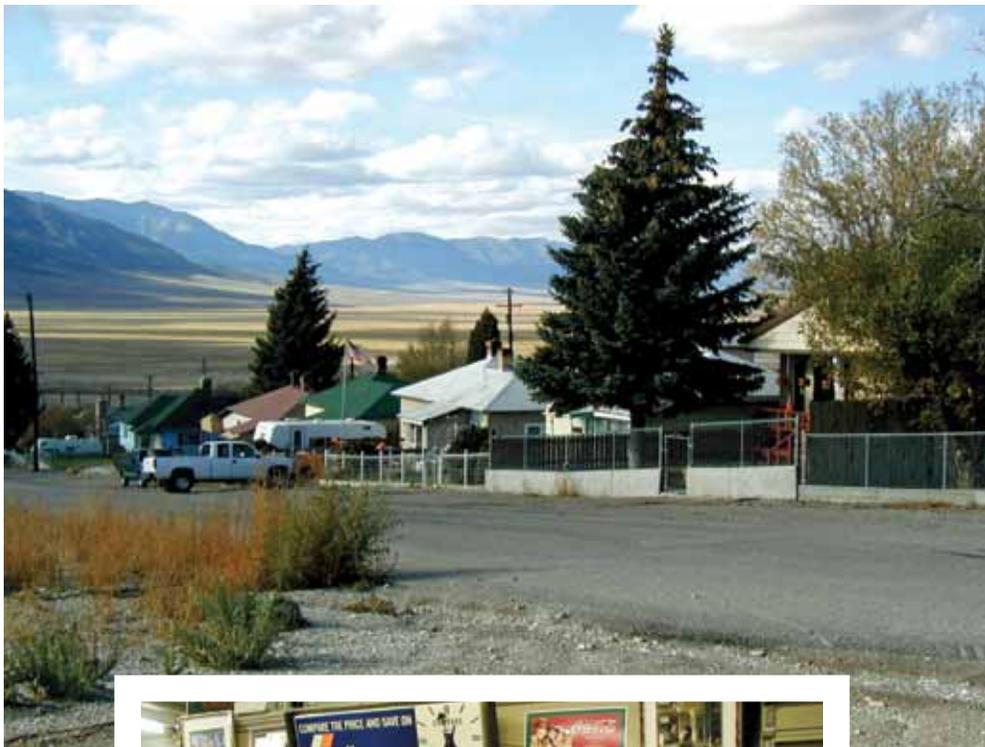


St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, McGill, is still in use nearly 100 years after its founding.

The interior of St. Alexios Greek Orthodox Church is arranged traditionally with icons of Jesus and Mary flanking the center panel, which covers the altar.



McGill's Greek Orthodox Church, rebuilt in the 1950s, used the icons, pews, and lights from the original church.



Regulation company houses march down the steep street of McGill.

Bessie recalls with delight the holiday celebrations for Easter and New Year's, the music and dancing, and most of all the food. Louis Cononelos' grocery store always carried Greek olives and cheeses and other specialty foods, and parties and gatherings featured plenty of traditional foods and pastries. According to Bessie, the Greeks "always had a glass of wine with dinner," and she recounts how the community got special permission from the state for each family to make up to 200 gallons of wine for their own use. Truckloads of California grapes would be shipped in every September to be stomped in outside vats and fermented in basements to make wine. There are stories of winemaking equipment still stored in some McGill cellars. Bessie still cooks traditional foods including a round Easter bread loaf with a red-dyed egg

in the center and a New Year's loaf with a coin baked inside that will bring good luck to its finder. She regrets the loss of the Independence Day celebration which brought several hundred locals (most of them not Greek) to the Ely convention center to enjoy music and dancing along with homemade food.

Both Bessie and Sollie have mixed feelings about McGill as a company town—owned and run by Consolidated Copper and later Kennecott Copper. True, they "took care of everything," including housing, schools, recreation, and the hospital, but they also regulated which businesses could operate and where people could live. And when the company left, the town collapsed. The final literal collapse in McGill came on September 4, 1993 when the company blew up the tall stack of the smelter that had been McGill's landmark. As Bessie says, "you'd come from Salt Lake and you'd say, 'oh, we're getting home.' You'd see the smokestack and say, 'we're just about home.' Now you don't even know if you're home or not." The company apparently decided the stack was unsafe, and toppled it as hundreds of people from all over eastern Nevada came to watch the spectacle. Most were not happy, but that didn't keep them from watching. "They shouldn't have, they should have left that, that was really something," Bessie laments. The community expressed its disapproval, but "they don't listen to us, nobody listened, they think they know everything. It was terrible." The county's most distinctive landmark was gone.



The McGill Drugstore has been preserved as a museum, with its contents just as they were left when the business closed in 1979.

One newer member of White Pine's Greek community is Irene Chachas, who grew up in a Greek family in Salt Lake City but married John Chachas from Ely and moved there with him in 1980. Irene, John, and John's brother George (a former Ely mayor) look after St. Alexios Church, keeping the lawn mowed and preparing for the bi-monthly services. The priest from Las Vegas' St. John's Greek Orthodox Church comes up to serve the joint Ely-McGill congregation, alternating months between the two churches. There are four or five Greek families in Ely who are still active in the church, and the seven McGill widows, so it's a small group, but the church and its traditions are important enough for them to keep supporting it.

Irene and John have instilled Greek traditions and the Greek language in their two daughters, and Irene is generous in sharing her cooking skills and knowledge of music, dance and crafts with schools and community groups. Because there is not a large and supportive community like the one in which she grew up, Irene felt a special obligation to maintain and pass on her traditions here. Easter is the most important holiday in the Greek Orthodox Church, and her family observes the 40 days of Lent and the major religious obligations of Holy Week. On the day before Easter, people fast all day then attend a late evening service that lasts until midnight, after which they can break their fast. On Easter Day, lamb is the traditional food. Irene also laments the loss of the Greek Festival, but says she can't blame the elderly people for not wanting to do the work anymore, and acknowledges that there are not enough younger people to assume the burden.

Another ethnic group that dominated the copper industry and the county in the early days was the Yugoslavians, both Serbians and Croatians. They lived in a segregated section of town in Ruth, five miles west of Ely at the huge copper mine and in Austrian Town in McGill. Buddy Jukich has carried on and honored his Serbian heritage, in his own unique way. His home in Ely is a work of art—a folk art environment. Wagon wheels and colorful rocks fill the small yard in front of his small wooden house, and ore carts can be spotted out back. The fence along the driveway is covered in license plates; a row of bottles runs the length of a shed building that spans the lot in back; and old wagons and animal skulls adorn the roof.



St. Alexios Church, Ely, was built in the 1950s.



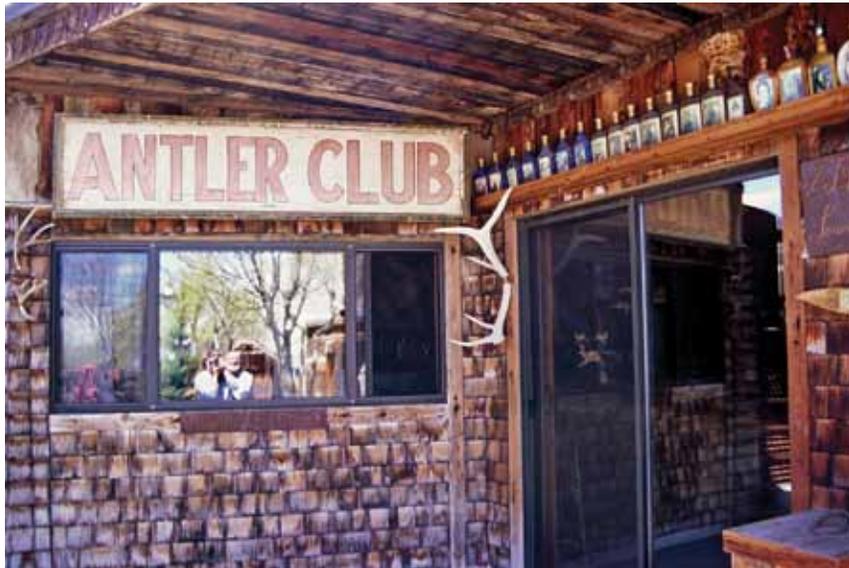
Even the casual passerby can't help but notice the artistic nature of Bud Jukich's property in Ely.



Bud Jukich's collections of old tools, bottles, and insulators are meticulously arranged and cared for in the shed behind his house.

Bud says he built this whole environment as a tribute to his Serbian heritage. His grandfather and father worked in the Ruth copper mines, and Buddy was born in Old Ruth in 1931. He started barbecuing—a Serbian tradition—for friends and organizations and soon built the backyard shed, with a firebrick floor and sliding panels in the roof, to make the work easier. Eventually half of the shed was enclosed and today houses “The Antler Club,” a bar and dining area where Buddy and his pals can hang out. Every inch of wall and shelf space, indoors and out, is covered with his collections of old tools, Slivovitz bottles, license plates, taxidermy animals, photographs, horseshoes, and padlocks—all precisely and neatly

arranged and maintained. He says he started the project in 1970 and it took him 19 years to finish on evenings and weekends when he wasn't working at his roofing business. How did he know when he was done? When he ran out of room to add even one more thing. Now he keeps pretty busy just maintaining the collection. Buddy's property also includes a small smokehouse for preparing meats the traditional Serbian way. He makes sauerkraut traditionally as well, and still enjoys his *slivovitz*. Buddy is also a fan of traditional Serbian *tamburitza* music, and has autographed pictures of well-known players in his living room. There are few public reminders of White Pine's Yugoslavian heritage other than names on mailboxes, so Buddy Jukich's creation is an important place in the cultural landscape. One hopes it will be preserved and maintained after he is gone.



LEFT: Antler Club, Ely.



RIGHT: The Antler Club, Ely, is a cozy retreat for Bud and his friends.

The Japanese receive little public recognition in the county. There were never very many Japanese in the area, perhaps 50 in Ely. There were separate housing areas for Japanese workers in Ruth and McGill, and they were probably more discriminated against than other groups. For example, a Japanese boy was valedictorian at White Pine High School in the 1940s but was not allowed to speak at graduation. The Japanese could not work in the mine or the mill, but did track-laying work and yard work. There were Japanese business owners in Ely who ran restaurants and laundries, and one family operated a truck farm at the 3C Ranch about five miles south of town. Terry Ishii Hase's father ran that farm, and she recalls spending summers hoeing crops and bunching onions for sale. At first the vegetables they grew were sold to other Japanese in McGill and Ruth, but later their produce was marketed in Ely and some even went to Salt Lake City.

Terry's grandparents first came from Japan in the 1920s and worked for railroads in Nebraska and Utah before ending up in Ely. They decided they didn't like railroad work so started the farm in about 1930 and ran it for 30 years. Terry's father and uncle were born in the U.S., so although the family returned to Japan for a while, they eventually moved back to Ely. Terry's father and uncle went back to Japan to find brides, and Terry and her siblings were later sent to Japan for schooling so there was always a lot of travel back and forth. Terry was caught in Japan during World War II so did not have to move to a relocation camp, but apparently none of the Japanese residents of Ely were evacuated. Those in McGill and Ruth were, but for some reason, which she does not understand, Ely residents like her father continued to work and live in Ely, although they were subjected to curfews and harsh prejudice.



The old 3C Ranch, south of Ely, was owned by Consolidated Copper and is now home to the Steptoe Valley Wildlife Management Area.



Japanese headstone, Ely cemetery.



Mary Jean and Pete Paris, Sr.

The Basques first came to White Pine County to work as sheepherders. Many became ranch owners. Although sheep are still raised in the county, there are far fewer than in the past. This is a small herd in Preston.



Mary Jean Paris with one of the many quilts she has made since retiring from ranching.

The Basques are perhaps Nevada's best-known ethnic community, and White Pine County has a long history of Basque sheep and cattle ranching that continues to this day. Pete Paris's father Beltran came to this country in 1912 at the age of 24 and went to work as a sheepherder in Wyoming and northern Nevada. He saved his money and eventually bought some sheep to start his own business in White Pine County. He bought several ranches in Butte Valley, 70 miles northwest of Ely, and Pete's sister-in-law is still there. Pete and his brother Bert ran the ranch together for many years, with Bert managing the sheep and Pete the cows. Pete says it was an ideal partnership:

"Usually partners don't get along, you know...but we got along wonderful, and I admire both of us because, you know, you make a mistake running livestock, you sell your calves, you think it's a good deal and they go up a little and then you feel bad. And the same way with the sheep. You sell the wool and a month later they're worth [more]. But that's one thing we never...what he done with them sheep I was a hundred percent behind him, and what I done with the cows he was a hundred percent behind me, and it just worked out beautiful, God, we were together all our life. In fact we shared the same bed until he got married."

Pete married his wife Mary Jean in 1950; she had come from the Basque country the year before at the urging of her brothers in America. Their son Pete Jr. is a sheep rancher in Elko, another son is an accountant there, and a third son, David, ran the ranch in Butte Valley with them until Pete retired in 1998. Pete and Mary Jean agree that the ranch life was hard but rewarding, and the best way to raise kids and teach them the value of work and family. The hardest part, and the hardest on family unity, was that for 17 years Mary Jean had to live in Ely with the children during the school year, only coming home on weekends and for the summers. Pete realizes what a sacrifice it was for her, and says he's trying to make it up to her now. They live in a spacious new house on the outskirts of Ely, with seven immaculate acres of land so Pete can still raise a little hay. Mary Jean has her own studio for making quilts. She is a prolific quilt maker, and has closets full of finished quilts and unquilted tops. She loves to quilt when they visit their son and daughter-in-law, who have bought a ranch in Nebraska. Mary Jean also returns regularly to the Basque country to visit her siblings. Pete explains, "When we started going together and then I asked her to marry me, she says, 'On one condition.' And I says, 'What's that?' And she says, 'You take me back home once in a while.' Oh yeah, sure, any time you want, sure," he laughs.

RANCH LIFE

Ranching, especially sheep ranching, is having a rough go these days. Often when a rancher retires and sells his land, it is bought by someone wealthy who wants a “hobby ranch” or a tax write-off, and it’s run by a hired foreman and does not have to make a profit. “You can’t compete with them people,” Pete says. “When we buy a ranch, it’s got to pay for itself. They are pricing ranches out of range of working ranchers.” Added to the high price of land, equipment, and help is the low price of beef, lamb, and wool; the sum is often a losing proposition, even for families with several generations on the land.

One solution to the problem of the family ranch is to expand, which is what Dean Baker of Snake Valley has done. Snake Valley spreads across the White Pine border with Utah, and includes the towns of Baker, Nevada, and Garrison and Eskdale, Utah. Dean’s family are relative newcomers there (they are not related to the family that founded Baker). His father started acquiring land in the area in the 1950s when he was farming in Delta, Utah. Eventually the family moved to Baker and began raising cattle and growing alfalfa seed. Dean finished college a few quarters at a time while also working on the ranch, and says that by working hard and being careful with money they were able to survive and grow. In the early years, “We were very, very, very, very frugal, we were very careful, we flat didn’t have hardly enough money to run the thing,” he recalls. “But we had some good help, Dad always got along very well with his employees...and he was good to them, so we’ve always had really loyal, long-standing help,” including one man now in his 80s who says he’ll be with the Baker Ranch to the end.



A big whitewashed “L” marks the hillside above Lund.

Quarter Circle 5 Ranch, Lund Valley.





Ranch entrance,
Quarter Circle Five.

Over the years the Bakers have bought up neighboring ranches and farms in both Nevada and Utah as the owners retired or sold out. With increased mechanization and the high cost of equipment and feed and chemicals, small family operations need to expand to make enough money to cover their costs. Dean feels they should not get any larger now, the operation is big enough to support him and his three sons, who have taken over daily management, and they are the largest ranching operation in Snake Valley. They also have a number of hired workers, “way too many to pay and not enough to get the work done,” Dean laughs. The ranch produces alfalfa seed, corn, barley, oats, dairy hay, and cattle. Now semi-retired, Dean is content with his life. “I feel very, very lucky that I’ve been able to be here and do all the fun things that I’ve done. I don’t think too many people spend their life doing as many fun things as I’ve done. I think I can justly be proud of what we do and manage.” One of his favorite things is flying airplanes, both for fun and for crop dusting on the farm; he does most of the spraying in the valley for other farmers as well. He does think that they have harmed the natural balance of insects in the valley with chemicals, and have lost many of the beneficial ones while killing the harmful ones. “We had a huge abundance of very good pollinators here, native pollinators, and in retrospect we probably killed the population off. Try as hard as we can, we’ve never been able to rebuild it to the level it was.”

The peaks of Great Basin National Park
hide under a shawl of clouds.

WHITE PINE NEIGHBORS

Dean Baker speaks highly of his neighbors and fellow ranchers, and is often mentioned by them in turn as an important member of the tight community of Snake Valley. Another major player in that community—one Dean has learned to live with although he rarely agrees with its policies—is Great Basin National Park. The park started out as Lehman Caves National Monument in 1922, covering one square mile. It became a national park in 1986 and now includes some 77,000 acres. The formation of the park was long and contentious, and ranchers and other locals resented the loss of public grazing land and access to traditional fishing and hunting areas. As Dean Baker says, “[The Park Service] is good people who are convinced that what they are doing is right. And their mission conflicts with our mission of raising cattle.”

Dean happens to be personal friends with Dave Moore, a retired Park Service superintendent who chose to come back to Baker after falling in love with the country when he worked as superintendent of Lehman Caves National Monument in the 1970s. Dave joined the Park Service in 1968 after a stint in the military, and says he “likes everything about it.” He reads from a book that accuses the Park Service of having a “mystic, quasi-religious” attitude about its mission, and replies, “That’s what we felt!” He thinks that respect for the lofty ideals of the Park Service by its employees is one of the strengths of the organization. “We were taught from when we first started, it is something special. It’s not just another bureau in the government; it’s not just a job.”



Looking east to Wheeler Peak
from Sacramento Pass.



The town of Baker is one of the few green spots in Snake Valley.

Eve party at a now-defunct local bar that made them feel accepted. “It was just a great time, and that’s when it started really feeling like home to me,” Dave recalls.

Despite the contentious history of the park and the occasional ongoing distrust of Park Service policies, Great Basin National Park provides jobs for local residents, and the itinerant professional employees (workers must move in order to advance in the park system) live there and are part of the community. Baker is too small a place for people not to be civil, whatever their disagreements. One of the fascinating things about Baker and the Snake Valley is how such a diverse group of people works together to get things done with limited resources.

As with any occupational group that shares a strong mission and philosophy, the Park Service has a lot of traditions and lore shared by its members. Dave’s wife Roberta says he “bleeds gray and green,” the Park Service uniform colors. The instantly-recognizable broad-brimmed hat, as another example, is an important part of their image. “I always wore the hat, no matter what,” Dave says, “and I was a stickler on having people wear the hat, it was one of my things.” There are specially-built wooden hat racks in the Great Basin Park office, and a retiring employee always has his hat bronzed—Dave’s sits proudly in his home office. One tradition at the Great Basin Park is that the person leaving a park-owned house always leaves a full meal in the refrigerator for the new resident—Dave and his family found this out when they arrived in Baker from Las Vegas in 1974. They were also immediately welcomed into the community by Dean Baker’s parents, Fred and Betty, and attended a New Year’s

An excellent example of this is the school system, which includes two states, two counties, and two utopian communities at opposite ends of the political spectrum. The valley has set up a shared elementary school system that has all children from both Nevada and Utah attending kindergarten through second grade in Garrison, Utah, and third through eighth grade at the Baker School. However, once in high school, students had to choose whether to make the long trip to Ely, Nevada or Delta, Utah, each at least an hour away. Dean Baker says, "That's one of the worst things about living in this valley is sending your children away to high school. There was no simple solution, whether you sent them to board in Delta or board in Ely or ride the bus or home school, or move to town and buy a house, all of those things are not healthy family situations." Just this year, however, a new solution was created. The settlement of Eskdale, Utah, which was formed in the 1950s by a religious organization called the Aaronic Order as a communal living arrangement, turned its school into a charter high school through Millard County, Utah. Now all the students in the valley can go there and live at home with their families, and there is one less element to fragment life in Snake Valley. As an added bonus, the music teacher at Eskdale, which is renowned for its music education and community orchestra, has been teaching at the Baker School so students are ready to take advantage full advantage of the music program by the time they reach high school.

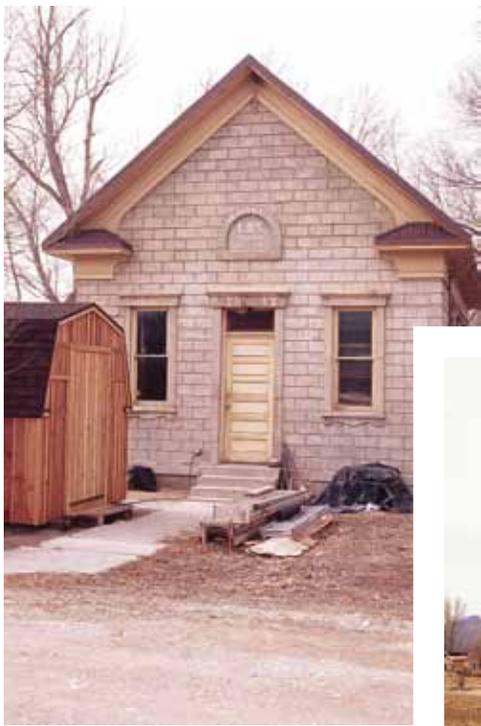
Eskdale is not the only utopian community in the valley. There seems to be something about the isolation and the rugged landscape of the western desert, the Big Empty, which attracts visionaries and social experimenters. The School of the Natural Order was founded in the 1940s by a man who called himself Vitvan, which



means "great teacher" in Sanskrit. After several moves, the group ended up on some land on the mountainside above Baker in 1957, at a place they called Home Farm. Marj Coffman (her license plate reads SEEKERS) was one of the early arrivals with the school, which was originally intended as a self-sufficient commune, "but everyone was too independent for it to succeed." Instead, members of the school share a philosophy and a worldview that binds them together wherever they live (and there are many adherents all over the country), and the Baker group has some shared meals and community gatherings. Some members live on the Home Farm property and pay rent to the school, but others, like Marj and her husband Bill, live off the property. Over the years the Home Farmers have become an accepted part of the community; several members have taught at the Baker School, and new seekers occasionally move in and settle. "You'd never run out of stories of the things people do for one another," Marj smiles.



Those driving the shortcut back to Baker from the Border Inn sometimes need a reminder to stop when they reach the main road.



LDS relief building, Preston.



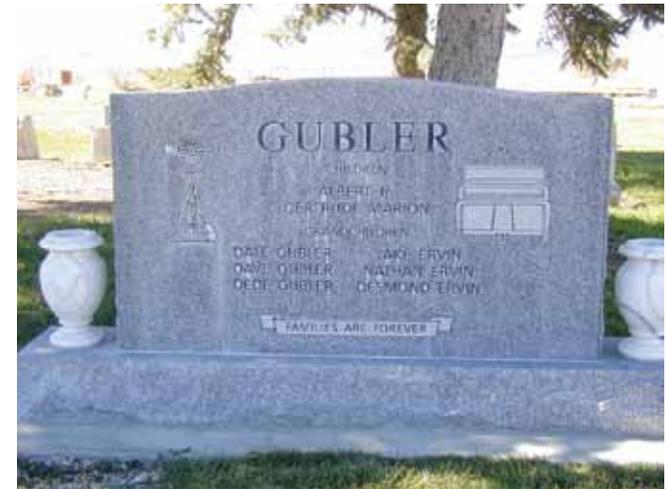
Hay derrick, Lund.



Windmill for pumping water, Lund.

In many ways, Baker and the Snake Valley are like any small rural community. People are recognized by their cars around town or as they pass on the highway. Someone needing to do business will pull into the cafe if they see their target's car in the parking lot. Word of mouth and the post office are the main communication channels. Differences in religion (most of the residents of Garrison are Mormon, for example, while those of Baker generally are not) do not interfere with doing the work of a community. What is unusual is the vast diversity of political and social beliefs in the valley, from the liberal Home Farm folks to the federal employees of the Park Service, to the longtime ranchers, to the religious conservatives of Eskdale. Yet it all seems to work. And through all this, the residents of Nevada and Utah keep strictly to their own time zones, with none of the unofficial shifting one way or the other that many border areas adopt. Thus any public event always clearly states whether the scheduled time is in the Pacific or Mountain zone, and many flyers and announcements include both. Maybe that's the secret—people are allowed to be who they are, to be distinctive and unique, not forced to fit one mold or one time zone. There is room, both physical and philosophical, for all.

Lund, in the southeastern part of the county, is another small, isolated community in White Pine. Unlike Baker, this area is much more homogenous, having been settled by Mormon families in 1898 and remaining a strongly Mormon ranching and farming valley to this day. A number of the older houses in town and in neighboring Preston (even smaller than Lund) sport windmills and water tanks in their yards, and hay derricks stand watch in farmyards. Quilting, knitting, crocheting, embroidery and other needlework traditions are still common. The Lund cemetery is full of stones with images of cowboys and stock tanks and mountainous landscapes memorializing the valley's way of life, in addition to the carvings of LDS temples and lists of children's names that exemplify Mormon grave marker traditions.

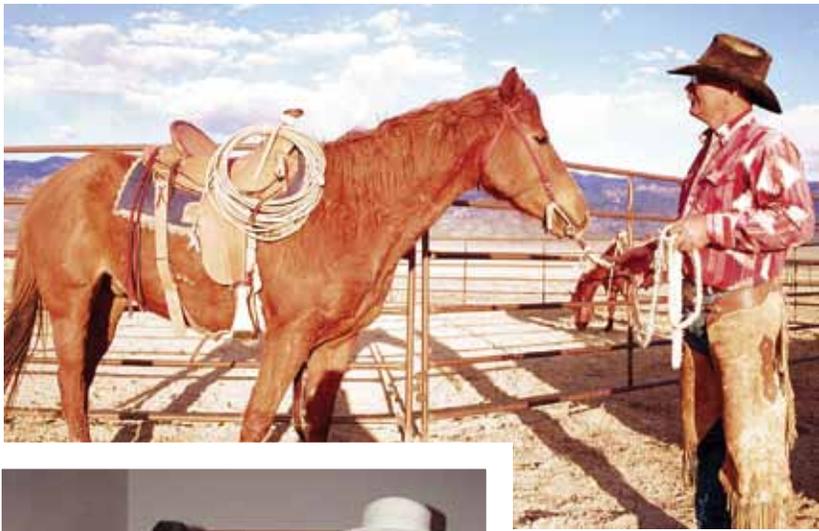


Lund Cemetery – marker commemorates ranching and Mormon heritage.

“POST IMPRESSIONIST ART” SERIES

A series of “Post Impressionist Art” creations adorns the fences along the road from Baker to Great Basin National Park. They were initiated by “Doc” Sherman, first as simple gloves on Fence posts called “The Permanent Wave Society,” and later expanded with larger works made from found and recycled objects.





Jeff Gardner started making saddles like this because he couldn't afford to buy the good custom gear he needs as a working cowboy.

RANCH CRAFT TRADITIONS

One of the valley's original ranches is the Quarter Circle 5, which is still in the hands of the founding Gardner family. Jeff Gardner now runs the ranch with several of his siblings and his mother as partners, and his son Lamar helps out as well. They raise Red Angus beef, breed and train horses and, like most ranches, they also raise hay for winter feed in flood-irrigated fields. Calves are born in March and branded in mid-April, then moved a month later to summer ranges in Cave Valley and South Steptoe Valley over the mountains to the east. They are brought back to the ranch in early October, but unlike ranchers further north who sell their cattle in the fall, the Lund Valley ranchers don't sell until after the first of the year. There are about five cattle ranches in the valley, and lots of hay farms which produce high-quality dairy hay for Idaho and also hay for horses.

In the last few years Jeff and Lamar have started making saddles together in their spare time, mostly winters. They say they just had a need for good working saddles and couldn't afford custom work, so decided to try it themselves. Lamar had done a bit of leather work before and both had repaired their own gear, so they got some books and tools and plunged ahead. Lamar says neighboring saddle makers Alan Forsgren and Rodney Mike from Duckwater were very helpful with tips and tricks as well, although Lamar made his first saddle on his own so he'd "have plenty of questions" for the experts later. They have made about three saddles so far, and have several more ordered from neighbors, so they are getting a local reputation. They order saddle trees from a company in Utah and leather from Ohio, and often have to wait several months for them to arrive. They have drafted patterns from books and made their own wooden saddle stand and welded stitching horse. Jeff does all his sewing by hand, but Lamar has taken some of his heavier work to a friend with an industrial sewing machine. Lamar says he'd like to learn more about tooling so he could do fancy custom work on his saddles. Jeff's wife helps with the tooling on her husband's saddles.



Jeff Gardner and his son Lamar work as a team, making saddles for themselves and their neighbors.



Mailboxes are favorite locations for creative expression in rural communities. This masterpiece is north of Lund.

The making of cowboy gear is also carried on in another branch of the Gardner family—Jeff's brother-in-law Jay Godfrey, who is married to Jeff's sister and lives a mile up the road, makes braided leather horse gear. Jay was born in Bishop, California, and raised in Tonopah, Nevada, and came to the Lund Valley in 1959. He says he always liked working with leather and started quite young, but never really stuck with it until he got to Lund. His mentor was Jim Englebright, a well-known Ely braider who died in March of 2002. Jim showed him a lot of buttons that he's never seen anywhere else. Near the end of Jim's life, when he could hardly see, Jay would help him cut strings, which he could still braid by feel.

Jay braids mostly with tanned latigo leather, although he occasionally uses rawhide. At the moment he has a small calf hide stretched out on his shed that he plans to use for small decorative buttons because it is thin and easy to work with. Jay uses a small handheld cutter to cut strings from a circle of leather—a 17-inch circle will make enough strings for a 42-foot riata. The strings are then run through a skiver, which makes them an even thickness, and the edges are beveled so the braiding lies flat—rawhide is beveled on the top surface, but latigo is usually beveled on the bottom, although Jay will sometimes do it on the top to get a contrasting color. He usually uses chestnut colored leather, but sometimes adds different colors to make patterns as well.

As with any hand craft, there is a lot of improvisation in Jay's work. He has made an awl out of a pitchfork tine and a braided rawhide handle. For the cores of his larger, heavier pieces, such as bosals, he will use a piece of steel emergency brake cable, braid over it once with thin strings, and then again with quarter-inch strings of leather. He also makes reins, headstalls, hobbles, and miniature pieces such as keychains and bracelets. Jay makes most of his gear for himself and his family, and will occasionally get orders from local folks. He also donates pieces for fundraising auctions. He says most of the interest in his buckaroo style of gear is in the northern part of the state; further south, toward Alamo, there is a different style of cowboying and not much use for braided gear. These regional variations in occupational style give an area its unique character, and despite the incursions of modern life, cattle drives on horseback and handmade leather gear still hold sway in the Lund Valley.



Jay Godfrey with some of his handiwork.

An awl made from an old pitchfork tine, with decoratively braided handle and shaft cover.



A handy little cutter helps Jay cut rawhide strings for braiding.





Outsider art made from old mining tools and machine parts.

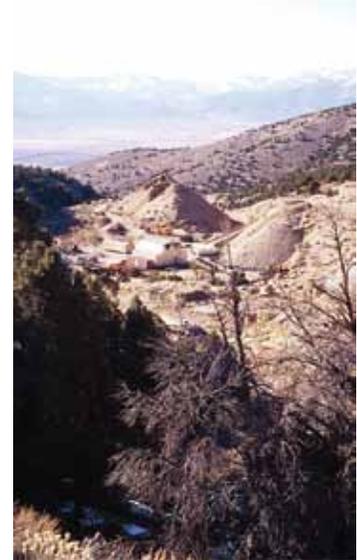
THE INFLUENCE OF MINING

In contrast to ranching, which has kept many of its historic practices alive in the modern world because they still work, mining has always been technologically oriented and looking for the newest, most efficient ways of doing things. Mining was once the lifeblood of White Pine County and the reason for its political and economic prominence in the state. A disproportionate number of Nevada governors have come from here because the wealth of the gold and copper mines bought White Pine a voice. The huge copper pit at Ruth is the most obvious and dramatic reminder of the power of King Copper and of the Kennecott Corporation, which essentially ran the county until the mine shut down in 1978. Although the mine reopened briefly in the 1990s, mining is now a part of White Pine's past.

The original town of Ruth, now known as Old Ruth, was moved about two miles to its present location in 1954 when the company wanted to mine underneath the old town. Jack Davis, who was born in Old Ruth in 1930, says there were several thousand people living and working there at the time—a “lot of brawn” for labor in the mine. After high school, Jack started out working on the track gang, which laid and moved track for the trains that hauled ore out of the pit. They used steam engines to haul the ore, but switched to diesel locomotives in the 1930s and later to trucks. The ore was taken to the smelter in McGill via the Nevada Northern Railroad. Ruth had Serbian, Mexican, Greek, Italian, and Japanese residents who lived in segregated parts of town in the early days. Trips to Ely were common, for shopping but also to frequent the bars and gambling halls that were not as available in the company town of Ruth.



An old headframe stands silhouetted against one of the Ruth mine tailings.



Remains of a mining operation near Osceola.

Today many of Ruth's company-town houses, arranged on curving streets, stand empty, as do the school, several churches and the community hall. The grocery store recently closed, although there are still two operating saloons. The remains of one of the largest copper pits in the country, and the blasted landscape that surrounds it, are the town's claim to fame. Ruth's enormous tailing piles can be seen from miles away, a reminder of its glory days. People have discovered Ruth as an inexpensive and quiet place to retire. Some are former employees of Kennecott, but others have moved in from elsewhere—several from Las Vegas in the last six months, according to Frank Collins, proprietor of the Commercial Club. Frank is a member of the Shoshone Tribe and was born in Ely in 1940. He was trained as a technical illustrator and worked in California as a tool designer and engineer for Rockwell (he has of a photo in the bar of himself painting the word "Columbia" on the side of a space shuttle), but moved back to Ruth in 1995 and bought the bar about a year ago. The Commercial Club consists of a bar, cafe, laundromat, and RV park.

Although Frank says he did not do much in the way of traditional Shoshone crafts as a youngster, he did some woodcarving and he always liked to draw and paint. While living in California, he got interested in making drums and figured out how to construct them by studying those he saw at pow-wows. He makes the octagonal frame out of pine and covers it with deer, elk, or cow rawhide. The hides are soaked in water with ash and lime to loosen the hair; scraped clean and stretched over the wooden frame while still wet; and laced on with rawhide strips. The finished drums range in size from ten to twenty inches in diameter. What makes these drums unique are the paintings Frank puts on them, mostly images of eagles, wolves, sheep, and Indian people. He says although they can be played, they are mostly used for decoration and several adorn the walls of his bar. Frank's paintings and a series of caricatures of local residents fill the bar's walls, a testament to his artistic nature and the character of the town of Ruth.



Frank Collins with some of his artwork displayed behind the bar of the Commercial Club.



Caricatures of local folks, drawn by Frank Collins, fill the walls of his Commercial Club in Ruth.



Frank Collins advertises his establishment on one of his drums.



THE WESTERN SHOSHONE

The Western Shoshone are the original residents of White Pine and traditionally lived a mobile life, traveling with the seasons to hunt, gather pine nuts, and seek a sheltered location in the winter. Today they mostly live on three parcels of land that make up the Ely Shoshone Colony, and on the Duckwater Reservation over the border to the south in Nye County. Tribal elders are concerned that their language and traditions are being lost, so the tribe has organized language and craft classes to perpetuate these important aspects of Shoshone culture.

Cindy Marks is the tribe's elder coordinator and the organizer of the craft class. She offers an afternoon class on Tuesdays and an evening one on Wednesdays, which together attract over a dozen people. One Tuesday afternoon in March there were three elders, along with Cindy, working on beaded checkbook covers. The class instructor is Sharon Whiterock, who was born in Ely but had lived on the Duck Valley Reservation in northern Elko County for many years before returning a few years ago. She says she "always knew" beading, surrounded by her mother and aunts doing beadwork, and she also knows how to tan deer hides and make willow cradleboards. The willow tradition is in danger of being lost at the Ely Colony, although there are still basket makers and weavers in Duckwater. Cindy is hoping the tradition can be revitalized through the classes. The group started out making dream catchers and medicine bags, then progressed to beaded coin purses, and is now working on checkbook covers. Future plans include moccasins and willow cradleboards, and maybe hide tanning, if they can get an outdoor area set up at the community center for the messy, smelly work.

TOP LEFT: Sharon Whiterock helps Boyd Graham with his beadwork project at the Shoshone Tribe's Community Center.



Western Shoshone beadwork: Checkbook covers and coin purses.



The Duckwater Shoshone are known for their willow basketry, including seed beaters, winnowing trays, and pine nut baskets.

The checkbook covers start out with a foundation of burlap with canvas glued to both sides, and the edges are bound with bias tape. The beading is done with two needles, one with the beads strung on it and the second to sew the first thread flat to the backing. It is painstaking work, but can be used to make complex and beautiful patterns, including traditional geometric blocks of color and pictorial images of roses or animals. The work session is cheerful and convivial, with Sharon helping those who get stuck, people dropping in to visit, and lots of joking and laughter. The conversation ranges from a proud recollection of the six Ely dancers who participated in the recent Olympics to plans for next summer's fandango, and then to stories of the elderly women of the community who love card games and "can play all night long," and discussion of who are the best hand game players. Near the end of the session Sharon's daughter comes in with her infant son in a cradleboard Sharon made—these are not just decorative crafts, but vital living traditions with an important place in the life of the community and the future of its children.

Sharon Whiterock made this cradleboard, or "baby basket" for her grandson.



Traditional Western Shoshone Round Dance.

Young Shoshone express their cultural pride by dancing both traditional and pow-wow style.





TOP: Quilt by Mary L. Reid.
BOTTOM: Working on a quilt.

QUILTING AND NEEDLECRAFTS

Traditional crafts are also richly represented in the rest of White Pine County, both as relaxing and engrossing hobbies and sometimes as a way to make money in an economically depressed and isolated area. Quilting is probably the most common traditional craft, and Ely has an active quilt club called the Sagebrush Quilters. They meet weekly on Thursdays, either at the Episcopal Church or at members' homes, and they hold an all-day quilting on the last Wednesday of every month. There are about 15 members of the club and on a typical Thursday there will be at least ten women present in the church basement social hall. Occasionally someone will teach a workshop on a new technique or small project, but usually people bring their own quilts to work on, or recently finished ones to show off. At a meeting last March, several people were cutting fabric blocks for a children's quilting project; the group is participating in a national effort to make 1500 quilts for children who lost parents in the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington. They also regularly donate "comfort quilts" to local social service agencies for children who have been removed from their homes.

One woman was finishing the binding on a family quilt for

her mother's 80th birthday and another was cutting blocks for a Girl Scout project. Dorothy Lani was basting a baby quilt top for one of her 19 great-grandchildren. She wants to finish a quilt for each of them to present at her 60th wedding anniversary party in July. Dorothy is a native of Ely and has a family heritage of quilting, embroidery, crochet, and other needle arts. She started learning when she was quite young and has seen a lot of changes in tools and technology over the years. She's only too happy to accept new ways of doing things, like using rotary cutters instead of cutting each piece out by hand, or holding a quilt top to its batting with a sticky basting spray to keep them from shifting while she bastes them together with thread.

The women get a lot of work done at these sessions, which last from two to three hours, but there's also a lot of laughter and trading of community news. Many women have been members of the group for years, but it's also a good way for a newcomer to town to make friends while sharing their love of quilting. A few years ago the group organized a large quilt show at the convention center, which was very popular, but they have not had the time or energy to try it again. They do organize a show at the county fair each year, and

sometimes take trips as a group to quilt shows in Utah or Oregon. The common thread of quilting draws these women together for work, play, and community service.

Like many of the members of the Sagebrush Quilters, Paula Nicholes not only quilts, but also sews, embroiders, crochets, and makes decorative arrangements of pressed flowers. She raises a few sheep and has the wool made into quilt batts as well. Paula uses her talent for craft work as a way to make money, quilting tops for other people, sewing denim handbags to sell at the local KOA campground to summer tourists, and teaching pressed flower classes. She says she believes in “blooming where you are planted,” and although she never thought she’d live in a small rural community (she’s from Minnesota originally) she loves the close relationships and the self-sufficient lifestyle here.

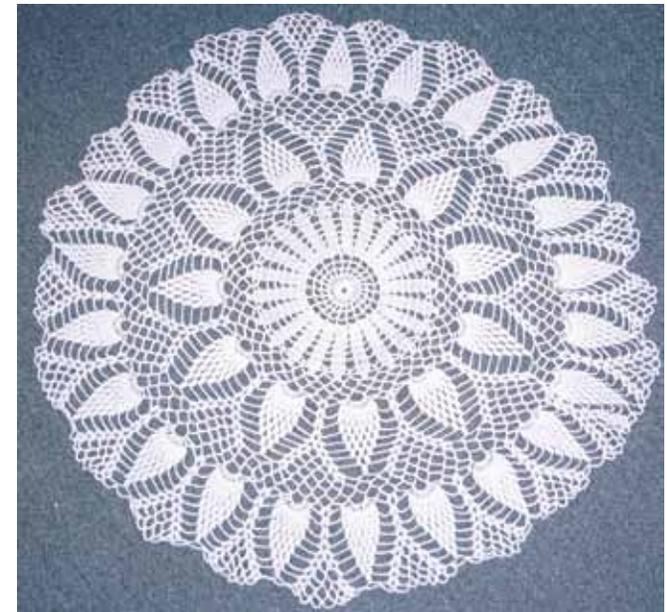
Creative thinking and multiple talents are often necessary to survive in the small towns of the West. Donna Frederick and her husband Al opened the Ely Gift Boutique in downtown Ely after Al was laid off at the mine (“This is what ‘reduction in force’ looks like,” she says ruefully). The shop carries souvenirs, books, historic memorabilia, and gifts. She learned to crochet from her grandmother, who lived on a farm in Colorado and spent her winters doing handicrafts. Donna says she learned from her grandmother never to let her hands be idle, and to this day she can’t “just sit doing nothing” while watching television or riding on long car trips. She crochets decorative items like doilies, tablecloths and afghans, for herself and her children and grandchildren. She has

a few of her own crocheted items for sale in her shop, but does not primarily make things to sell.

Crocheted items can also be found at Carol’s Country Corner, a gift shop owned by Carol Beager. Carol opened the shop a few years ago and started out carrying country-style decorative items and crafts. However, local people soon began asking if they could sell their work on consignment, so there are now locally-made quilts, crocheted items, woodwork, rag rugs, and willow furniture in the shop. Carol has come to see the economic development possibilities in “homegrown crafts,” and is pushing the local economic development office to help support home craft businesses, without much luck so far. She knows several welders and ironworkers, for example, who were trained at Kennecott, and who could make decorative items for sale, but could use help with small business development and marketing. Carol also realizes that local artisans would need to depend on tourists or selling to outside markets, because the local population often can’t afford handmade items, but with the county’s location at a crossroads of two US highways and easy access to Salt Lake City, Las Vegas and Reno, that is not out of the question. Carol’s energy and optimism are infectious, so maybe her ideas can help some local folks make a living with their creative talents.



Donna Frederick, Ely, shows off one of her crocheted doilies.



Doily by Donna Frederick, Ely.



A loveseat, the first piece of furniture George Carnes made, graces his front porch in Ely.

WILLOW FURNITURE

One man who discovered his artistic talents after he retired is George Carnes, who was the publisher of the *Ely Daily Times* for 38 years. His wife has an old willow rocking chair that he's always admired, and he'd been talking about trying to make one like it, so as a retirement gift he was given a book on making willow furniture, almost as a joke. What he's done since then is no joke. His first piece was a large chair, which now sits sturdily on his front porch. His house is full of willow tables, bookshelves, planters, and small "bear chairs" and beds for stuffed animals. Lately he's been experimenting with trellises for the garden, and he wants to do more decorative pieces like picture frames. He did not start out with the intention of selling his work, but now there is too much for his house so he has to—Carol Beager carries his work, as does a store in Fallon, and he's considering marketing his work on the Internet, although he's not sure he wants to keep up with the larger demand that might entail.

George collects all his willows in the mountains east of Ely, along creek beds and on ranches where he has permission to gather. He lets the wood dry a bit before he uses it, but it needs to be partially green so it will shrink around nails as it dries and hold them tighter. The smaller "benders" also need to be flexible so they can be shaped into the arched backs of chairs or the curves of garden trellises. George is a neat and careful worker, and is just finishing a new workshop behind his house because the garage is getting too cramped to work in. He says he really enjoys making something beautiful out of natural materials, and he learns something new with each project. He wants his pieces to be around for a long time after he is gone, like the 100-year-old rocker that was his inspiration.



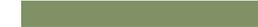
George Carnes with willow trellis. His supply of willow can be seen in the background.



Carol's Country Corner carries George's willow chairs and tables.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RAILROAD

Another small craft business in Ely is The Rail Place, owned by Jean Steiner, and located near the old Nevada Northern tracks just east of the depot. Jean's late husband Jerry worked for the railroad, and he and some of his co-workers would make things out of old pieces of rail, such as bookends. One day a thin section of rail fell on the floor and Jerry liked the ringing sound it made, so he decided to make wind chimes. Thin slices of rail are suspended from three railroad spikes that are welded together at the tips, and they do make a pleasant sound in a breeze. Jean now does all the cutting herself using a handsaw, and polishes the pieces with a wire brush and a buffer. In addition to the chimes, she makes bookends, pen holders, paperweights, and key chains using slices of small mine rails. She has a large stockpile of rails behind her shop, bought over the years as the rails were scrapped by the railroad and the mine. Many rails have the date of manufacture stamped near the end and these are especially prized—Jean has a set of bookends in her shop with the date 1906 on them, the year of the founding of the Nevada Northern.



The workshop at the Rail Place, where Jean Steiner crafts decorative objects from railroad castoffs.



Jean Steiner's wind chimes are made from old railroad rails and spikes.



The Nevada Northern Railroad was a real coup for White Pine County and, along with the mines and the smelter, was an economic lifeline for the region until it closed in 1983. The line ran from the mines at Ruth through Ely and below McGill, where a spur took ore to the smelter. The train then carried the copper north to join with the Union Pacific, where it could be shipped anywhere. The train brought supplies and people into White Pine, and allowed residents to travel out. It also provided internal transportation for the local towns; schoolchildren and shoppers would ride the train to and from Ely. When the Nevada Northern left town, they just closed the doors and took off, leaving the trains and buildings abandoned. Today the rolling stock and shops are owned by the non-profit Nevada Northern Railway Foundation, and the depot and freight barn are part of the Nevada State Museum system. The Ghost Train of Ely runs several days a week in the summer, either to Ruth or McGill, and the sound of its whistle as the engine approaches a grade crossing echoes across the mountains that surround Ely. A few old-timers who worked on the railroad help keep things running and will gladly tell tales of the train's heyday to anyone who will listen.



In the depot, the original desks and control room remain, as does the supply room filled with forms and office supplies as if workers would step in at any minute and ask for a purchase order or box of paper clips. Sean Pitts, curator of the Depot Museum, says that when he first arrived the main safe was locked and he could not figure out how to get in it. He got talking to a former worker who realized that he could be trusted to tell "the true story of the railroad," and gave Pitts the combination. Inside were payroll books and other priceless records that are now part of the museum's displays of the depot in its prime.



Bookends made from a section of rail from the 1906 Nevada Northern Railroad.

TOP: Everyone loves a train.
BOTTOM: The Ghost Train of Old Ely approaches the end of its run below Ruth.

Cherry Creek is another White Pine community affected by the railroad. Located about 50 miles north of Ely in Steptoe Valley, it was once a booming mining town that vied for the county seat with Hamilton (and lost) when Eureka and White Pine counties split. The train line ran through the valley a few miles downhill to the east of Cherry Creek and gave them a way to ship their ore out and to bring supplies in.

Today Cherry Creek boasts a couple of dozen residents, mostly retirees who like the isolation and the quiet. Walt Campbell, who retired here from Las Vegas in 1988 (and says he liked it better back then, when there were only six residents), is the curator of the Cherry Creek Museum, housed in the original 1872 schoolhouse. It displays the usual collection of found metal objects (horseshoes, square nails, hinges, and tools), ore samples, Indian grinding rocks, old school desks, photos of early residents, and a concertina that belonged to Italian rancher Joe Salvi. But Walt is the main attraction, regaling visitors with

mining history and tales of life in present-day Cherry Creek.

The locals are an independent and feisty lot, an image they cultivate and promote so they will be left alone by the outside world. The Barrel Saloon is the social center of town, as well as home to the Steptoe Valley Volunteer Fire Department. If you need to find someone, just stop in and Sue, the proprietor, will call around on the fire radio and track them down. Walt says CB radios used to be the main means of communication in town, but now everyone has phones. A miner from the Cherry Creek of the 1870s would hardly recognize it today, the fine stone and brick buildings are mostly just foundations and the population of 7000 is down to 22, but he'd probably feel right at home with the hardy lot who still keep the town on the map.

The Barrel Saloon is the social center of Cherry Creek and home of the Steptoe Valley Volunteer Fire Department.



The Cherry Creek Museum occupies the town's original schoolhouse, one of the oldest in the state.



A few hardy souls keep Cherry Creek hanging on at the edge of the Great Basin.

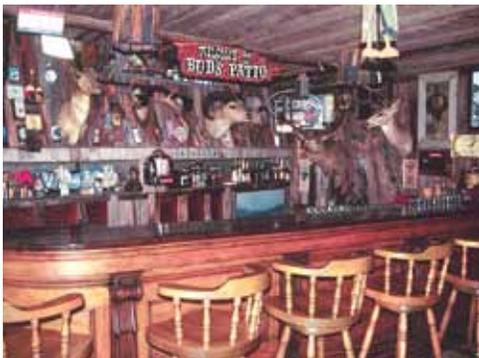
WHITE PINE COUNTY



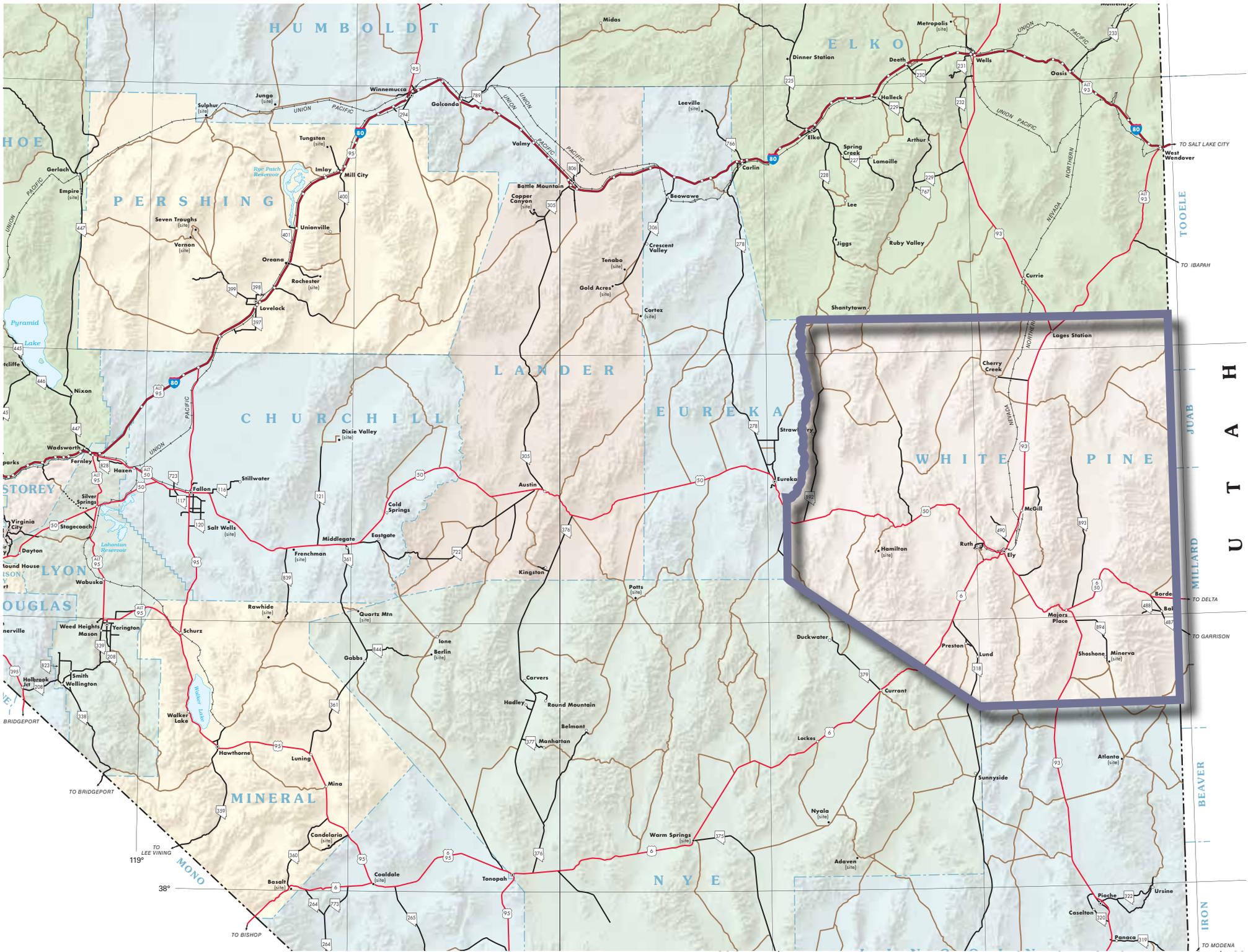
COMMUNITY AND PLACE

Some people might be surprised that anyone still lives anywhere in White Pine County; they are the same people who think the Nevada desert is boring and unchanging. Those who live here, whether for five years or five generations, know that White Pine exemplifies the nature and importance of community in the vast spaces of the Great Basin. It is truly not easy to live here, so those who do are of iron purpose, despite varying degrees of hardship. One good place to see this sense of community in action is at a local celebration such as Labor Day, when almost every town in the county has some kind of event. The Snake Valley Reunion, the McGill Town Picnic at the swimming hole, and Ely's Trains, Planes and Automobiles Celebration all honor the region's heritage and keep its residents and former residents in touch. Labor Day has special resonance in White Pine County because it was a union stronghold with the railroads and mines as major employers. While this is no longer the case, the holiday remains a significant date in the community. White Pine High School has an all-class reunion every July Fourth weekend. On July 24, Lund celebrates Pioneer Day with a parade and rodeo, commemorating the arrival of the Mormons into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. The Baker School is the scene of all kinds of community meetings and events.

But the best places to see what White Pine is all about are the cafes and bars, the mountain passes, the schools, the roads where people wave at everyone—friend or stranger, the post office, the fields of alfalfa or sheep, the courthouse, the big whitewashed WP on the mountain overlooking Ely. It is the marriage of people and place, the human presence on the land, and the unique mix that happens in one particular spot, that defines these lives. Where the Loneliest Road meets the Great Basin Highway.



CLOCKWISE: Typical Basque sheep wagons; sheep crossing the road; the Antler Club in Ely; the White River Valley near Lund; rural mailbox art.



Town of Ruth with copper tailings in background.



WHITE PINE COUNTY