

## Charles Wonacott Ranch

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

(Compilers Note: This transcription comes from the newspaper. The copy has no date. It seems likely it would be the Inyo Register sometime in the 1940-1950 timeframe)

George and Emily Huckaby and family and Charles Wonacott and wife Rachel (Huckaby) came from the east in a wagon train. They chose the Owens River Valley as their ultimate goal and arrived in 1874 at what was then known as the Love Bridge, now ridges. George homesteaded acreage on Dixon Lane and one tall white silo cylinder is a marker standing just west of U. S. Hwy. 6, north of Bishop.

Both families lived on the ranch, then the Huckaby family sold to Charles Wonacott and moved to land beyond the river until moving to Laws. (This isn't quite the story actually Rachel's parents, Hiram and Louvicey Huckaby owned the ranch. Hiram died and she left the ranch to the children, James, George and Rachel. And her husband Charles bought out the two Huckaby boys.) George (Huckaby) and Emily (his wife Emily Smith) were the parents of Florence (Huckaby) Smith. Florence Huckaby married Joe Smith, a different Smith and she was in Laws for years. She was postmistress until just before her death and her little post is at the museum at Laws. I always called her aunt Florence, but she wasn't an aunt.) Wonacott built a two-story home on Wonacott Lane, as earlier known. He teamed between Candelaria, Carson City and Bishop Creek and was also busy as carpenter helping build several schools and some of the bridges over the Owens River.

Recently, a pretty, ornate medal the size of a dollar was discovered near the Wonacott, silo by use of a metal detector. The embossed words, "This medal of excellence to Charles Wonacott for a cartridge loader, 1877. The historic piece indicates a sort of contest unknown in 1877.

Charles and Rachel raised eight children. One son, Don, managed the farm in later and built the silo. (Charles sold the ranch to his son Don Aug. 12, 1924 His name is noted in the Inyo Creamery Papers. The Wonacott children had to hike salt grass fields to attend Riverside school to the north. (The school the ranch, Charles donated the one acre to the school district for "as it shall be used for school purposes")

"In those days there was no fences from our place clear to town", as told by Albert W. (Bob) Wonacott. Bob liked to tell of the few years he lived in Nevada. His father was then the town undertaker and Bob was employed as a teamster. He drove teams the long trip to and from Sodaville, which was then the end of the railroad from Carson and points north. The route used by stages and the long teams was across the flats by Millers and over the Monte Carlo Range with two night stopovers.

Another interest of Nevada's early days told by Bob was a mode of transportation between Tonopah and Goldfield after the T & G Railroad was completed. Autos were equipped with flanged wheels so they could run on the tracks between train schedules. Passengers were hauled at a cost of \$30 per round trip. Holiday time parties would "charter" the rail traveling cars for a special event at Goldfield for a sum anywhere from \$30 to \$50.

In 1908 Bob and Carrie Thompson were married. They raised three children, Thelma, Thomas and Barbara Jean. The family was long known for their dairy business near Bishop and also in the Mammoth Lakes area. Milk and cream were always delivered to the door with a cheerful greeting or a bit of news. Bob and Carrie were very hospitable people Bob welcoming friends with a reminder of early days, "put your horses in the corral and bring in your bedrolls" Family history from the late Bob and Carrie, (Thompson) Wonacott.