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***YOUR GUIDE TO THE
DEATH VALLEY AREA***

Interesting Places You've Never Been To!

The "Grand Tour - Part I"

by *The Intrepid Explorer*

Editor's note: This is Part I of a multi-part series of articles on interesting places in Nye County and surrounding areas.

This is the first part of a multi-part article on a trip through some of the less populated areas of Nye County, and some interesting sights over in White Pine and Lincoln Counties. The total distance traveled is something on the order of 800 or 900 miles, or more if one considers the detours to see interesting points along the way. I won't bother to go into details about the first two stops, Goldfield and Tonopah as one could take several articles to describe all the things to see there, and, hopefully, in a future set of articles I will do just that.

Nye County is one of the largest counties in the country. I've seen different numbers tossed around, but the last one claimed that Nye was the fourth largest county in the country. If anyone knows what the other three are, please let me know. They must be *huge*! Anyhow, it's a vast piece of real estate of which most residents are probably very much uninformed. There's Pahrump. There's Tonopah. And a few wide spots in the road along the way. Beyond that, there isn't much need to see the rest. And with all the county offices that are now duplicated in Pahrump, there's little need for the average citizen to even leave town to conduct most business.

If that were the prevailing mentality, then we'd all be back in Europe and other places, watching the sun rise and

set, and the paint dry. Our ancestors were a curious, adventurous lot, and that's why most of us are here, either directly or indirectly. I can now safely report that there *is* indeed life elsewhere in the county, thank you! And quite a lot of it. Maybe not even what you might expect. I will tell you what I have discovered, and the more adventurous of you, who have inherited the exploring gene, may want to go out and verify my incredible tales for yourself. But you can sit home and read them and enjoy them even if you aren't able to go out gallivanting about the countryside as I have done.

We pushed off from Amargosa bright and early on Thursday morning, ready for adventure. First stop was Beatty, to refuel the buggy and get a few items for an in-flight meal. Then off we went, northward. Even though it was the end of August and still a bit on the warm side, this is an interesting part of the country to look at. What should one be looking for? The end of the Mojave Desert and the beginning of the Great Basin. It happens right along this

stretch of highway. And it's relatively easy to spot. The creosote bushes of the Mojave begin to thin out and then just vanish, to be replaced by sage, Joshua Trees, and Yuccas. The actual dividing line isn't painted across the highway, and it differs depending on which book you read, but you can see for yourself and make up your own personal line. Don't paint it on the road, though. The sheriff may take a dim view of this, no matter how important it might be, scientifically speaking.

We arrived in Goldfield and took a little tour of the town.



Several years ago in November we headed this way. We stopped to play in the snow a few miles to the south of town, and the fuel pump died! We *did* get to see Goldfield, but not as tourists. We endeavored to see a little bit more this time, and at least complete that previous trip. I think it's psychological. You have to complete all the stages in life, and they have to be done in order if one wants to advance to the next. One of these days I'll complete my childhood and then see what adult life is like!

Goldfield is a neat place. Way too many old buildings to be able to even see them all in just a few hours. Then there are the little stores and who knows what there is if one is bold enough to venture off of Highway 95 and see what lies further afield. I hope to go back and spend an entire day and be able to tell you what is out there. I did pick up a nice map with a walking tour of town placed on it, so I may not get lost and you might possibly find out how I fared.

A relatively short distance up the road is Tonopah. Much the same applies, only more so. Lots of old buildings and such to see. But lots of newer things as well. Be sure and see the Central Nevada Museum and the Mining Park. There's a BLM field office in town and they have lots of



maps and free information that you might want to check out if you tramp about the countryside as I do. I am reasonably sure that there is some information at the Museum about historic buildings in town and probably a self-guided walking tour like they have in Goldfield. I think that at one point

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Goldfield was the 2nd largest city in Nevada, and Tonopah has had a colorful history too. Besides, this is the last civilization as we know it for the next several hundred miles!

Before we even got to the downtown area of Tonopah, we made a right turn and headed east on Highway 6. This would be our route for the next 160 miles into Ely.

The country is still much the same as it was heading up to Tonopah, only more so. Mountains in the distance, low hills here and there closer to the highway. The occasional open stretch of fairly flat ground. Lots of blue sky. The road slaloms back and forth amongst the hills, then climbs a little, passes through a summit, and then a nice clear view to the next bunch of mountains to the east. From time to time one can get a glimpse of some much taller mountains off the north and south. Peaks in the 8,000' to 10,000' range. No snow on them in August, but come back in three or four months and it would be a really impressive sight.

Up into some more hills, right through Warm Springs Summit, and then around the corner to a "T" intersection. Not very much to see, if one just zooms right on by. To the right, heading due east, is Highway 375, perhaps better known as the Extraterrestrial Highway. Highway 6 continues northeast.

But, this is Warm Springs. I've never been here before. Might as well get out and take a look as it might be a long time before I might wander this way again.

Good thing too. This is not some wide spot in the road that has fallen on hard times and has all but blown away, though it sure looks it. No signs of any current life, don't get me wrong. But worth stopping. First sign of something is that there are trees and lots of green things

growing in the area. As anyone familiar with the desert knows, trees almost always indicate two things: water, and humans, at least once upon a time. There are some buildings here. One large concrete block building, the newest of the lot. A cafe and bar, once. No idea when it was last open. Across the street, an older wood building

that's slowly coming undone. There's an old sign hanging outside. Don't know what it was. Up the street just a little is the remains of an even older stone building. That might date back many, many decades.

The most interesting thing is the water. There's a little stream running right past the newer building. It disappears under the road and must emerge on the other side as there is a string of very large trees marching off to the east for hundreds of yards. If you follow the stream, you'll find that it seems to be following some sort of man made or perhaps man improved channel back up into the hills. If you go slightly to the south of the building you'll find . . . a swimming pool! Not abandoned, like everything else here, but full of blue water. Very warm water! Further up the channel some of the water is diverted to the swimming pool. At the other end of the pool is a drain and the excess water flows right back into the channel and down the hill. There is even an old building inside the chain link fence around the pool that was used by people to change into their bathing attire. Considering how old it looks, I doubt anyone with a bikini ever emerged. Were it not August, and we wanted to reach our destination before dark, a dip in the pool would have been quite inviting. It seems others have felt the same as there is a big hole in the fence at one corner where you can bend down and sneak in. A couple of youngish Englishmen were sort of camped behind the big building and told us about the pool and had already tested it out.



Warm Springs

contraptions. Weather monitoring? Must be a dozen buildings or more. Fairly new ones too. The road heads up to Sandy Summit, and some large building appears to be up there,

Time to push on. Still a long ways to go and it's already after noon. The road quickly straightens out and heads past a few farms. Or something. On one side of the road is a forestry department office. Not many trees around here! Up in the mountains, perhaps. But on the other side of the road is something else. It almost looks like *this* is where E.T. has been staying. All kinds of

strange looking

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though we never do see it from the highway. The map merely says "Department of Energy" up in that general direction. Who knows?

Once past the summit we begin to head more towards the east and are no longer in a long valley, but back in the rolling hills of the beginning of this highway. And then a sign. "Lunar Crater". It sounds interesting. Inviting. Even beckoning! But we look at the road, we look at the mileages on the sign, and then at our watches. It will have to wait for another day. Just up the road is a gravel road to the north that heads out to some ancient lava flows. We go there. A mile isn't going to delay us much. This was once a very volcanic region. We have craters down the road and lava flows here. There's a large brass plaque on the other side of a fence. It must be some strange new kind of brass as it's almost copper colored. I took a picture, but it's hard to even tell that there is writing on it. Little bits of lines are all that show up. Why, it could almost be a bunch of notes taken by. . . E.T.

We're burning daylight. Back in the car. Up to yet another summit. Black Rock summit this time. I doubt we've ever gone up or down more than 1000 feet in altitude on this whole stretch of road, so "summit" seems somewhat misleading. Not exactly the Rockies or the Sierras. But you can't see what's on the other side until you get to the top, so summit it is. And more interesting things are on the other side.

First, there are once again some signs of life. Not too far from the "summit" we come to Lockes. It looks like an



old ranch, though it's clear that it's still in use as there was a fairly nice home there and various pieces of farm machinery. And green stuff on both sides of the road. The map indicates that there are several springs in the area, and this must be the largest one. More trees and even something that might be alfalfa or something being intentionally grown. When you least expect it, the unexpected manages to show up! Maybe Yogi Berra was on to something.

This is Railroad Valley. Probably the only place in Nye County, or even Nevada, where they are pumping oil out of the ground. And you can definitely smell it! Maybe they are processing it as well. There were those little pumps bobbing up and down all the way off into the distance. Not quite as thick as a swarm of locusts. I've seen larger herds over in California around Bakersfield. But more than just a handful. And it's a very large valley. What might have been out there 10 or 20 miles into the distance one can only imagine. Or not. This is, after all, Nye County.

Don't go away! There's a lot more to come. White Pine County. Ely, Great Basin National Park, Ely some more. Lincoln County. Pioche, Cathedral Gorge State Park, Panaca, Caliente. Ash Springs, Alamo, Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge. Will it all fit into the next issue? Dunno. Come back in December and find out. Or get out there on the road and do some exploring of your own so you can see if I'm pulling your leg about heated swimming pools in the middle of nowhere, and oil wells in Nevada. You ain't seen nuthin' yet!

To Be Continued

