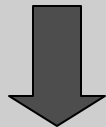


THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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Administrator's Notes

Melanie Barton

I recently received an announcement for the annual California Preservation Conference and was drawn to their title: **OLD ROOTS – NEW GROWTH, Cultivating Communities**. The intriguing visual image this inspires describes perfectly what is happening in the Placer County Museums. We are relying on our early, historic roots as we look toward a future that preserves our heritage and cultivates communities. We are moving forward with two exciting projects this year that will accomplish this goal: the relocation and consolidation of the Archives & Research Center and the Collections Management Facility; and the implementation of the Contemporary Collecting Guide.

The Archives is a repository of invaluable information about the people, government, and events of this area. It contains hundreds of documents and resources including but not limited to: deeds, probates, Great Register of Voters, oral histories, newspaper index, maps, Affidavit of Marriages, coroner's reports, and a database of Buildings in Auburn pre-1925.

Our photograph collection grows daily and offers a very personal glimpse into the lives of Placer County residents from the 19th c. forward. At the Collections we have thousands of artifacts, some dating from the Gold Rush and many from the late 19th c. and early 20th c. Although quite a few are exhibited in the six county museums, hundreds are securely stored for future use and research by historians. All artifacts have been donated by community members or people with a tie to Placer County.

At our new location on C Ave. in the Placer County Government Center, the Archives/Collections Center will have ample space to grow and to properly maintain all of the objects entrusted to our care. This facility will be open for research and is a fantastic resource for the entire county-wide community. If you are interested in your personal family history, old mining ditches, fruit sheds, or early local businesses, qualified museum staff and dedicated volunteers will be on hand to assist with the search. And even if you are not descended from a long time Placer County family, you may still be interested in the history of the place you call "home". I can guarantee that a trip to the Archives/Collections Center

will provide you with an authentic glimpse of local history and the communities that provided the rich texture of our county from the valley through the foothills and the high Sierra.

The aim of the Contemporary Collecting Guide is to collect a representative sample of what is new, current and innovative in Placer County. It records current history and builds our collections for future generations. All materials collected must have relevance to significant events or local projects of importance in the county, local business or school activity, or a local individual or group. Try to imagine an exhibit 100 years in the future, 2112. We want to collect objects now that will tell the story of what was happening in our communities. This is a very exciting project for us. You will be hearing more about this in the months to come as we identify which areas to focus on. We hope to involve community members in this task because, after all, what is collected will represent and celebrate **Your Community**.

Last Chance

By Ralph Gibson

One of the great gifts of the Gold Rush is a plethora of place names throughout the gold-bearing regions of California that obviously have stories behind them. Names such as Murderer's Bar, Bogus Thunder, and Grizzly Flat

conjure images within each of us whether we have been to those places or not.

In most cases, we are left to imagine why a town or place has a particular name. There are stories and lore about the naming of many towns throughout Placer County, but in many of those cases, it's difficult to separate fact from fiction.

This is true for the town of Last Chance. There is a story that has floated up through the years about a group of miners prospecting in the area in 1850. They had little luck finding gold. They were near the summit and one remarked that this would be their "last chance" to find gold on the western slope. One of the men was hunting and he came across a flock of grouse. He fired and hit one bird. The bird fell to the ground and flapped its wings before succumbing to its injury. As the hunter approached, he noticed the bird's wings had brushed away leaves and soil and exposed a bright chunk of gold. The men decided to name the area "Last Chance" remembering the remark one of them gave about this location being their last chance to find gold on the western slope. It's a good story, but that's all it might be; we may never know for sure.

Last Chance was a gold mining town that was home to as many as 200 people during its heyday in the 1860s. Besides homes, there were businesses such as hotels, saloons, stores and a saw mill. Hydraulic mines and drift

mines dotted the area where deposits of placer gold promised small fortunes to those who put in the labor.

Most of the early miners prospected seasonally until the deep winter snows drove them further down the mountain. Last Chance sits at about 5,000 feet in elevation and often is covered in snow in the winter.

Two of the first permanent residents of Last Chance were Jack Hyland and his brother P.G. Hyland. They tried to prosper in a variety of occupations, such as mining, milling and merchandising. But eventually they focused primarily on mining.

An article in the April 21, 1862 issue of the *Sacramento Daily Union* probably lured miners to the area with this golden nugget of information about the town of Last Chance:

We have a large extent of country as yet unclaimed, which is sufficiently prospected to prove it to be rich in auriferous deposits. We have always considered our mines good – but recent developments convince us that they are richer and more extensive than we ever dared to hope. There is no doubt but that the whole ridge above town is rich. Only three tunnels are yet in, and all three have "struck big pay." The "El Dorado Company" struck through week before last, and three men in three days took out five hundred dollars; and they believe

they have enough more dirt out, and gold in their sluices, for five hundred dollars more. An hundred dollars a day to the hand is pretty good – about as good as miners will average.

In the early 1860s, more people decided to reside permanently in Last Chance and brave the deep winter snows. Businesses opened and commerce began to flow through the town, but mining was still the primary occupation.

Getting to Last Chance was something of an adventure – as was about every place on the divide. A letter published in the August 21, 1863 *Daily Alta* by one of their reporters illustrates this perfectly:

In order to reach the important mining town from which I write, the traveler from San Francisco must take the steamer from your city for Sacramento, then the railway cars through Folsom to the Auburn Station, then stage six miles to Auburn City, one of the prettiest places in California; then stage through Todd's Valley and Forest Hill to Michigan Bluffs; from Michigan Bluffs he must either take a mule or horse, or else adopt my plan, and foot it by the long, winding, and at times dizzy trail, through Deadwood to Last Chance – 14 miles. On the way from the bluffs, the traveler passes "Ground Hog's

Glory", "Bogus Thunder", "Devils Basin", and Hell's Delight" diggings. Rather strange names but veritable names nevertheless. Society is not as rough as names indicate.

After the turn of the 20th century, the population dwindled and mining slowed down. Last Chance was on the same Ghost Town trajectory as many other gold rush towns in the county. One of the last articles I found that related to Last Chance was about a curious epidemic that struck many of the town's cows. This article was printed in the July 14, 1917 issue of the *Pacific Rural Press*:

Farm Advisor Amundsen, of Placer County, has left for Last Chance, near Auburn, to investigate the cause of so many cows going blind.

I have yet to find out just what happened to those cows!

How do you get to Last Chance?

According to Google Maps, these are the directions from Auburn:

Merge onto I-80 East (2 miles)

Take exit 121 for Foresthill

Turn Right onto Auburn-Ravine Road

Continue onto Foresthill Road (16.7 miles)

Turn right onto Mosquito Ridge Road (0.8 miles)

Slight left to stay on Mosquito Ridge Road (10.2 miles)

Turn left to stay on Mosquito Ridge Road (8.7 miles)

Turn right to stay on Mosquito Ridge Road (7.3 miles)

Slight left toward Last Chance Road (0.5 miles)

Turn left onto Last Chance Road (3.8 miles)

Turn right to stay on Last Chance Road (0.8 miles)

You're at Last Chance!

The roads to Last Chance are barely passable when wet and muddy and are not open when there is snow.





Museums Intelligence

Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

Although we didn't have a wet winter and it looks like spring will be equally as dry, the jury is still out as to whether this will be a drought year. Living History is upon us and, as we all know, the 1889 jig we strut at the Bernhard Museum this time of year is the most effective rain dance around. Our first day of Living History on February 29th – Leap Day – brought the first drops of rain in weeks.

Our calendar is nearly full for the program once more with only three open days through June 6th. It should be another successful year at the Bernhard. To help make sure that it will be, we did a special recruitment for volunteers to help with the Bernhard Museum and the Living History program. We netted six people and five made it through the shortened training and have begun to shadow. These new volunteers will take the full training classes next fall.

At the museums we are working on a hat exhibit titled: What Killed the American Hat? This exhibit will focus on the reasons why so many women went hatless in the 1960s. The exhibit is designed to encourage participation in the display and to help us answer the question posed by the title. This exhibit will replace the display of

Flapper Dresses in the Placer County Museum and will be installed in the spring.

We are also working on changing out the "History on the Go" exhibit case in the Placer County Museum. Currently, this exhibit highlights four cemeteries in Placer County. Our new exhibit will focus on four New Deal sites in the county. This exhibit will be installed before summer.

Community Education Program: *What the Heck is That?*

Have you ever wondered what strange, unique objects lurk in boxes on some of the shelves in a museum's collections storage facility? Each museum has their share of objects that are odd in nature or are tied to a dark aspect of history. Because of this, many of these types of objects are rarely put on display. Well, now you have a chance to see some of the objects we have in our collection that are definitely on the weird side.

Please join us on Sunday, March 18th at 1:00 pm in the Bernhard Museum Winery for this FREE Community Education Program. Curator of Collections, Kasia Woroniecka will introduce each object she brought from collections storage for the program and will discuss how the Placer County Museums collects and preserves objects.

Community Education Program: *Chinese Doctors of the Gold Rush*

During the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, many observers noted the good health of many of the Chinese laborers.

This was due in part to the Chinese doctors and herbalists who came here during the Gold Rush. Wally Hagaman, a noted historian of Chinese Gold Rush history and author of the book *The Chinese Must Go!*, about the anti Chinese boycott in 1883, will give a power point presentation on some of the successful Chinese doctors who practiced in the region during the Gold Rush.

The program will be on Saturday, April 21st at 1:00 pm and is FREE!

The Bernhard Museum Winery is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road in Auburn.

There is limited seating available for both of these programs and is on a first come, first served basis.

For more information about either of these programs, please call 530-889-6500.

Mountain Quarries Bridge Centennial Event March 24, 2012

Join us at the Auburn State Theater to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Mountain Quarries Bridge!

Mike Lynch, Auburn State Recreation Area Superintendent, will give a presentation on the history of the bridge and its associated railroad.

Mountain Quarries Bridge Centennial souvenirs will be on sale.

The event will run from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm and is FREE!



Placer County Historical Society News



President's Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

Looking Forward

About 100 attended the formal signing ceremony Feb. 21 at the Canyon View Community Center in Auburn to celebrate the 25-year federal-state agreement for continued operation of the Auburn and Folsom State Recreation areas.

This assures operational funding through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the state Department of Parks and Recreation to provide services for some 53,000 acres of historical as well as recreational area from Mineral Bar near Colfax in the Upper American River Canyon down river to Folsom Lake and Lake Natomas.

As was noted by some of the speakers and participants, it is absolutely awesome to have such an outdoor jewel in the backyard of the capital of the most populous state in the nation. Hopefully, some day the area will be declared a national monument to note the role the Gold Rush played in California becoming the 31st state and uniting a nation over the bitter struggle that nearly tore us apart.

Six-pack History

The National Park Service has designated six more Auburn landmarks on the National Register of Historic Places. They are the 1937 WPA-built

City Hall and Fire House, Auburn Hose Co. No. 1, Auburn Fire House No. 2, Odd Fellows Hall, Masonic Temple and the Placer County Bank.

The Fire House bay of the old City Hall, once home of the Boys and Girls Club, is soon to house the California Welcome Center and Placer County Visitors Bureau, once the troubling water leakage problems are resolved.

The current City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, first established as the Auburn Grammar School in 1915, is the next building expected to make the National Register, thanks to the hard work of Carmel Barry-Schweyer, retired Archives Curator, and Councilman Mike Holmes.

Holmes, a lifetime PCHS member, was a bit miffed at the Council's Feb. 27 meeting over Auburn's failure to develop its own list of historical buildings as required under the city's 2004 preservation ordinance, which he is working on upgrading.

Bad and Sad

On or about Jan. 4, the Ophir bronze plaque, state Historical Marker 463, installed in 1950 as part of California's Centennial Celebration, was stolen. The foundation was put in by the Placer County Historical Society.

On Feb. 7, Anthony James Karas, 47, of Lincoln, was arrested on charges of grand theft and possession of stolen property. Sheriff's deputies said they found the marker with the

lettering ground off dumped along Fiddyment Road and were able to trace it back to Karas.

*On Sunday, Feb. 26, life member Richard Hubbard, a mainstay at our dinner meetings and a longtime member of the Landmarks Committee, died.

otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

When: April 5, 2012

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

Where: Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

Cost: \$14 per person

Menu: Chicken Marsala, seasonal vegetables, salad, rolls, and Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

Mail Check to: PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603.

Program: Mike Lynch, Auburn State Recreation Area Superintendent will give a special presentation on the centennial of the Mountain Quarries Railroad and Bridge.



Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Helen Wayland,
(530) 346-7040
www.colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society
Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859
www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society
Sandy Simester,
(530) 367-3535
www.foresthillhistory.org

Fruitvale School Hall
Community Association
Lyndell Grey, (916) 645-3517

Golden Drift Historical Society
Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

Historical Advisory Board
Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

Joss House Museum and
Chinese History Center
Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

Lincoln Area Archives Museum
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3470

Lincoln Highway Association
Bob Dieterich, bobd@iname.com
www.lincolnhwy.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society
Dot Shiro, (916) 663-3892
<http://www.ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html>

Maidu Museum & Historic Site
Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299
www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum

Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59
Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878
dsallen59@sbcglobal.net

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society
Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Placer County Genealogical Society
www.pcgenes.com

Placer County Historical Society
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837
otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Museums Docent Guild
Sandi Tribe, (530) 887-9143

Rocklin Historical Society
Jean Sippola,
(916) 652-1034
www.rocklinhistory.org

Roseville Historical Society
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003
www.rosevillehistorical.org

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society
Javier Rodriguez, (530) 583-1762
www.northtahoemuseums.org

Artifact Highlight

Kasia Woroniecka

Teakettle

Cast iron cookware has been in use for hundreds of years. The first kettles were placed directly on the flame. They were not only used for boiling water, but in some households they were also used to brew the tea itself. Virtually indestructible, the cast iron kettles, skillets, pots and other iron cookware proved invaluable to the American settlers as they moved west and were often passed down to the next generation. While more expensive kettles made by artisan craftsmen were usually marked, kettles made of humbler materials such as cast iron were usually unmarked, as is the case with our kettle. This kettle was used in Last Chance and was donated to Placer County Museums in 1951.



Calendar of Events

March

- Mar. 13th, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Mar. 14th, 7:00 pm** *Joel Parker Whitney and the Whitney Ranch.* Lecture at the Old Saint Mary's Chapel
5152 Front Street in Rocklin. Contact: 916-624-0241.
- Mar. 18th, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: "What the Heck is That?" at the Bernhard Winery.
Contact 530-889-6500.
- Mar. 19th, 6:00 pm** Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting at the Forest Hill Divide Museum.
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Mar. 19th, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street.
Contact: 916-652-1034.
- Mar. 21st, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Mar. 22nd, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library.
Contact 530-885-2216.
- Mar. 24th, 1:00 pm** *Mountain Quarries Bridge* presentation by Mike Lynch at the State Theater in Auburn.
Contact: 530-888-7837
- Mar. 28th, 7:00 pm** *Why is There No Downtown, Downtown?* Lecture at the Old Saint Mary's Chapel at
5152 Front Street in Rocklin. Contact: 916-624-0241.

April

- Apr. 5th, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.
Contact: 530-885-5074.
- Apr. 10th, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Apr. 11th, 7:00 pm** *The Quarries: Where are They and Who Owned Them?* Lecture at the Old Saint Mary's Chapel
at 5152 Front Street in Rocklin. Contact: 916-624-0241.
- Apr. 16th, 6:30 pm** Forest Hill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall.
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Apr. 16th, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street.
Contact: 916-652-1034.
- Apr. 18th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Apr. 18th, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery.
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Apr. 20th, 12:00 pm** *Mountain Quarries Bridge* presentation by Mike Lynch at the Auburn Library's Beecher Room.
Contact: 530-886-4500.
- Apr. 21st, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Chinese Doctors of the Gold Rush.* Bernhard Winery.
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Apr. 25th, 7:00 pm** *Rocklin's Roundhouse.* Lecture at the Old Saint Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street in Rocklin.
Contact: 916-624-0241.
- Apr. 26th, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library.
Contact 530-885-2216.

Placer County Museums
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Auburn, CA 95603

