

This Old House
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Submitted to Inyo County GenWeb and the BUHS Faculty and Staff Project by Carol Braley Backert.



This is the Wonacott-Huckaby family home in Bishop, Ca. Built by Chas. Wonacott and Hiram Huckaby about 1900. My mother, Evangeline's room was on the second floor, just behind where the people are standing on the balcony. She grew up there, went to Riverside School which was on the ranch. Most of the Wonacott children were either born in this house or married in it. My great grandmother Louvicey Huckaby and my grandmother Rachel both died in this house.

Hiram Huckaby and his wife Louvicey Hicks Huckaby homesteaded the property. After Hiram's death Louvicey gave the house and the 160 acre ranch to her three children, Rachel, George and James. Charles Wonacott bought the two brothers shares and had Rachel quit claim her share, thus he became sole owner of the ranch and house. The City of Los Angeles took the water from the valley, the ranch had to be sold to the City, at their

price. The house and ranch were abandoned and finally the Indians set it on fire. The only visible reminder of this tragedy is the concrete silo on Dixon Lane, it stands today as mute testimony to avarice and greed As Will Rodgers said, "Los Angeles needed the water to put in their orange juice".

This picture was taken about 1911. See the ditch I played in when I was six years old. The trees are bare in the picture as it is winter, but in the summer it is a cool green place a home where seven children were raised and when the children grew up there were grandchildren. That place was home to all of us.

On the upper balcony from left to right are: Bob Wonacott, his wife Carrie Thompson-Wonacott, my grandmother Rachel, my grandfather Charles Wonacott. The young woman is Evangeline Wonacott-Backert, my mother. On the first floor the figure on the left is Forrest Wonacott, the uncle I was named after. The boy on the right is Dwight Wonacott he too was my uncle.

The house originally had no inside toilet, my grandmother said she didn't want people doing that in her house. There was a hand pump over the kitchen sink and a tank as part of the stove (called a water back). Eventually water was piped into the house and a toilet was added upstairs. The building in the rear was a stone house used to store vegetables and meat, it would be cool in summer and frost free in the winter. Between the house and the stone house was a washhouse used for laundry. The washing of clothes was done by Indian women who worked on the ranch and lived there as part of the family.

-Forrest Backert, February 21, 1997