

3033 Dale Street
San Diego, CA 92104
December 23, 1986
(619) 283-2803

Louise M. Jackson, Archive Research
Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments
1804 North Van Ness
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Dear Louise Jackson:

Your letter of November 28th has been on my desk for over three weeks. I seem to have slowed down considerably in the past couple of years, now that I am retired from teaching and nearing my 71st birthday! But there is still a lot to do--it just takes more determination to get at it.

I'm sorry that I can only add a little to your information about the Vaughns and Desert (View) Tower.

1. I am enclosing a copy of my booklet of spring, 1984, for the dedication of the CRRHL plaque. It contains a little more than you may have on the tower, and is footnoted for further checking. You know of Peter Odens and his work. He is older than I and in poor health, but can be contacted through the Imperial Valley Press in El Centro for perhaps a bit more. Leo Cline, to whom I referred several times, died several years ago. Reference to several of my articles is for information on the area surrounding the tower, so not of much use for your work. The San Diego Union microfilmed files in the California Room of the San Diego Public Library, 820 E Street, have not been indexed for the period of about 1905-1930. It is this era which would be of much help in fleshing out materials on the project, but I have not had time to page through for what might be there. Also, the library limits use of the readers to about fifteen minutes!

2. The reference to Bert Vaughn as mayor of San Diego points to some years between 1913 and 1919. I have not looked this up, but it should be easy to authenticate. He died in 1976, aged 97. His death certificate should be easily obtained from Vital Statistics, or some such recording center in Sacramento. I have found much from that source over the years.

3. Bert's son, Richard, is a retired judge in San Diego. He maintains law offices at 1059-10th Avenue, S. D. 92101 (Phone 619-236-1144.) His home address is not listed, but his residential phone is 619-560-4936. He was at the plaque dedication.

4. Dennis A. Newman, who owned the tower from 1944 until 1977, lives at 12745 Via Esperia, Del Mar, CA 92014. His phone is 619-755-3650. He is now almost 76 years old, but was in good health at the 1984 dedication.

5. Jane Knapp, who has owned the tower since 1977, is reportedly trying to sell the property (1986) since her children feel that it is too isolated for her to maintain with little help. After 1984 she was finally able to get a direct phone line installed to the tower: 619-766-4612. The address there is Jane Knapp, Desert View Tower, Inc., Jacumba, CA 92034. The Post Office Box is 301, but the postmistress (?) knows everyone so has no problem with numbers!

6. I suspect for W. T. Ratcliffe that you are as informed as I. He seems to have been at Desert Tower in the early 1930's and then to have disappeared. Some who discuss him insist that he had another name, but are vague about that. Maybe Dick Vaughn could be of help.

Unfortunately for my Clamper historian activities, I hop from one site to another, about two per year. I get together enough to authenticate the site as to eligibility for state marking, and sometimes get into a bit of depth beyond that. Rarely do I have time to go back and dig more deeply, though often I get the urge. Since Desert (View) Tower in May, 1984, I have "done" the Johnson-Taylor Adobe Ranch house (point of interest, late May and Oct. 6, 1984); the Picacho Mines, CRHL #193, on the Colorado River, Apr. 20, 1985; the "ghost town" of Tumco, eastern Imperial County, CRHL #182, Oct. 19, 1985; a little on the Church of the Brethren Site east of Holtville (point of interest), Nov. 16, 1985; Campo Stone Store, CRHL #411, May 3, 1986; Julian City, CRHL #412, Sept. 27, 1986; and the work for the Ballast Point Whaling Station of 1859-73, CRHL #50, to be dedicated March 22, 1987. This makes me a "jumping bean" historian. (I've also "done" a couple of papers on Baja California, my original interest at U. C., Berkeley, for presentations in 1985 and 1986.)

You are probably aware of the "Lost World" site on the Colorado near Pilot Knob, which also has the #939 site number assigned to Desert (View) Tower. It is in such disrepair that we have despaired of plaquing it.

Thanks for the letter of Novemebr 28th. I wish I could be of more help.

encl. Desert Tower booklet.

Sincerely yours,

Eugene K. Chamberlin

Eugene K. Chamberlin, Ph. D.
Historian, Squibob, ECV

P. S. I finally located the story on Jane Knapp (Knap ?) and her efforts to sell the Tower. It is in The Tribune (S. D.), May 8, 1986, pages B-1 and B-11. It adds some of the usual undocumented speculation about the tower which makes it hard to pin down reliability. With Bert Vaughn gone now for over ten years it is possible that even son Dick could not clear up the discrepancies.