

Another structure that was a feature of most winter villages was a sweat house, normally constructed the same as a conical winter house. It usually contained a center post, and the pit for the fire was near the door. Men and women used the sweat house, but commonly at different times. It was owned by the community, but individuals might build and own their own. Sweat houses functioned as men's dormitories, as meeting and gambling places, and also places where prayers would be offered while sweating. Sweat baths were used for cleansing and for curing sickness. Doctoring did not take place in sweat houses, however (Steward 1941:285).



Figure 14. Summer windbreak - cooking area, probably of Hank Patterson's family (small boy in arms). He is held by his grandmother, Nellie Doc; probably taken at Rhyolite, NV, about 1902 (PE). Neg. # DEVA 5105 (J.C. Back, photographer).

Clothing. Skins, dressed as described above, were used for clothing, especially for robes. Women wore front and back aprons of skins, and men a skin breechclout. Neither sex wore upper garments of skins, probably because deer hides were in short supply. Both sexes often went barefoot, except during the cold of winter or the heat of summer. Footwear was made of skins, usually in the form of ankle-high moccasins. Joshua tree bark sandals are also reported for some subareas within the territory, as are woven sandals of

yucca fiber (Steward 1941:301). In colder months rabbitskin or other fur robes were worn as capes. A single-skin tunic might also be added to the upper body by both men and women. Children dressed in the same manner as the adults.

### Religion

Although religious concepts held by the Timbisha and Panamint Shoshone have not been discussed in published sources in any depth, it seems quite clear from what has been recorded that relationships with the land and its resources were first and foremost defined by religion. Timbisha and Panamint traditional tales, as recorded by Steward (1943), are all set in *The Time When Animals Were People*. Thus, the animals go about making a world that humans will later inhabit, and, at the same time, defining many of the relationships that humans will have with the individual species. Some animals humans will hunt, such a bighorn sheep and deer; some they will not, such as hawk and eagle [see *Rat and Mountain Sheep*, and *The Deer Stealer* (Steward 1943:284-7)]. Some, such as bear, must be killed at a certain time of the year and butchered in a specific manner [see *Coyote and the Bear Cubs: The Death of Wolf* (Steward 1943:294-6)]. Coyote, who always seems to be getting himself and others into trouble, urinates on a plant causing it to have a bitter taste [probably prince's plume, which now must be boiled to remove the bitterness (Steward 1943:269)]. A whole group of animals is involved in bringing pine nuts to this country--if it were not for them, people would not have this resource to eat [see *Theft of Pine Nuts* (Steward 1943:256-70)]. Animals also brought fire, each in turn carrying it relay-fashion as they were being pursued by its owners, until at last it arrived in this country. It was put into certain bushes for safe keeping, and that is why these are now used to make a fire drill [see *Theft of Fire* (Steward 1943:254-55)]. Coyote, too, is responsible for bringing people to Death Valley--the middle of the world--although because of his curiosity along the way, people also end up elsewhere [see *The Origin of People* (Steward 1943:263)]. Through stories, everything of the Earth and everyone of the Earth are connected.

These stories were told to children and adults in the wintertime, serving as educational tools and moral codes. Children learned that marmots live in rocky places, that one kind of packrat lives in the mountains, that hummingbirds can fly high and swiftly, why jackrabbit has a black tail and woodrat a red spot on his breast, and much more. They learned that if one is greedy, or kills more game than can be used, bad consequences will follow.

The places where some of the stories happened were often specific, so that the landscape, including springs and hot pools, formations, mountains, colors, takes on an added significance to all who would hear the tales. For example, the pursuers of those stealing fire are said to make up a rock formation near Lida, NV (Steward 1943:255); Packrat lured Mountain Sheep to his corral below Tucki Mountain near Stovepipe Wells (Steward 1943:284); Hawk escaped Fly by landing on Mt. Whitney (Steward 1943:287); Cottontail went home to a specific rock in Saline Valley after he shot the Sun, putting it on a better

course through the sky (Steward 1943:278). Koso Hot Springs was the site of a big race where Sun was killed [see The Race to Koso Hot Springs (Steward 1943:268-69)]. The land becomes a living land and the plants and animals on it have a spiritual essence that goes beyond their present identities and their every-day uses.

Other religious concepts explained why certain individuals would be great hunters; why the spirits of large game animals must be treated properly when an animal was killed; why some people would have the power to doctor the sick through supernatural means; why certain plants could be called upon to furnish medicines; why the dead should not be disturbed nor their burial places approached; why people should act properly toward plants and animals when they took them for food--not taking more than they needed and treating them with respect; why disrespect for the land and its resources would bring human disaster.

In all they emphasized the sacredness of life, including the life force within the Earth: the Earth and any spirits that may be in or around where people lived and travelled were offered prayers and food as part of that respect (Driver 1937:105). They also emphasized that an individual should develop his or her own relationships with the many spirits of the world, some of which would offer their help to an individual in dreams (Steward 1941:322). This and much more is what religion chartered. And that in turn guided the everyday lives of persons as they went about their various tasks. It was a routine matter to pray to various spirits upon entering an area and to ask them not to be upset with a human presence. Because they could and did reside anywhere and everywhere, the entire land took on an added sacred significance.

Religious concepts also dictated the timing of ceremonies, including those involved with subsistence as well as other matters. Steward (1938) was told that Koso, Panamint Valley, northern Death Valley and Saline Valley people held annual fall festivals, which were attended by people from other locations. The focus of the ceremonies was the offering of prayers of thanksgiving for the pine nut crop which people were about to pick, and/or for the rabbit drive about to take place. At the same time, prayers for rain and other things necessary to insure the good growth of foods the following year and the health of people through the winter were offered (Steward 1938:75, 82). Festivals were also times when people socialized, played games of various kinds, told stories, and looked for marriage partners. They stayed together for several days to weeks, depending on the food supplies available. Other ceremonies were involved with mourning the dead, or other social activities (Driver 1937:101).

### Other Aspects of Culture

The foregoing has summarized the early research on various aspects of Timbisha and Panamint Shoshone culture that are particularly important toward land use definitions. But, culture is made up of more than what has been reviewed. Social organization, including family structure, kinship, birth, marriage and death, and political organization, including

leadership patterns, make up large segments of life, as do other aspects of religion and ceremony. For the Timbisha and Panamint people, this was no less true, and interested readers should consult especially Steward (1938) for details. He stresses the importance of the individual nuclear or extended family in the organization of all tasks, from subsistence, to camp life, to religion and ceremony.

Small numbers of families were the foundations of winter villages; individual families or small groups of related men or women those of temporary camps. These persons lived and worked together: the men chose hunting partners from their kinsmen and friends; and the women chose other female relatives and friends with whom to gather plant foods and trap small mammals and birds. Children, once they were old enough, accompanied adults. Before that time, they remained in camp with their grandparents. The role of grandparents in raising young children, including in teaching them about the land and its resources, was a very important one, not to be overlooked. Also of importance was the knowledge that persons had a wider network of kinsmen throughout the region who could be visited in good times as well as bad (Steward 1938). All were under obligations to assist each other, and all took those obligations very seriously.

Political organization, as well, influenced some aspects of land use. Often local headmen had the obligation to suggest that families move camp if food supplies were dwindling. They would try to see that the needs of the elderly or the very young were met if immediate family were not available. Sometimes such persons had specific power related to the taking of big game such as bighorn sheep or deer, or toward directing a communal rabbit drive. They also brought parties together in disputes and helped them reach solutions. Although they led more by consensus than by authority, they were persons of respect, who often articulated many of the values of the groups and thus were important focal points in land use matters.

## ETHNOHISTORICAL OVERVIEW, to 1933

### Introduction

The period of history beginning with the initial intrusions of outsiders into Timbisha territory and concluding with the establishment of Death Valley National Monument is framed by two major themes. The first is the destructive impact to the environment and to Timbisha lifeways perpetuated by the techniques, equipment and processes used in the economic pursuits of the outsiders. Mining for gold and silver, processing borax and ranching for profit all required enormous quantities of land, water and fuel--environmental resources directly tied to Timbisha land use. A second theme is the glaring lack of detailed historical information regarding the Timbisha people (Roth 1982): what specifically were the people doing during this period, how did this onslaught of people, animals and equipment

affect them and their land most directly, what exact changes did they make in ways of living, and what constraints were placed on them? The unknowns are clearer than the knowns.

The following sketch provides a brief overview of the activities of explorers, miners, ranchers and other outsiders into Timbisha territory between 1830 and 1933, focusing upon their impact on Timbisha land use patterns and on information these outsiders reported about the Timbisha people.

### Horse Traders and Gold Seekers

The initial intrusions into Timbisha territory took place between the 1830s and the 1850s along the route known as the Old Spanish Trail. These years brought horse traders and raiders on their way from California to New Mexico, and gold seekers, the infamous "49'ers", on their way to the California gold fields. The earliest report of individual contact between the outsiders and the people focuses on the story about George Hanson as a child in 1850 being startled when he encountered a non-Indian at a seasonal camp, Emigrant Springs (Lingenfelter 1986:20). This incident is part of a larger story, recorded many times, about Timbisha people seeing parties of "49'ers" abandoning their wagons and other belongings after having left the main trail by mistake and entering the Valley (Irwin 1980). Between November, 1849, and February, 1850, there was a continuous succession of wagons taking the "new" cut-off through Death Valley. Lingenfelter (1986:41) summarizes the effect of one of the parties of cut-off seekers to people living at Furnace Creek:

The coming of the Jayhawkers with their strange horned beasts and odd rolling contraptions disrupted the quiet life at the village of Tumbisha near the mouth of Furnace Creek. The women and children retreated to the mesquite thicket to the west while the men kept a distant but careful watch on the intruders. Only a lame man remained in the village, buried in sand up to his neck, trying to hide. The argonauts were as startled as he when they discovered him, but they treated him kindly, allaying the fears of his watchful companions and saving themselves from reprisals.

### Hard Rock Miners

The discovery of gold in Death Valley in late 1849 by two Mormon missionaries on their way to Tahiti brought miners and mining companies into Timbisha territory. The Salt Spring area received the first impact of environmental destruction resulting from mining processes. A steam-powered quartz crusher brought in to crush the ore "took all the mesquite and creosote bush within haul of the mine just to get the little boiler roaring" (Lingenfelter 1986:56). The environmental conditions which caused mining to be

unprofitable at the Salt Spring lode--lack of water, lack of adequate fuel supply, an abundance of epsom salts which clogs pipes and valves, and difficult terrain over which the ore must be transported--were present in all the subsequent gold and silver mining that took place throughout Timbisha territory.

The 1859 discovery of silver in the Comstock in western Nevada brought silver mining to the Death Valley area in a big way. Earlier in the decade a miner had taken a small piece of silver-lead ore from Death Valley and had it made into a gunsight. The quest for Gunsight silver, and the discovery of silver in the Coso Range in 1860, brought hundreds of prospectors, and a new meaning of "land use," to Timbisha territory. By 1861 large areas of Timbisha territory had been divided and organized into "mining districts," owned and controlled by mining companies. For example, the Telescope Mining District encompassed important Timbisha camping and food collecting locations in the Panamints. Mining operations were established 3 mi. southeast of Wildrose Spring, a significant source of water and resources used by the people in their seasonal migrations.

The significance of these kinds of invasions of Timbisha territory to the people themselves is documented by Lingenfelter (1986:65) in his discussion of an attack by Native people on the Panamint mining camp in 1863. Four miners were killed, the company cabin burned, and miners returning with supplies were driven away. Lingenfelter says of these and other conflicts:

The Panamint and other Indians throughout the desert country had been tolerant of the first prospectors, although they sometimes found their actions curious. As one Panamint Indian noted, "mostly they come in pairs without their women; this we thought was strange for it is not a custom of our people to go that way." But when the miners began to take over the springs and cut down the pinyon, it was clearly time to put an end to their intrusion. Starting with the Coso rush, the Paiute and Shoshone throughout the Death Valley and Amargosa country made sporadic attacks to drive the whites out. Such efforts continued into the late 1860s, until their futility became obvious to all. Indian hostility only briefly slowed the tide of miners sweeping into the country, for the lure of the Gunsight and other storied wealth drew men there with an irresistible pull.

The increasing numbers of intruders also brought an increase in violence directed at the Timbisha people. In 1860 a military expedition was dispatched into Timbisha territory in retaliation for several non-Indian deaths along the Old Spanish Trail. After several months of randomly hunting for Indian people to murder, a base camp was set up on the Mojave River and forays into the surrounding territory were undertaken. Lingenfelter (1986:85) talks about the "success" of this venture:

The first success came on a sortie to the southwest, where Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Davis captured two unsuspecting Indians. There were promptly taken to Bitter Spring and hung as a grim warning on a makeshift gallows...Then, to the east near Kelso Dunes, three more Indians were killed, their heads cut off and added to the trophies at Bitter Spring.

### Ranchers, Homesteaders and Salt Miners

The 1870s and 1880s brought ranchers, homesteaders, settlers and salt miners into the heart of Timbisha territory causing increased constraints on land use. Non-Indian settlements were established in connection to mining districts. Homesteads and ranches which supplied food for the mining camps and settlements were developed in the small, rich oases already utilized by Timbisha people. Thousands of acres of land on the Valley floor were organized into borax mining districts, closing off seasonal living places and access to food collecting areas.

By 1871 there were four gold and/or silver mining districts with associated settlements in areas of primary importance to Timbisha people, three in the Panamints and one at Grapevine Canyon (Levy 1969). At this time the Timbisha were irrigating agricultural crops in Maahunu, Grapevine Canyon (Steward 1938), and in Pumaitinggahni, Johnson Canyon. In 1875, William Johnson, a non-Indian, moved into the Pumaitinggahni area to start a truck garden in the rich springs area tended by Hungry Bill and his family. Lingenfelter (1986:164) highlights this economic venture:

Moving in on the spring at the Shoshone camp of Puaitungani (Johnson Canyon), just 6 mi. east of Panamint, Johnson terraced a piece of ground, ran a ditch, and planted a variety of vegetables that eventually brought him several hundred dollars a ton in the hungry boom camp. In the expectation that Panamint would last, he even set out some fruit trees, but the boom was over before they could bloom.

After Johnson moved on, Hungry Bill and his family reclaimed the area, continuing to plant their gardens of "grapevines and peach trees as well as squash, melons, beans, corn, wheat and alfalfa" (Lingenfelter 1986:20). At about the same time, Hungry Bill's brother, Panamint Tom, started a ranch at the south end of the Valley at Pabuna close to Warm Spring (see Traditional Use Study, #11 for additional discussion).

Lingenfelter (1986:162) notes that the first agriculturalists and ranchers in the Death Valley and the Amargosa region were the people native to the territory:

The natural fecundity of watered land...had long been demonstrated by the Southern Paiute and the Shoshone, who raised abundant crops of

corn, beans, melons and squash around some of the springs and seeps. Then, in the late 1860s, Mormon Charlie, a progressive Paiute, started a stock ranch in Pahrump valley...

Two non-Indian owned ranches were started in 1874 to supply hay to one of the mining companies in the Panamints. These ranches were located on lands utilized by Timbisha people as primary food collecting regions--one at Tugumbusi, Bennett's Well, and the other at Timbisha, Furnace Creek. Both of these areas contained large, productive mesquite groves which provided abundant amounts of food for the people. These ranches were abandoned in the fall of 1875; other hay ranches operated for a short period of time at other areas in Timbisha territory, including one at the north end of the Panamints, one near the hot springs in Grapevine Canyon, and one in the Valley near Grapevine Springs. This ranch at Grapevine Springs (Lower Vine Ranch), together with one started at the mouth of Furnace Creek in 1883, played an important role in the economy of Death Valley for many years. Lower Vine Ranch became part of the national monument in 1933, while the Greenland Ranch at Furnace Creek became a lucrative private enterprise in the midst of the federally-managed national monument.

The Greenland Ranch, developed in association with the new borax mines located on the Valley floor, was built in the midst of a long-established primary winter camp location. Roth (1982:10) discusses five different historical reports which give accounts of a large settlement of Indian people at Furnace Creek from 1849 through 1866. These include a "49'er" encounter with a "big Indian camp" [in Manly (1949)] at Furnace Creek, an 1857 U.S. Surveyor General map showing a number of Indian camps at Furnace Creek, and an 1858 account of a "rancheria of over one hundred people, with 20 or 30 structures...at the mouth of Furnace Creek," in which the people there "called themselves Panamint." In 1861 and in 1866 two different parties reported encountering "a deserted Indian settlement at Furnace Creek," with the 1861 party acknowledging that the people "had probably left for their summer resort in the high mountains on the other side of the valley" [in Woodward (1961)]. Steward's (1938) consultants placed Timbisha people in winter villages in the Furnace Creek area in the 1860s and 1870s, hunting in the surrounding mountains and summering in the Panamint Range.

The discovery in the early 1880s of borate minerals, which when refined produce borax, was in Lingfelter's (1986:173) terms the "greatest mineral wealth" in Death Valley country making Timbisha territory a "treasure vault." He maintains that it was more important than precious metals, gold and silver:

Of all the salts that accumulated in the crucible of Death Valley, the most prized was borax--that miracle of the laundry, that friend of jewelers and potters, that preserver of meats and mummies. A hundred different uses made a market for that versatile salt, and thus made Death Valley a treasure vault.

There was indeed an enormous market for borax until the end of the decade. The demand for it yielded great wealth for those involved in the production; the production of it caused tremendous damage to the environment and to the natural resources throughout the Valley, and placed further land-use constraints on the people. On November 21, 1881, the Death Valley Borax and Salt Mining District was organized. Roughly 4,000 acres of land on the east edge of the salt flat north of Furnace Creek were divided into 27 placer claims. In 1882, the Eagle Mountain Borax and Salt district claimed 3000 acres near Resting Spring in the Amargosa. In the same year, the Monte Blanco Borax and Salt Mining District claimed the mountain of white salts on the south side of Furnace Creek Wash, and the Eagle Borax Works claimed 320 acres in the Bennett's Well area. The taking of this land through the mining "claim" process virtually closed off access to thousands of significant acres of food collecting regions and winter living locations for Timbisha people.

The processing of borax at all these mines took an enormous toll on the natural resources in the area. Tremendous amounts of water and wood for fuel were utilized:

The Harmony Borax Works...had two enormous dissolving tanks, each holding about 3,000 gallons; eight 2,000 gallon settling tanks; and fifty-seven 1,800-gallon crystallizing tanks...The great steam boiler, 17 feet long and 4 feet in diameter...heated the tanks and powered the crusher and pumps...the efficiency of crystallizing tanks [was increased] by wrapping them with many layers of felt, which when soaked with water helped cool the tanks by evaporation (Lingenfelter 1986:181).

In addition to the devastating impact on the natural resources in Timbisha territory,<sup>8</sup> there was destruction to the land itself as the borax was transported out of Death Valley to rail lines. Roads had to be constructed which would withstand 30 tons of ore. One such route was "across the Devil's Golf Course on a road that had to be graded by sledge hammers" (Lingenfelter 1986:182); another route was that taken by teams of eighteen mules and two horses--the now well-known "20 Mule Team of the Pacific Coast Borax Company," from Death Valley to the railroad at Mojave. The fully loaded borax wagons, weighing 30 tons, began the 330 mi. roundtrip every four days.

Historic information on employment opportunities during the 1870s and 1880s for the people are very sketchy. Lingenfelter (1986) mentions only Chinese people working in the borax industry; Roth (1982:11) mentions that the two major borax works "employed Indians" until their closure, and then

the ranch and other activities at Furnace Creek from that point forward were an important source of wage work for Indians both from the settlement and elsewhere in Death Valley. Many sources indicate that going to the ranch for the haying and irrigation was an important seasonal wage activity from at least the 1890s.

## Gold Miners

Between 1890 and 1910, Timbisha territory witnessed a resurgence of gold mining activity. Although several Indian people played major roles in the discovery of very rich mines--John Tecopa from Pahrump found the Johnnie Ledge, and Mary Scott, an Ash Meadows Paiute-Shoshone, found gold on the slope of the Black Mountains--they were not compensated for their discoveries. As in earlier years, the discovery of gold brought hundreds of prospectors into Death Valley country. Mining districts were established, such as the South Park Mining District, in 1896 in the Panamints. Communities which were associated with the mines flourished. For example, in 1891, Montgomery "was a promising looking camp...boasting some sixty settlers, two rival stores, the necessary number of saloons, and plans for a hotel" (Lingenfelter 1986:190). By 1900 the mining camp of Ballarat was serving approximately 300 people working in the new mines in the Panamints. It was called "The Mining Camp of the Desert," and it notably had a school "with thirty-one pupils, including eight Indians" (Lingenfelter 1986:199).

Also as in the previous mining booms, new equipment to process the ore and run the mines was brought in. This time the machinery included gasoline engines, enormous rock crushers, new water pumps and much larger stamp mills. Lingenfelter (1986:193) describes the activity associated with setting up the Confidence Mine "right in the heart of Death Valley," in 1895 to 1896:

He bought a string of pack mules at \$100 a head, a China pump, a rock crusher, a 20-horsepower gasoline engine, and still another newfangled machine--a Bryan Roller Quartz Mill, with three great 3,000-pound wheels that rolled around on the ore. He also put crews to work opening the ledge, building a bunkhouse, sinking a well, erecting the mill, and grading a wagon road 7 mi. from the mine down to the mill site on the floor of Death Valley. He is said to have spent between forty and fifty thousand dollars on the mill alone.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the equipment involved in the mining process and the natural resources required to run the operation were staggering. At this time an extremely toxic substance was introduced into the mining process--cyanide--used in leaching gold from the tailings. Lingenfelter (1986:198) describes the elaborate process:

erecting a ten-stamp mill just below the mine and running a 4,200-foot aerial tramway and a 10,000-foot pipeline to carry the ore and water....a new double-traveling cable tramway, enlarged the mill to twenty stamps, and added a 50-ton cyanide tank to work the tailings.

## Tourists

From the turn of the century until the establishment of the Monument in 1933, the economic pursuits of the non-Indians turned from mining to tourism. There was a fourteen year revival of borax mining, but the major money-maker was fast becoming tourism. The twenty-mule team wagons were resurrected by the Pacific Coast Borax Company and were driven in the Pasadena Rose Parade in 1916. Books were published showing the "romance" or the "terrors" of the area with enticing titles such as, The Romance of the Desert, Through Death Valley in a Dodge Brothers Motor Car, Ballads of Heavens and Hell, and Toll of the Sands. Zane Grey's Wanderer of the Wasteland was published in 1923. The first tourist hotel, the Stove Pipe Wells Hotel, opened in 1926; the Furnace Creek Ranch, and the luxury hotel, the Furnace Creek Inn, opened the following year. In addition to the hotels, tourism brought new roads, rail lines, tour buses and airline flights to Timbisha territory--and, of course, people.

Each season, more and more tourists flocked to the valley. A few thousand had come that first season, twice that the next, and over ten thousand came in 1928-29. By then tourism had become a million-dollar-a year business (Lingenfelter 1986:455).

Some Timbisha people were by now involved in work either in the nearby towns of Beatty, Pahrump and others, in the revived borax industry, or in the tourism industry (Roth 1982). Lingenfelter (1986:454) notes that "a crew of Shoshone and Paiute" made all the adobe for the Furnace Creek Ranch. Information regarding where people were living at this time is very limited, although Roth (1982:14) provides some information on residence locations indicating that after 1920 "there was an increase in the number of families listed at Furnace Creek, Scotty's Castle, Lida, and Beatty." He also reports that the people were summering in Wildrose Canyon or in the Sierras, that there were reports of Timbisha people hunting with bows and arrows in 1923, and that "traditional curers were still active". Roth (1982:14) notes that some children were attending school by 1910, some were attending boarding school in Carson City, Nevada, between 1911 and 1916, and by 1926, some were attending public schools in Darwin, Beatty, Ryan and Furnace Creek.

By the 1930s Timbisha territory had been staked out and claimed by multiple mining companies. Very significant locations throughout the territory were now "owned" by outsiders--the old Greenland Ranch originally built in the midst of the large, well-established winter camp at Furnace Creek, Timbisha, was now the thriving Furnace Creek Ranch. The low ridge at the mouth of Furnace Creek which had been a sacred dance area was now the Furnace Creek Inn (PE). Only one Timbisha person "owned" land in Timbisha territory--Hungry Bill had been approved for an allotment in the Panamints in 1908. The only other Timbisha person to receive an allotment within the Valley was Robert Thompson, Panamint Tom's son, in 1936 (Roth 1982).

On February 11, 1933, Timbisha territory was officially proclaimed a federally-owned and federally-controlled piece of land with these words (U.S. Government Printing Office 1933):

WHEREAS it appears that the public interest would be promoted by including certain lands known as Death Valley, in California, within a national monument for the preservation of the unusual features of scenic, scientific, and educational interest therein contained...

With the founding of Death Valley National Monument, land use and livelihoods changed drastically for the Timbisha people. For many years, the Bureau of Indian Affairs had alternately ignored the people or included them in some of its services. When the Monument was established, another federal agency came into the picture, the National Park Service. The history of the next 50 years for the Timbisha people is a very complex one, with positions alternating that they were and were not wards of the federal government, they were and were not entitled to services, and they could or could not remain in their ancestral home. During those years various proposals were considered for removing the people altogether, as well as improving their circumstances. In 1936, a very forward-looking area officer of the Nevada Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alida Bowler, in cooperation with the Monument Superintendent T.R. Goodwin, attempted to provide permanent homes for the people through the construction of an adobe village south of Furnace Creek Ranch. This was ultimately accomplished, and the history of Timbisha residence in the area up to and including the move to the present village site, as well as something of the later history of the village is detailed in Section III, History of the Village. Roth (1982) provides a good summary of the administrative activities of the BIA and the Park Service during these years.

### III. TRADITIONAL USE STUDY

#### Methods

As noted in the Introduction, this aspect of the study was primarily field based: that is, members of the study team, including the Timbisha Tribe's Historic Preservation Committee, visited a number of locations in the region, looked at the resources present, and discussed their past and present uses. In the case of plants and animals, we attempted to identify them in the field using field guides rather than actual collection. We used videotape in some cases to record both the site areas and information about them. Members of the Historic Preservation Committee often spoke in their native Timbisha language so that a linguistic record would also be preserved for future generations. Otherwise, Native names for areas (place names) and resources were also recorded.

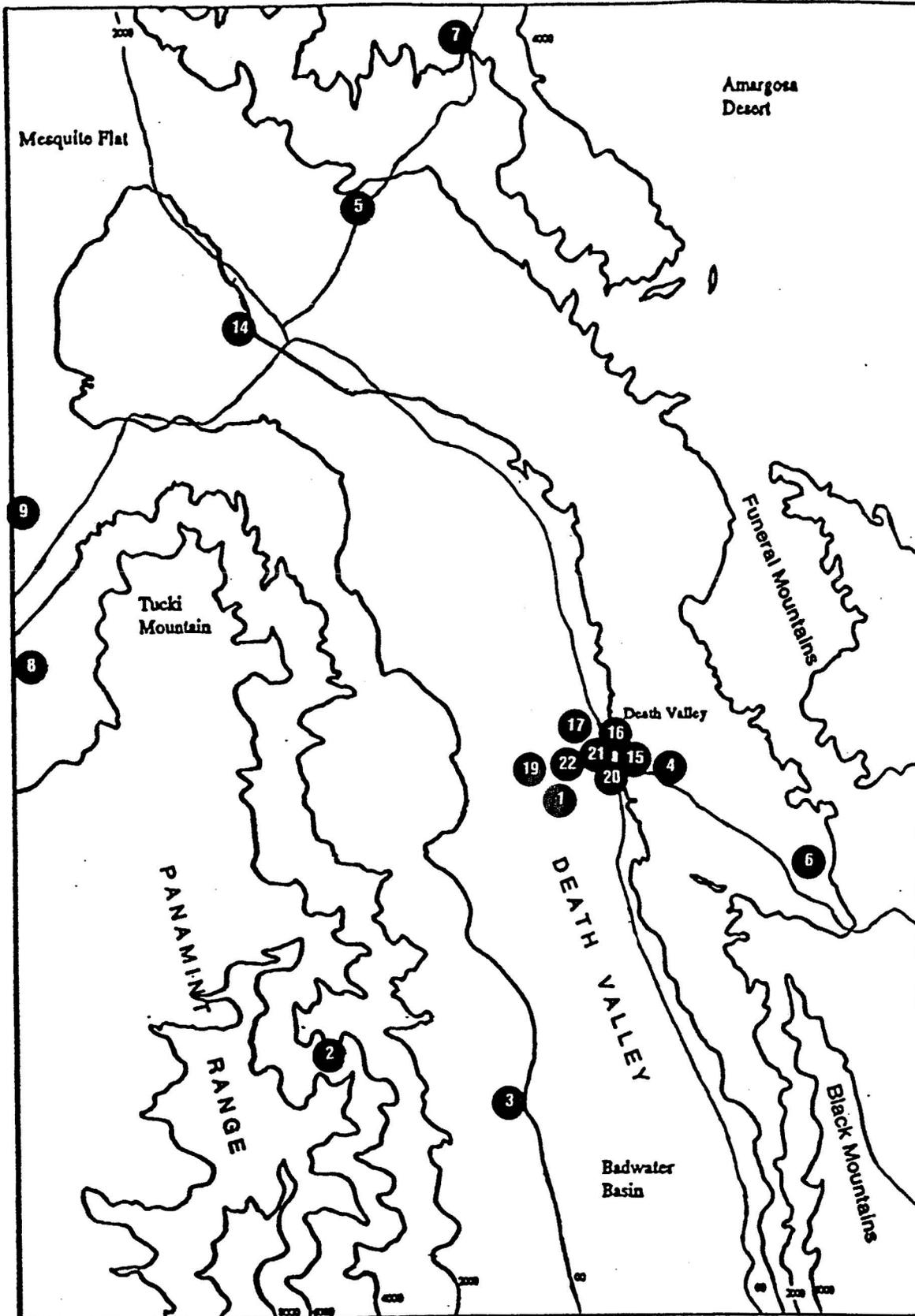
Working in the field in this way is an important aspect of method for any land use study. People recall past uses and can talk about present uses much easier when actually at a place and when using familiar landmarks as referents. Many more plants can be seen and discussed, and often the presence of animals may be noted even if they are not seen. Within anthropology, ethnobotany (a people's perceptions of and uses of plants) and ethnozoology (a people's perceptions of and uses of animals) are seen as important aspects of land use to record, as are Native place names (Hunn 1990). And indigenous views on resource management are especially important in a climate of environmental concern that equates a return to "wilderness" with a management philosophy that advocates benign neglect (Blackburn and Anderson 1993).

Direct observation of people's interactions with the land also come about in the field. When people prayerfully approach the land and its resources, when they check on the condition of places and plants and animals, when they comment on improvements or degradations, when they place themselves in the context of family, friends, and others who have gone before in particular places, then one gains a better overall concept of the importance of the land to them. This and many more feelings of association came from the Historic Preservation Committee during this study. Additional interviews done in people's homes were also useful, as was the extensive time spent in the archives; but these become secondary to the data actually collected in the field. It was also through these field visits that we all gained a better understanding of the dynamics of the Mojave Desert landscape.

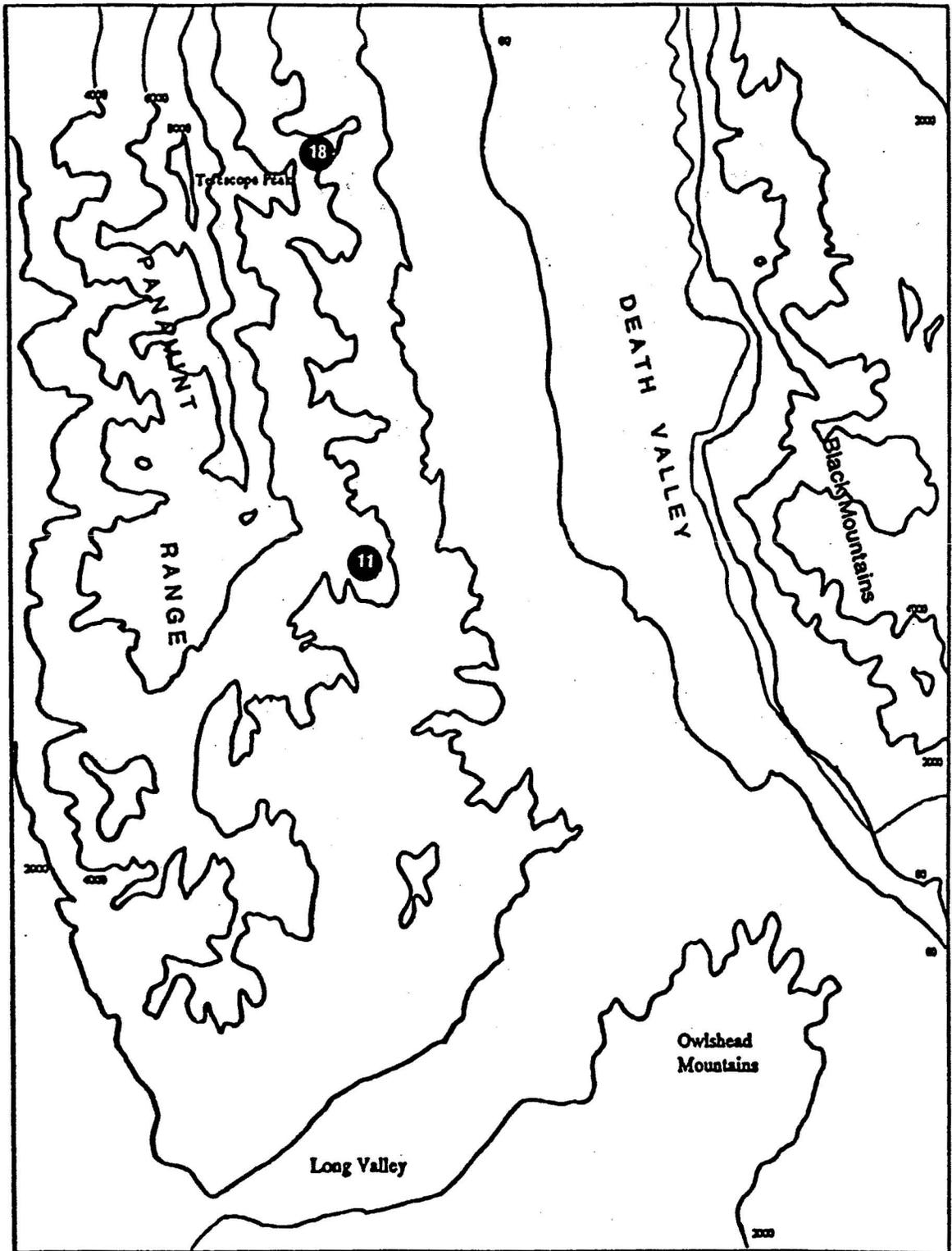
#### Historic Locations Visited

As noted earlier, the Timbisha people feel strongly about the whole of the region that is their homeland, including all of its aspects, so that a survey of traditional use areas such as we conducted does little more than point out some of the areas and some of their concerns. But the absence of data on others should not be taken as evidence that they are not concerned about them, or that they did not use them or care for them formerly or at present in some way. Nonetheless, with the time we could allot to this project, we were able to review some areas in the central and southern portion of Death Valley National Park and some related areas outside of its boundaries. The northern portion of the Park was not studied in any systematic way, although we will report on some of the known areas in that region in a very preliminary way and largely from the literature. We will also make some suggestions in the concluding section as to what might be done in that region to gain a better understanding of its present and former uses and the groups and persons involved (a Phase 2).

During field studies, a total of 22 localities were visited in the company of the Timbisha Tribe's Historic Preservation Committee (Maps 3a, 3b). Members of the committee chose the sites we visited for the most part, in consultation with the ethnographers. Each site was known to have been important in the past, and some are still actively visited today, although not just by Timbisha tribal members. People of Panamint



Map 3a: Locations of Use Areas Visited, Central Death Valley.



Map 3b: Locations of Use Areas Visited, Southern Death Valley.

Valley, Saline Valley, Koso, and Beatty descent are involved as well. In the following, each locality is described briefly, along with some indications of the site's importance, and present-day concerns for its protection and integrity. Locations will be indicated only in a general way for some, as the Historic Preservation Committee is very concerned about potential vandalism.

### 1. Furnace Creek Mesquite Groves

Map 4 gives the approximate distribution of the honey mesquite groves near Furnace Creek. In former times, these groves were the source of mesquite beans used as a major staple for the Timbisha people, as well as others who came from sites in the southern and central portions of Death Valley. People also came from Ash Meadows (Southern Paiutes and Shoshones) and from Beatty and northern Death Valley to trade for any surplus of this crop (Steward 1938).

People were often camped in the groves for the winter, but if not, they moved there in April or May anticipating the harvest. While there, they either built windbreak shelters or sheltered within the trees. Given that the mesquite trees provided various products, from green pods to fully processed meal and cakes (see Plants and Animals), camps here might last for two to three months. They were also used at other times of the year for small mammal and bird hunting. After caching the harvest nearby, people moved to the high country in the Panamint Range for the summer. This pattern of moving to the groves, and then to the high country, was still occurring after the present Timbisha Village was built. It seems to have ceased in the 1940s, when several people moved away during the War, and others became more involved with wage work and were unable to relocate as easily. People continued to harvest the trees, however, and even today there is considerable concern for what appears to be a steadily declining crop. Collecting mesquite and knowing how to properly process it is a marker of ethnic pride, and the elders of Timbisha Village want that knowledge to continue.

The mesquites in this portion of Death Valley are the sweetest in the region, according to tradition. As one moves up the Valley, near Surveyor's Well and Mesquite Flat, they become more sour. Thus, rights to harvest in these groves were and are very important to the Timbisha people. Non-local people might be given permission to harvest there if there was a good crop, but otherwise, they had to trade for a surplus. Thus, these groves, above all others in Death Valley, are a major source of concern; and they appear to be in trouble (see IV, Management Concerns).

### 2. Wildrose

A second major site area we visited with the Historic Preservation Committee was one of the principal summer - fall camps in the high country, in the Wildrose area. This site

is very important historically as well as at present, as it is the site where most of the people from Timbisha spent the summer and fall months until the 1950s when they were no longer allowed. And people still go to the district at present to collect pine nuts in the fall.

Members of the Historic Preservation Committee guided us to one major site and discussed who lived there in the summers when they were children. There were several camp areas for the different families, including for the Bolands, Thompsons, Kennedys, Pattersons, Shoshones, and families from Beatty, including Tule George, Tom Stewart, and the Cottonwoods. The people from Beatty came particularly if the pine nuts in their districts failed in a given year, but might also come to avoid the heat of summer. Occasionally, people from Panamint Valley and Saline Valley visited as well. From these camps the men always hunted bighorn sheep, and the women collected various root plants such as mariposa lily and onions. In August, everyone began collecting pine nuts, which are particularly large and flavorful in this area.

There were two major springs in the area, one of them (Paatsa) at one time deeded to Bill Boland after a court trial. This spring was cleaned, cleared, and carefully tended by the family whenever they were in the area. It had also been enhanced by the family with a log spring box to facilitate water collection. This spring was used for water for drinking and cooking, as well as for washing clothes and bathing. Water for the latter purposes was heated with a fire in a flat area below the spring, which also featured a communal clothesline.

Each family had a designated camping area under the pinyon trees. Each had cleaned and cleared the site of underbrush, trimmed the trees of lower branches, and leveled a place to sleep and sit. Some people had tents; others put up other structures after they could bring lumber in by car. People had also generally cleaned and cleared the area to aid in pine nut collection and to insure against the spread of fire (see Native Resource Management Principles).

Today there are some standing and collapsed structures in the area, and evidence of the cleaning and clearing that took place in former times (Figures 15, 16). People no longer camp here for any length of time because of Park rules and because they cannot have fires. The latter rule also prevents the processing of green cones, which formerly took place in this area (see also Nelson 1891, and Ethnographic Overview and Plants and Animals). They do come on a daily or a two-to-three day basis to harvest mature pine nuts.

The Historic Preservation Committee is particularly concerned that the location of this camp not be revealed, as they have already seen signs that vandalism has taken place here. Various materials that were once part of the family camps have already been removed. Monument staff removed most of the improvements around the spring some years ago, but failed to realize that the willow and plum tree growing there had been planted by the people (see Native Resource Management Principles).

Map 4: Mesquite Distribution on Furnace Creek Alluvial Fan



Intermittent Stream



Improved Road



Mesquite Groves



Contour Interval = 200 feet  
Magnetic Declination: 15° East

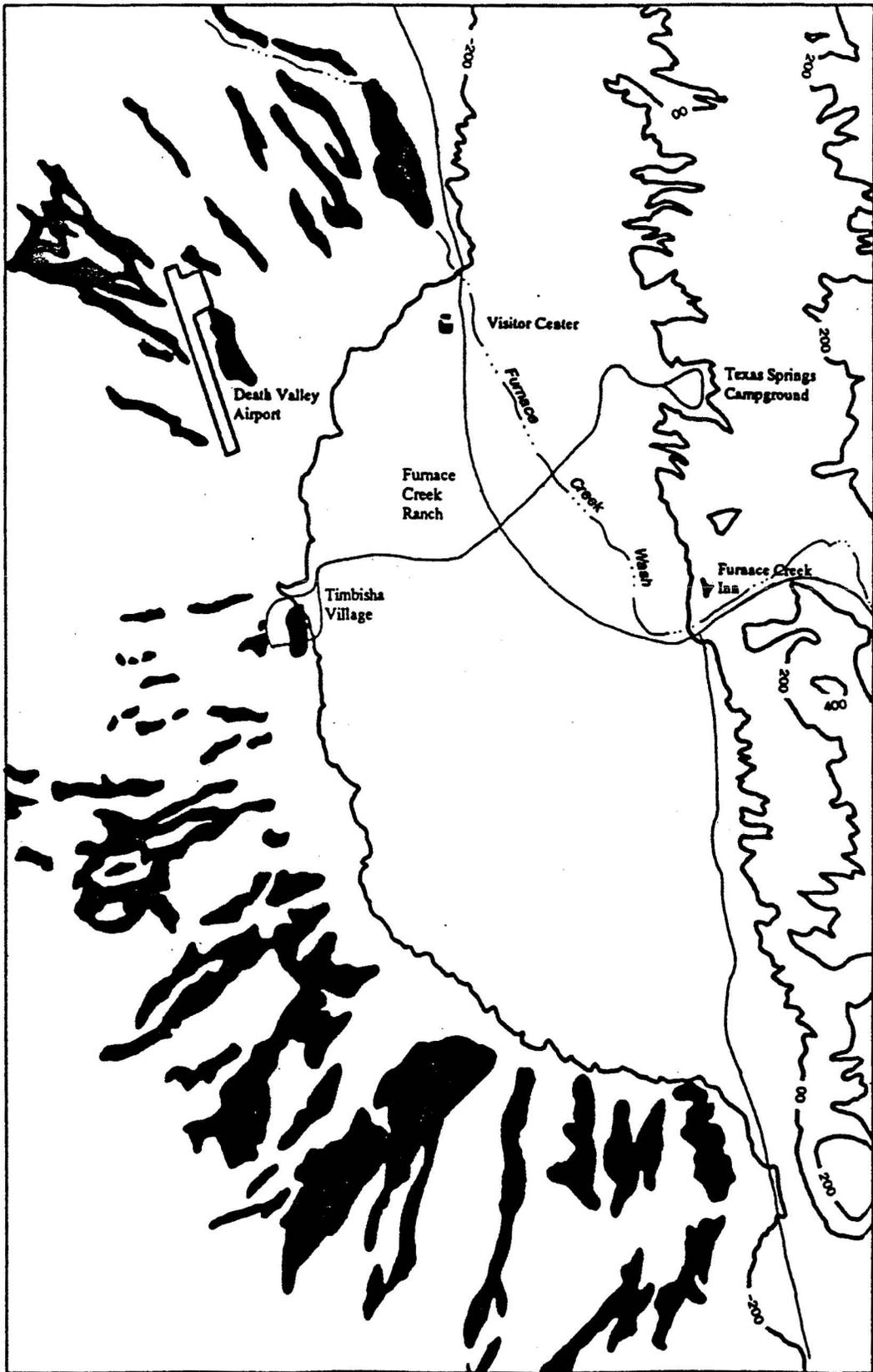




Figure 15. Collapsed structure at Johnny Shoshone's family camp in Wildrose. March, 1993.



Figure 16. Kitchen and storage pantry at Johnny Shoshone's family camp, Wildrose. March, 1993.

### 3. Eagle Borax

The area at Eagle Borax (To?i, 'cattail') used to be the family camp of Tom Wilson and his wife Suzie (Figure 17), a well-known basket maker, and Tim Billson, her brother. They formerly lived in the area of Bennett's Well (Tugumbaaci?i, 'sky water'), one of the main winter camp areas, but apparently moved to Eagle Borax in the late 1930s after a stay at Furnace Creek. There was probably always a winter camp near here, but the exact site seems to have shifted--sometimes because of a death--and probably also due to mining activity in the area. Members of the Historic Preservation Committee remembered the Wilson - Billson camp, as they used to visit it when they were small, in the 1930s. The camp had a well-made brush structure in a grove of very large mesquites, and there was a corral for stock.



Figure 17. Tom Wilson and family, Bennett's Well, ca. 1938. Suzie Billson Wilson is working on a coiled basket; children Musie Billson, and Clyde, Tom and Agnes Wilson (PE). Neg. # DEVA 4109 (Photograph by Burton Frasher © Frashers Fotos - Pomona, California.)