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An Agency of the Division of Museums & History
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Spring 2014

Chaining Nevada: the Lasting Legacy of Ike James

By Paul Pace, P.L.S.

Illustrations: author's collection

The Territory of Nevada emerged from the Territory of Utah in March 1861. Its northern boundary was the 42nd Parallel and its eastern boundary the 39th Meridian west of Washington, DC. Along the 35th Parallel it bounded the Territory of New Mexico (later Arizona). Its intended western boundary was the crest of the Sierra Nevada, to which California, admitted to the Union in 1850, didn't consent.

In July 1862 Congress moved Nevada's east boundary to the 38th Meridian west of Washington, DC. The Greenwich Meridian hadn't come into universal use and longitude from Washington doesn't match that from Greenwich. Therefore Nevada's eastern line is not at an even degree of longitude. The Washington Meridian would remain in use for land surveys in the U.S. until 1912. Nevada entered the Union in 1864 with its 1862 boundaries.

U.S. Senator William M. Stewart introduced legislation to make Nevada's southern boundary the Colorado River and its eastern boundary the 37th Meridian, carving another degree of longitude from Utah. Stewart's bill passed in May 1866 over the objections of the Delegate from Utah Territory. In July 1870 Congress appropriated \$17,000 for a survey of Nevada's eastern boundary. Willis Drummond, Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, DC, was instructed to let a contract.

Ike James responded with a proposal to the Surveyor General of Nevada for the survey. Initial Point of the 400-plus mile line was to be where the 37th Meridian crossed the Central Pacific Railroad. James was expected to determine the longitude of the Initial Point astronomically, assuming the telegraph line along the railroad could be used for precise time signals.

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NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

2180 South Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701
775-687-6953

www.NevadaCulture.org/museums

Open 9:00 to 5:00

Thursdays through Mondays
except Thanksgiving

Admission: \$6. Children under 18, and
members of the Friends of the Nevada
State Railroad Museum, admitted FREE.



The museum is an agency of the
State of Nevada

Brian Sandoval, Governor

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Tourism & Cultural Affairs**

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2014 Spring Operations

Saturday, May 10: National Train Day

V&T Ry. McKeen motor car no. 22

McKeen Car Fares: \$8; Children 4-11, \$4.

Museum members \$4 with Membership Card.

The McKeen car also will operate **July 6** and **October 31**.

Starting **May 11**, TC&GB Ry. **Edwards Motor Car no. 401**

operates **Saturdays & Sundays** through **September 28**
except when the McKeen Car or Steam Train is operating.

Edwards Car Fares: \$4; Children 4-11, \$2.

Museum members \$2 with Membership Card.

May 24, 25, 26: Memorial Day Weekend steam-up

Museum Admission/Train Ride combination tickets
on these days: \$15, Children 4-11 and members \$4.

All operations depart Wabuska Depot 10:00AM till 4:00PM.

See the summer Sagebrush Headlight for operations on

Independence Day Weekend July 4, 5, 6. and

Labor Day Weekend August 30-31 and September 1.

Please submit items for the next *Sagebrush Headlight* by May 23.

California—Nevada Railroad Historical Society excursion Virginia & Truckee Ry. Reno to Minden May 29, 1949

This special train was double-headed by nos. 26 and 27 as far
as Carson City, where this Allen family photo was taken.

Almeda Allen, wife of
Virginia & Truckee
Roadmaster Patrick
Allen, poses in front
of no. 27 beside
Patrick Jr., age 14
(left rear), and Bernie,
age 12 (left front).
Mrs. Allen is holding
six-month-old Ron.

Locomotive no. 26
continued with the
train to Minden and
back.

A year later, on May
31, 1950, the V&T
would make its last
revenue trip before
abandonment.

*Photo courtesy of
Bernie Allen*



Friends of NSRM Message

Spring is here and summer is on the way. It promises to be a very busy one, especially with the 4th of July weekend. We are planning a special event featuring the Glenbrook. It will finely be finished and under steam all weekend. The 3 rail track work is expected to be completed and ready for service by both gauges. In addition to the Glenbrook and the Inyo (both wood burning 1875 Baldwin's) we are bringing up the Eureka from Las Vegas to complete a threesome of 1875 wood burning Baldwin locomotives. Nowhere else in the country or world can that be seen.

In addition, we will have numerous other locomotives and antique pieces of transportation equipment. This is an official event for the 150 Committee for Nevada's 150th Celebration of statehood. Be sure to mark your colanders and attend. You will not be sorry.

We are hoping that this will be the first of many great exhibitions featuring the Glenbrook. It has been a lengthy process by the restoration shop to get it in service, but well worth the wait. Chris DeWitt and staff have created another fantastic restoration. Many adversities were triumphed to get to this point. A huge congratulation is in order, so when you see the shop crew, be sure to express your gratitude and appreciation for a job well done.

So for now, see you this summer in Carson City and have a great spring.

Ronald J. Allen,
President

Continued from Page 1

James's field notes reveal that he chose instead to triangulate into the Initial Point, using U.S. Coast Survey monuments located near Salt Lake City (*see sketch below and map, page 4*). Doing so contravened orders of Commissioner Drummond, who questioned elements of the survey including the establishment of the Initial Point, the character of some of the monuments, and the lack of meteorological observations at mile-posts. James wrote to Edmund Smith Davis, Nevada's Surveyor-General, responding to Drummond's charges of inadequacy. James promised to complete the remaining work promptly and reminded the Commissioner of the dangers to a small party of surveyors in those remote areas.

In April 1871 Congress authorized Drummond to accept the survey "notwithstanding any departure from the instructions that, in the opinion of said commissioner, does not materially impair the accuracy of the work."

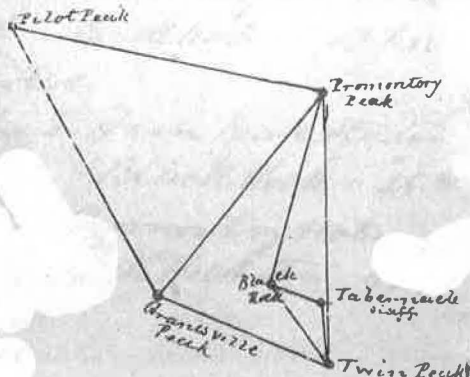
James returned to his practice in Virginia City after repairing his survey, which Drummond continued to question. In July of 1871, he awarded Daniel G. Major a contract for \$200 to examine James' work, particularly the line north from the Initial Point to the intersection of the 37th Meridian and the 42nd Parallel, the northeast corner of Nevada.

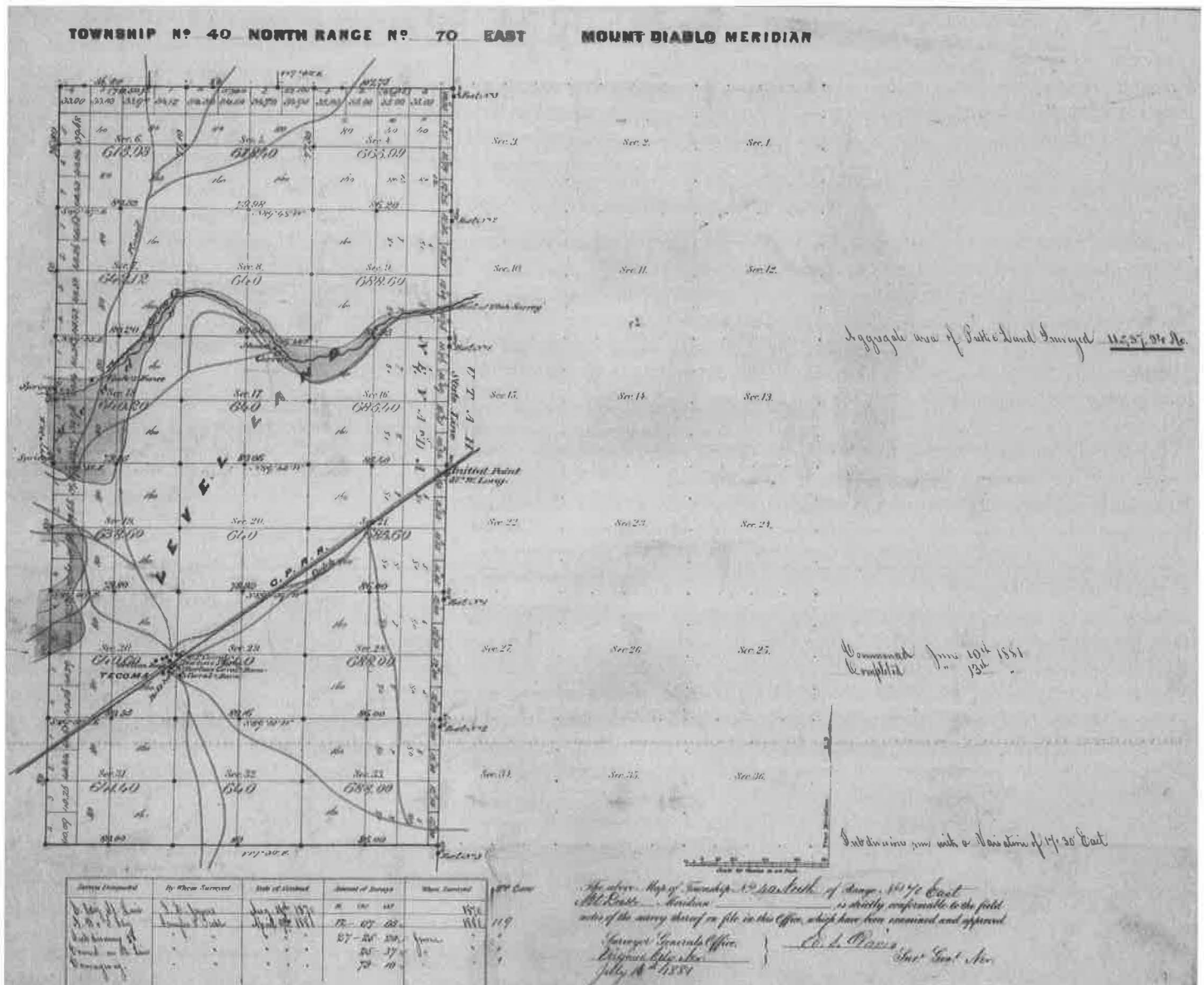
Instructions issued that June required Major "to obliterate monuments executed by the surveyor of the eastern boundary of Nevada, as well as resetting mile-posts" for some 45 miles. The remaining 355 miles of James's boundary survey, from the Central Pacific Railroad to the Colorado River, remained intact. Soon afterward Major received the contract to survey the north boundary of Nevada. He later surveyed California's northern line. When he resurveyed the eastern boundary of California in 1872, A.W. von Schmidt determined that Major's Initial Point for the survey of the north line of California, which had begun at Nevada's northwest corner, was three miles out of longitudinal position; demonstrating again the difficulties of determining geodetic position in those days.

Meanwhile discovery of the Crown Point bonanza in 1871 revived the languishing Comstock. In February 1873 discovery of the "Big Bonanza" in the Con Virginia Mine by John Mackay and James Fair made the future seem secure. Mining resumed in earnest and investment capital flowed back into Virginia City.

Continued on Page 4

*Sketch of triangulations
from Coast Survey Station
Monica Station at Salt
Lake City to Pilot Peak*





In March 1873 the *Gold Hill News* reported that Ike James was living on his ranch in southern California. He may have obtained the property near Los Angeles for the benefit of his wife, who was in poor health. In May Mrs. James died at her mother's home in San Jose, apparently of typhus. Ike was left with young children.

That July James and R. H. Stretch went in search of a sea-level canal route from the Gulf of California northward into the desert near Death Valley. Together they produced a report entitled *The Practicality of Turning the Waters of the Gulf of California into the Colorado Deserts and the Death Valley*. However, the plan to reclaim the desert lands quietly died. By September James was back in Virginia City, running underground surveys for the Belcher Mine from an office in the Odd Fellows Building.

In order to secure a constant timber supply for the Comstock, Darius Mills and Henry Yerington had joined with banker Duane Bliss to form a company that would acquire sawmills and timber interests at Glenbrook on Lake Tahoe. Among the acquisitions was the Summit Flume Company's V-flume that descended Clear Creek Canyon to a point just south of Carson City. In June 1874 the *Gold Hill Daily News* reported that James had been asked by Duane Bliss to survey for a narrow-gauge railroad between Glenbrook and Spooner Summit. Bliss sought to eliminate the last animal-powered link between the forests of Lake Tahoe and Virginia City. The terrain proved difficult. Grades were steep and switchbacks were required, as was a 487-foot tunnel at the summit. Over the 8¾-mile line, eleven trestles spanned drainages. By the time the survey was completed it was too late in the year to begin construction. Grading started in April 1875. Finished in August 1875, the line hauled 300,000 board feet a day.

During the summer of 1875 stock shares on the Comstock fell to a third of previous values. In August a panic hit the San Francisco Stock Exchange, followed by a run on the Bank of California. The Bank was forced to close its doors and at the urging of Sharon and Mills, bank president William Ralston was asked to resign. It was his habit to take a swim in the Pacific Ocean every day: He was found dead from drowning, or perhaps suicide. Low as spirits were on the Comstock, worse would come. A terrible fire in October 1875 engulfed Virginia City, laying waste to 2,000 buildings and destroying \$10,000,000 in property.

The mines and mills continued to operate, as did the railroad, and the town began to rebuild. The Bank of California recovered somewhat, though never reclaiming its former prominence. The *Territorial Enterprise* reported that Ike James and L.F.J. Wrinkle, a mining man of wide reputation, were in business with an office in the Mayre Building in Virginia City. Together they were a formidable team. Dan De Quille reported in the *Territorial Enterprise* in July 1875 that James was to map the 1500-foot level of the Con Virginia Mine at the request of William Sharon. James and Wrinkle also conducted numerous mineral surveys in the 1870s, as well as the boundary of the Nevada State Prison site in Carson City. In 1876 John Mackay, still one of the princes of the Comstock, asked James to supervise the sinking of a new shaft at the Yellow Jacket Mine. The shaft reached the 3600-foot level but no profitable ore was found and flooding of hot water forced its abandonment.

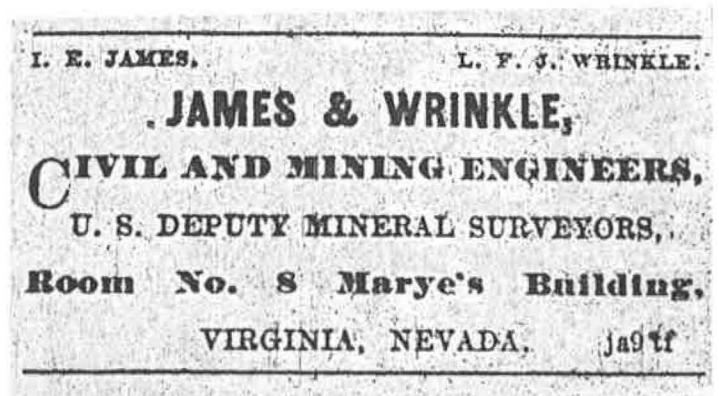
Adolph Sutro meanwhile had secured financing in Europe and pressed on with the tunnel. In July 1878 his workers holed through at the Savage Mine. By the next year the tunnel had begun operation, though many of the mines by then were working below the level of the drain. The project had taken 15 years and had cost millions of dollars. Sutro sold his interest in it and moved to San Francisco, where he developed the sandy, western part of the peninsula, built the Cliff House, Sutro Baths, and other landmarks. Eventually he was elected Mayor. Those who purchased the tunnel, including his brother Theodore, suffered losses.

That September James succeeded T.G. Taylor as Superintendent of the Yellow Jacket Mine, a position he would hold for five years. By the 1880s mining on the Comstock was in decline. Mines at Aurora and Candelaria were making money, but their progress was hampered by transportation costs. William Sharon and D.O. Mills began to consider extending the V&T Railroad into the southern deserts to capture the transportation market.

When the Western Nevada Railroad (later the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway) sent surveyors to locate a route from Wadsworth south past Walker Lake, owners of the V&T quickly requested James's assistance. He went into the field with the V&T's C.L. Anderson and J.T. Oliver, soon to be named chief engineer of the new line, to reconnoiter a route from Mound House south toward Bodie and Aurora. In April, the *Daily Nevada Tribune* reported that James and his colleagues had located a "new and better route" and expressed hope that construction would begin soon.



This Gurley Railroad Level and the H.S. Crocker transit on page 1 typify instruments in use during I.E. James's engineering career.

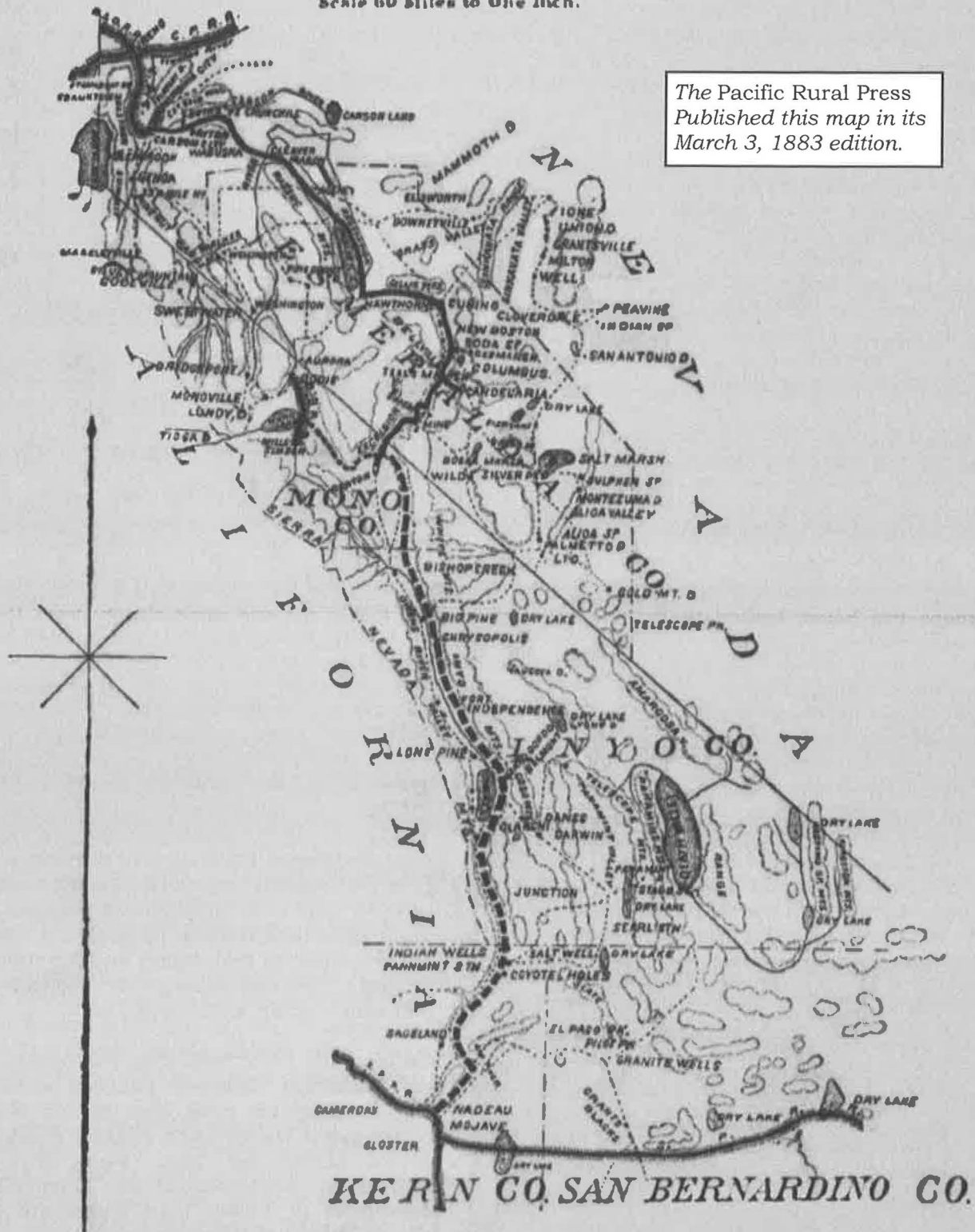


On May 10, 1880, well after surveying had begun, the Carson & Colorado Railroad incorporated to build 3-ft gauge track from Mound House to the north end of Walker Lake. Initially freight was to be ferried across the lake. When that idea was abandoned, the centerline was extended along the east shore of Walker Lake and south toward the mining camps of Belleville and Candelaria. The line crossed the Walker Lake Indian Reservation and right-of-way negotiations quickly began. According to Senate Executive Document No. 17, 49th Congress, April 13, 1880 "...a special council of the

Map of the Carson and Colorado Railroad 1882.

Scale 60 Miles to One Inch.

The Pacific Rural Press
Published this map in its
March 3, 1883 edition.



Pah-Ute Indians...resolved that in consideration of the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars in coin..." a right of way across the Reservation was granted to D.O. Mills, et al, in accordance with the survey then being made. Documentation of the right of way, sent to Congress for ratification, languished in the House of Representatives for years. It was ultimately ratified and signed by President Cleveland in January 1888.

The line soon extended beyond Belleville, with J.T. Oliver in charge of surveys. It cleared Montgomery Pass, crossed the California-Nevada state line and descended Owens Valley, terminating at Keeler. Construction started at Mound House May 31, 1880. The first train to Candelaria arrived February 28, 1882. Track reached Keeler on July 12 and regular service began in August 1883. In 1885 D.O. Mills, William Sharon and others formed the Inyo Development Company to recover soda ash in Owens Valley. Henry Yerington was its president, and L.F.J. Wrinkle, Ike's old partner from the Comstock, was chosen as superintendent.

The southern mining boom faltered in the late 1890s and service all but stopped. The Carson & Colorado, among the last products of the Comstock Bonanzas, was sold to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1900.

In February 1880 James had become Superintendent of the Sierra Nevada Mine, among the least profitable of Comstock mines. His predecessor Captain Taylor returned from San Francisco to take charge of the Yellow Jacket. James held the Sierra Nevada post one year and later was named a Trustee for the Yellow Jacket.

In March 1881 James went to Nicaragua to examine a gold mine, returning to Virginia City in May. In July he resigned as Superintendent of the Sierra Nevada Mine to take charge of the Contention Mine near Tombstone, Arizona. In September the *Gold Hill News* reported that "A highly sensational and seemingly improbable story comes from Tombstone, Arizona, that Ike James has been captured by cowboys and . . . one of Mr. James' ears was cut off and sent in to the Wells Fargo & Co. with a note saying that the ex-Superintendent would be held for \$40,000 ransom."

Two weeks later the *Territorial Enterprise* quoted a letter from Ike to a friend in Virginia City: "We are having it lively here with the festive Apache We could see a crowd of them this afternoon making south, with our troops two hours behind them. The only concern we feel is for our wood-supply from the Dragoon Mountains, now occupied by the Indians. No danger in this place and don't believe any stories"

In July 1884 James became Superintendent of the Carlisle Mine in Silver City, New Mexico. In August he told the newspaper there that he was going to erect a mill for the reduction of ore found there. By November he had appointed his son George as the foreman of the mill, and in 1886 he moved to back Los Angeles.

Isaac Evan James retired after 35 years in the West, working in the childhood of the American Industrial Revolution. In January 1887, a few days before his 57th birthday, he died of Bright's Disease at his brother Alfred's home in Los Angeles.

Many of James's contributions survive. Some may be found yet among the empty railroad cuts of Washoe Canyon, deserted mine dumps of the Comstock Lode, and lonely mile-posts along Nevada's eastern boundary.



In 2002 the Snowshoe Thompson Chapter of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus erected this monument to Ike's memory. It stands in front of the Carson & Mills Park Railroad station in Carson City's Mills Park.

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NEVADA
A WORLD WITHIN.
A STATE APART.

**Please check your mailbox the third week of May
for a special flyer with details about NSRM operations
Independence Day Weekend July 4, 5 & 6, 2014.**