

Please Update Your Records ...

MBHS Museum & Research Center in Landers now has a single main telephone number:



760-364-2000

Any previous numbers, including 365-1877, are no longer supported.

**Parking:
Need somewhere to
park those
Pink Elephants?
Donate them to
MBHS for the
Fall Yard Sale!**

Leave them in Landers
or with any officer.

**It's tidy up time at Landers
Can you Pitch in?**

**Museum &
Research
Center**



8 am

until...

Saturday

March 6th

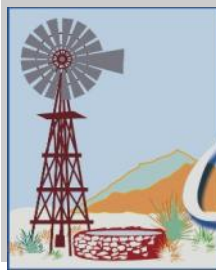
632 Landers Lane

Come early or late!

Bring your gloves

Still want to know more?

Email tom6818r@msn.com



MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Spring 2010

PO Box 2046, Yucca Valley, CA 92286 • 760-364-2000 • www.MBHS.net • MBHS.history@gmail.com

Cabot Yerxa: The Man, His Pueblo Home & Folly

By Carol Sanders

The desert has long attracted those some would call eccentric, others visionary, men who have built structures that embody their visions.

Consider George van Tassel and the Integratron in Landers; consider Leonard Knight, still at work on Salvation Mountain near Niland. And, consider Cabot Yerxa and his Old Pueblo Home, now Cabot's Pueblo Museum in Desert Hot Springs.

In the case of Cabot Yerxa, his combination home, art gallery, workshop, museum, and trading post is as colorful and expansive as his life story.

The pueblo began as a one-man project in 1941, and was still a work-in-progress at the time of Cabot's death in 1965. Inspired by Hopi

Indian architecture, the 5,000 square foot structure consists of some 35 rooms, with 150 windows and 65 doors. Construction material includes adobe bricks made by Cabot himself, with a cup of cement added to each brick. He seldom bought new materials; instead, Cabot



Young Cabot Yerxa. His hat is now in the Museum's collection.

scavenged the desert as far as the Salton Sea for used timbers, masonry, glass and wood. He was said to have taken nails from abandoned cabins, straightened them, and incorporated them into his pueblo. The front door is recycled from an old wagon.

beams. Irregularity was a deliberate part of Cabot's construction plan. He shared the Indian belief that evil spirits dwell in symmetry, and so purposely



"CABOT'S OLD INDIAN PUEBLO"
Desert Hot Springs, California

left walls somewhat uneven, floors not perfectly level, doorways aslant.

The pueblo is now a museum, one of the most fascinating in the desert area. What were the trading post and personal living quarters of Cabot Yerxa occupy the ground floor. "Ground" is an appropriate word, because the living room floor is dirt. The room is

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Continued on Page 4

From the Editor



A few short weeks ago, long time newsletter editor Sallie Brown transferred the title to me in the form of a large manila envelope, some computer files, and the assurance that if I find myself getting tripped up, she'd be close enough to catch me.

Sallie is justly credited with providing the vision and content of this newsletter. She set a high standard for every story, satisfied only after gathering all the right ingredients without compromise. A reality that presents no small challenge for me as I attempt her recipe for success.

Sallie's departure represents only part of the change going on here because Barbara Harris is stepping away from this newsletter. While Sallie has long been responsible for the meat of this medium, Barbara has provided its sizzle. Through countless all-nighters, Barbara's art direction and graphics acumen made this publication something every member could view with pride. Barbara distilled the raw content into a slick offering, pleasing to the eye, easy to digest issue after issue.

Sallie and Barbara leave a legacy of loyalty and dedication. Both stayed on far in excess of their commitments, sacrificing what was best for themselves in the interest of what was best for MBHS. They leave large shoes to fill as I look ahead.

To imagine I could replace Sallie and Barbara would be reckless, but owing to their advice and encouragement, plus the skill, legwork and continuity provided by remaining editorial staffer, Carol Sanders, there's hope we'll continue to publish a newsletter that you will read with interest, rely on for accuracy, and view with pride.

Your feedback is vital to this effort. Reader input will both drive our content, and preserve our drive.

Sincerely,

Mike Lipsitz, Editor

760-449-4048 landerscapes2@aol.com

FIELD TRIPS

Cabot's Pueblo Museum

Sunday, March 28, 2010 1 pm

Join us for a Day Trip to Desert Hot Springs
Discover this remarkable landmark
with a private tour of the Grounds & Museum
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

CONTACT: Laurie Geeson at 760-363-6681
or lauriegeeson25@gmail.com
Donation: \$10 • Bring Your Lunch • Car Pools

Covington Park & Environs

Sunday, June 13, 2010

Rescheduled from April 4th

Join us in the shade for a picnic-style potluck,
cake fund raiser, tour & talk on this
Treasured Park & Delicate Ecosystem.

Details to Come.

1st Wednesday History Programs

Wed. March 3

Gardening & Desert Wildflowers

Speaker: Robin Kobaly, The SummerTree Institute
More on this Special Presentation on Page 3

Wed. April 7

Desert Christ Park **Speaker:** Burke LeSage

Wed. May 5

Twentynine Palms & Dr. Luckie's Contributions
with a Voices of the Past—Special Presentation
Speakers: Dick Moran & Sallie Brown

Wed. June 2

Covington Park & Morongo Valley
Speaker: Laurie Geeson



5:30 - 7:30 pm

\$5 Donation at Door
Hi-Desert Nature Museum
next Yucca Valley Library

PROGRAMS RESUME IN SEPTEMBER 2010

— Laurie Geeson, Program Chair

2009-2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT LLOYD NOEL

760-364-3544 coyotepines@earthlink.net

1st VP PROPERTIES TOM GRANGER

760-365-7559 tom6818@msm.com

2nd VP BUDGET, AUDITS, FUNDRAISING, GRANTS MIKE GATHERER

909-585-9570 mike.gatherer@charter.net

TREASURER RACHEL CRAWFORD

760-363-1340

SECRETARY CAROLE SCHREIBER

760-369-0259

desert_thorn2@roadrunner.com

a Special First Wednesday Program presentation

ROBIN KOBALY

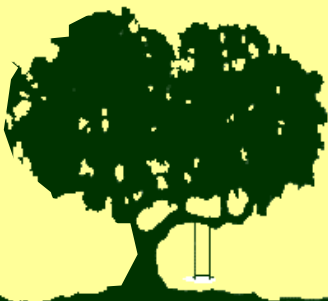
of The SummerTree Institute

The Secrets of Desert Wildflowers & Native Plants

Robin holds a master's in botany, and is Exec. Dir. of The SummerTree Institute, a locally based non-profit, working on environmental education. She spent 20 years as a BLM botanist, wildlife biologist and natural history interpretive specialist, and has received national acclaim for her work in environmental education.

Robin's fascination with plants, birds & wildlife likely began as she gathered wildflowers for the first Morongo Valley Wildflower Show in 1962. Robin's grandmother, Maxine Crotsenburg, asked her to collect specimens with her mother, Babs, and Aunt Laurie.

It's a story Robin's Aunt Laurie (Geeson) relates with pride. Plan to attend this special presentation.



**Wed. March 3
5:30 - 7:30 pm**

**HI-DESERT
NATURE MUSEUM
\$5 Donation**

From the President



I am pleased to report that MBHS has matured to the point where we are able to establish a firm annual budget plan. Additionally, our VP of Finance and Budget Committee has set performance parameters and developed plans to build adequate cash reserves. Along with this our committee chairs and members now have annual expectations/guidelines from which to operate.

I commend the many committee volunteers, chairs and board members for the loyalty and dedication that has helped to promote our organization and improved our stability, visibility, and support of our Mission Statement.

Getting to this point required thousands of dedicated volunteer hours and commitment to help our organization grow in importance to our communities. This volunteerism is a clear indication that our most valued and important asset is our membership. These overall efforts did not come easily and at times strained our organization's volunteerism. As we move forward through this year we are working to level the efforts for all committees and stabilize our growth so as to improve use of volunteers and recruit new members to help as our organization achieves greater relevance in the Morongo Basin.

Sincerely,
Lloyd Noel, President

BOARD MEETINGS

Board Meetings are scheduled for the
2nd TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH

March 9 • April 13 • May 11 • June 8 • July 13

1:00 P.M. at the MBHS Museum & Research Center in Landers.
Members are welcome to attend.

**MBHS MUSEUM & RESEARCH CENTER IN LANDERS
now has one phone number: 760-364-2000**

STAY UP-TO-DATE

For the latest on events, or to check out historic photo slide-shows, interesting stories and links or to download old newsletters, you'll want to check out the MBHS website.

www.mbhs.net

E-Mail: MBHS.history@gmail.com

dominated by a huge stone fireplace, and tucked beside it is Cabot's tiny bedroom. A kitchen, dining room, office and storage space take up the remainder of the first floor.

Cabot Yerxa

Visionary

Artist

Globe Trotter

Architect

Philanthropist

Scavenger

An apartment suite built for Portia, Cabot's second wife, occupies the second floor, which also has an area to showcase the art work of Cabot and his friends, and his collection of curiosities accumulated through the years.

The third floor consists of one large room with many windows, affording views of the nearby mountains. The room was once used as a classroom for metaphysical and theological studies that Cabot and Portia pursued.

The life of Cabot Yerxa is almost as fantastic as the design of his sprawling pueblo. He was born in 1883 in Hamilton, Dakota Territories, and spent his early years on the Sioux Reservation where his parents ran a trading post. The family left there for St. Paul, Minnesota, where they ran a store. The elder Mr. Yerxa next took the family to Mexico where he taught his merchandizing skills and developed a taste for cigars, at least for making them. The family next settled in Seattle, and soon young Cabot decided Alaska was his land of opportunity. Lured north by the gold rush, Cabot drove dog teams and a stage coach in the area of Nome, then set up a store specializing in selling cigars to the gold miners flocking to the area.

He became interested in the culture and language of the

Inuit, enjoyed their hospitality, and compiled a 320 word vocabulary of their language which he sold to the Smithsonian Institute. Cabot set up a mobile grocery business in Alaska, going to different areas and taking orders which were filled at his father's store in Seattle and shipped to the clients. It was while engaged in this enterprise that he met then Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt and maintained a long-time friendship with him.

Cabot's father next sold his General Merchandising company and moved the family to Cuba, where he built tract houses outside Havana. Political developments in Cuba forced the family to move to Florida, where they manufactured cigars in Key West.

Next Cabot headed West. He married, fathered a son, Rodney, and was divorced. Cabot joined the Yerxa family in moving to Riverside and investing in a promising citrus ranch. They lost their fortune in the freeze of 1913.



Yerxa atop 'Happy New Year'; his beloved 'Merry Christmas' brings up the rear.

Cabot then homesteaded near the desert area which later became Desert Hot Springs. At first, he lived a rugged life, sleeping outdoors and cooking over a campfire. Then he built a 10 by 12 foot cabin out of one inch wide boards. He used his artistic talent to create post cards of desert scenes which he sold to train passengers at the nearby rail stop of Garnet, outside Palm Springs.

One of the first items Cabot obtained was a burro he named Merry Christmas in honor of the day he purchased her. He credits the burro with saving his life during a sandstorm near Whitewater, 16 miles from home. Cabot flattened himself against the animal's back, protected his eyes from the blowing sand, and told Merry Christmas "Take me home." She did. A newspaper account of this adventure appeared in the *Riverside Enterprise*. The burro was also known for her eclectic eating habits. Cabot shared whatever he was eating with her, in gratitude for her saving his life, and she reportedly ate anything, and even drank water from a bottle and chewed tobacco.

With her aid, he built his first permanent shelter, which he called Eagle's Nest, a one-room cabin situated in a hole Cabot excavated on what he later called Miracle Hill. The

Continued next Page

Field Trip

Sun, March 28 1 pm

Join the MBHS Day Trip to Cabot's.

PRE-REGISTRATION
REQUIRED

Contact Laurie Geeson
760-363-6681

lauriegeeson25@gmail.com

Donation: \$10

Bring Your Lunch



Continued from previous page

most pressing problem was a lack of water. Cabot and Merry Christmas hauled water from Garnet, a fourteen mile round trip, several times a week. Then, **Cabot dug a well, the first of the hot water sources that later became the basis for the city of Desert Hot Springs.** He dug a second well about 600 yards from the first and discovered cold water. This unusual result occurred, Cabot later learned from geologists, because each well was located on the opposite side of the San Andreas earthquake fault. In honor of the different water temperatures, he named the site Miracle Hill.

The U.S. entered World War I, and Cabot joined the Army in 1918, leaving behind Merry Christmas. One story claimed he left her to roam free; another said that he left her with a friend. In any case, **when he returned a year later, she had disappeared into the desert.**

Cabot next went to Furtilla, California, now a ghost town, near Indio, and ran a grocery store and the post office there. Some time later, he went to Europe to travel and study art in Paris, but again returned to California where he ran a grocery store in Moorpark. By 1941, he'd returned to the desert and helped found the city of Desert Hot Springs. He continued his painting career, specializing in works depicting the Cahuilla Indians.

In 1945 Cabot Yerxa married for a second time. His wife,

Portia Graham, was known for her work in metaphysics. Both she and her husband **shared a belief in the probability of the existence of other life in other worlds and welcomed contact with those beings.**

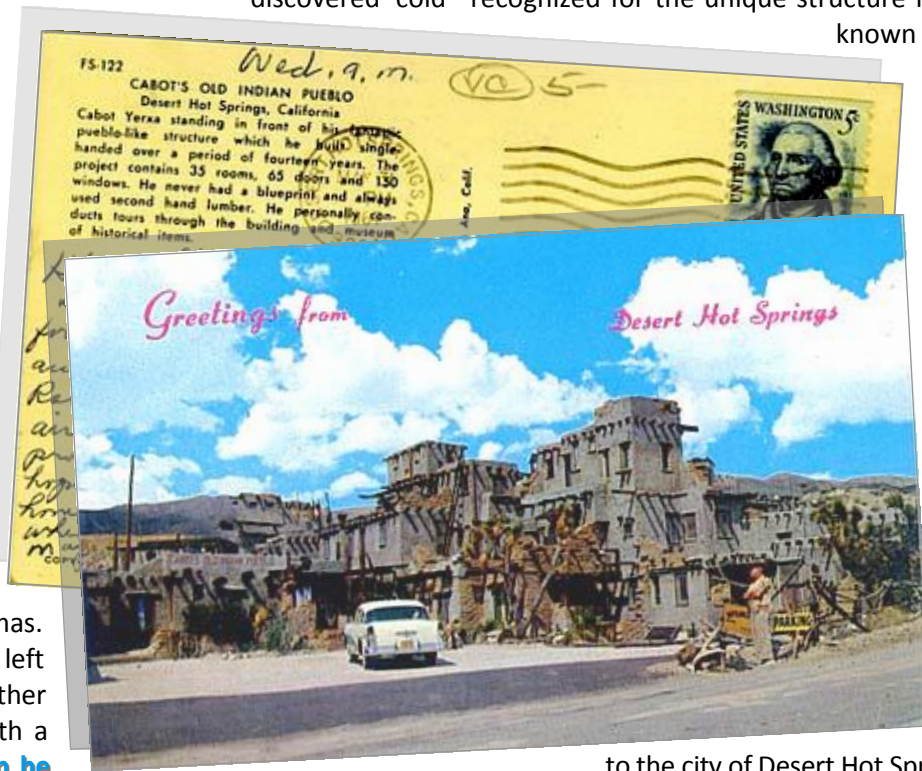
At age 82, Cabot Yerxa died of a heart attack in his home, the pueblo he had worked on for more than twenty years. Widely recognized for the unique structure he built, Cabot was also

known for his good deeds and philanthropy. The city marked his passing by lowering flags to half-staff and closing City Hall. More than 400 mourners attended his funeral.

After Cabot's death, the structure was nearly destroyed but his friend, Cole Eyraud, literally held off the forces of destruction by standing in the path of a bulldozer, shotgun in hand. He then bought the property, helped restore it, and, when he died, left it

to the city of Desert Hot Springs as a museum and art gallery.

Visitors today are struck by the sprawling structure's marriage of folly and ingenuity. Cabot Yerxa's legacy stands as a monument to the spirit of adventure and creativity, inspiring and attracting many who answer the call of the desert.



Cabot's Pueblo Museum
67616 East Desert View Ave.
Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240
760-329-7610 866-941-7610
www.cabotmuseum.org



Driving Directions Take Twentynine Palms Highway west toward Desert Hot Springs. Turn left at traffic light on N. Indian Canyon Dr. Continue on N. Indian Canyon to Pierson Blvd. and turn left. Follow Pierson to Palm Dr., and go right. Follow Palm Dr. to Desert View Ave. and turn left. Cabot's is up a short distance on left.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Thank you all who have renewed your memberships. Renewals are essential if we're to meet operating expenses and continue programming. Again, thanks so much for your loyalty and support!

Renewals If you haven't yet renewed, you should know how important this small membership fee is for continuing the work of the Historical Society. Please return your renewal today; help us continue to collect, preserve, and share the rich history of the Morongo Basin.

New Members I've served as Membership Chair and Co-Chair since Bernice Falltrick passed the reins in January 2008 and have continued the tradition of welcoming new members each newsletter. We're thrilled to welcome three new memberships since the last report, bringing the Society's membership total to 217.

Give Two Gifts in One

Gift Memberships make wonderful impressions and they benefit the Historical Society. With St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Mother and Father's Day just around the corner, think about giving a Gift Membership. We'll

introduce ourselves along with a warm *Gift Letter* from you.

Don't Miss Important Notices

Please let us know of any change to your address, telephone or email so we can keep you up to date with the Historical Society.

Questions or Comments?

Contact me ... I'd like to know what's on your mind!

— *Carole Kester*
Membership Chair
Email Coordinator

760-365-4096 or pioneertowndolls@earthlink.net

**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS**

Linda & Bob Bailey
of Morongo Valley

Eugene & Kathryn Warthan
of Yucca Valley

Community Off Road Watch
Organization of Landers
— a Gift from *Eve Vykydal*



MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving Our Past For Our Future

P.O. Box 2046 • Yucca Valley, CA 92286

760-364-2000

Email: MBHS.history@gmail.com

www.mbhs.net

MISSION STATEMENT

The specific purpose of this (non-profit) corporation is to collect, conserve and exhibit artifacts; to collect, display, interpret and publish memorabilia relating to the history of the Morongo Basin; to locate, identify and preserve historic sites; to promote the research and study of local history, and to share the rich heritage of the Morongo Basin with all the communities within and surrounding it.

MEMBER INTERESTS:

I would be interested in volunteering for:

- Docent tours of MBHS Museum & Research Center.
- Help maintain the grounds or house at MBHS Museum & Research Center.
- I would be interested in serving as an officer (specify) _____
- I would be interested in serving on a committee: (circle)
Programs Membership Auditing Budgeting Fundraising Hostess/Server Other
- Telephone committee or liaison representative for my community
- Research land records; member inquiries; requests from public.
- I can file/transcribe/do registrar or archive work.
- I could do video/oral interviews with people within the communities.
- I could help with events and programs / marketing / sales / advertising / newsletter.

FOR MBHS USE ONLY

Date received: _____ Cash: \$ _____ Check: # _____

Date received by Treasurer: _____ Date Newsletter sent: _____

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP (Please check one) New Renewal

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES (Please check one)

- Individual.....\$20.00 per year
- Family (1 address).....\$35.00 per year
- Organization.....\$40.00 per year
- Businesses.....\$45.00 per year
- Life (1 Ind/Bus/Org).....\$300.00 per person

**Please make checks payable to:
MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Name: _____
LAST FIRST MI.

Additional Name (Family Membership only): _____

Mailing Address: _____
P.O. BOX or STREET

_____ CITY STATE ZIP

Telephone: (____) _____

E-mail: _____ Check here for paperless Newsletter

NOTES:
(Revised 3/09)

LIFETIME & CHARTER MEMBER HONOR ROLE

In this issue, we honor those who invested in Lifetime Memberships. Many "Lifetimers", honored below, signed the original Charter between February and June 1999 when the Society began. Three of

these are the Society's Founding Members. They organized the first meeting on September 12, 1998 to gauge community interest in forming a historical society. We honor them here and remain grateful for their efforts.

Marion L. Arnett
Billy Holcomb Chapter
of E Clampus Vitus

Robert P. Green
Chris Gubler
Roxanne Guez
Pauline M. Hanson

Fred Ken Kramer
Harvey B. Legrone
Monika S. Legrone
Robert J. Leone

Mona Lowe
Cindy Melland
Bruce Miller
Cheryl A. Nankervis

Leota Bell
Betty Bilyeu
James Brock
Sallie A. Brown
Evelyn Conklin
Bob T. Connors
Charlyne J. Connors
Twila G. Couzens
Donna L. Davies
Shirlene M. Doten
Helen M. Dotts
Leona Eriksen



L to R: Ruth Long, Helen Dotts, Bernice Falltrick and Betty Bilyeu at an organizing meeting in 1999.

Kenneth W. Eschmann
Bernice E. Falltrick
LynAnne Felts
Mary E. Gaffney
Laurie Geeson

Anna Hilburn
Lois Salzmann Johnson
R. Lee Johnson
Taylor Jordan
Carole L. Kester

Merry L'Esperance
Les Long
Ruth Long
Chris Long
Tim Long

Dale D. Noel
Lloyd S. Noel
Marcia V. Pealstrom
John Ristaino
Wanda Stadum
Bob Stadum
Tamma's Magic Mercantile
Todd Swain
Swella Chiropractic Inc.
Jeannette Webster
Peter E. Wild
Sandra J. Williams
Dave Williams

Charter Members
Founding Members

Newsletter Offers Paperless Option

You know about 'preserving our past', but how about 'preserving our future' by using less and wasting less? With that in mind, we'll be making the newsletter available to you online, delivered to you via email.

We want to encourage you to choose this option not only to save time, paper and postage, but to reduce the workload of our volunteers who must collate, fold, tape, address, and stamp each printed newsletter ... hundreds of them!

When you go paperless, you'll get your newsletter days sooner too. We'll just skip the part about taking

the layout to the printer, proofing it, and all that volunteer processing and instead we'll just hit the send button and voila. Your new, fresh edition will be in your inbox, ready for you to xprint, read, forward, or whatever you wish.

In the next few weeks, you'll receive an email about going paperless. To select the paperless option, you'll simply reply to that email. That's all there is to it. You can change the option any time.

Come on, go paperless. Give it a try! Then pat yourself on the back for helping to preserve our future!

Won't you come along?

A Scholarship Art Show of B&W PHOTOGRAPHY

by Cheryl Jordan
with a history by Laurie Geeson



Peak into the Heart, Soul & History of Morongo Valley

Exclusive First Editions available to benefit the Scholarship Fund

Sat. May 8 • 6 to 8pm
Morongo Valley Cactus Mart

MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY GIFT SHOP

Our DVDs and Books by local authors
make perfect gifts! And when you give a
gift of local history it's always a good fit!



In stock —

The Adobes of 29 Palms
by Pat Rimmington • \$20

**29 Palms Inn & Abodes
of 29 Palms • DVD • \$20**

Gone the Way of the Earth
by Clifford J. Walker • \$14.95

OASIS of MURALS
Twentynine Palms, California:
Cultural Renaissance of the Gateway
to Joshua Tree National Park
by Vickie Waite • \$24.95

The Gift Shop is located inside
Tamma's Magic Mercantile
formerly Old Town Mercantile

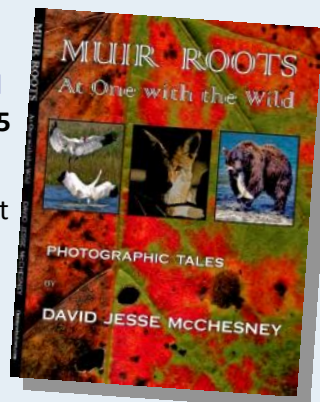
Old Town Yucca Valley • 55727 Hwy. 62 • 760-369-1970
Open Every Day • 10 am- 5 pm

RECOMMENDED READING
MUIR ROOTS: At One with the Wild
by David Jesse McChesney • \$29.95

This is a collection of 176 full color
images and tales that have come out
of McChesney's naturalist adventures
and Scottish MUIR ROOTS.

Relive the breathtaking moments in
this book. David Jesse McChesney's
photography and cards are avail-
able at the **MORONGO BASIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY GIFT SHOP** open
every day.

This is a great opportunity for you to take home your own
copy of this collection of beautiful scenes of nature and
wildlife. We are very fortunate to have such an outstanding
feature at the gift shop!



Remember to book a
"VOICES OF THE PAST"
program for your
next up-coming event.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
SALLIE BROWN • 364-4446
E-mail: salliebrown@earthlink.net

**Check the expiration date on your mailing label.
It may be time to renew your membership.**

E-mail Reminder ...

If you are not now receiving events update
e-mails and would like to get these notices &
reminders via email, contact Carole Kester at
760-365-4096 or pioneertowndolls@earthlink.net

Go Paperless!

