

# The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

## Sierra County Pioneers - Charles and Margaret Perry

By Virginia Lutes, and Margaret Dodson, using notes from the Perry grandchildren

**A** beautiful ranch house graces the entry to Sierraville from Sattley. Along Perry Creek, Charles Perry built this house around 1858.

Charles Perry was born in Missouri in 1824 on a farm. He stayed there until his first marriage at age 18 in 1842. He obtained employment on a steamer running up the Illinois River, then on boats running south to New Orleans. He knew every mile of the treacherous Mississippi River, and he displayed great skill in piloting the boats. After his wife's death, he started for California with an ox team and wagons. Along the way he married another member of the wagon train, Margaret Murphy, this was around 1853.



Margaret Jane Murphy was born in Ireland in 1829. She came to America when she was 14 years of age and went to work as a maid whenever she could get work. She saved enough to bring her sister here also and later they brought another sister. She was known for her charitable nature and her great nursing skill. She was midwife at many births. No night was too dark or stormy for

her to venture out in a case of sickness.

The Perry's' first located in Devil's Gate, Wyoming, spending the winter there, Charles built a Toll Bridge across the Sweetwater River. In 1854, he erected another bridge, as business had been so good with the first bridge, for he charged \$3.00 per wagon to cross. He sold the business and went north where he carried on a Trading Post. They had a narrow escape there, the same men

kept coming by to ask how long they would be there, and Perry became uneasy. When a customer asked him to sell him the business, he did so. He was only days away when word came that everyone at the Trading Post had been murdered, and the post destroyed.

Charles and Margaret joined a wagon train consisting of about 20 wagons. They took the Mormon Trail into Utah and came by the Great Salt Lake. They traveled through Nevada and over Beckwourth Pass. The reason Charles chose California was the fact he had knew an old Canadian fur trapper friend of his, James

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**T**he Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds an annual meeting, publishes a newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive THE SIERRAN, and are admitted free of charge to the museum and stamp mill tour. If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join us!

**Officers and Executive Board of The Sierra County Historical Society**

**President:** Bud Buczkowske, Alleghany

**Vice President:** Joleen Torri, Sattley

**Secretary:** Judy Lawrence, Sattley

**Treasurer:** Bill Copren, Sattley

Board members in addition to those previously mentioned are Maren Scholberg, Sierraville; Elda Faye Ball, Loyalton; Suzi Schoensee, Sattley; James Connolly, Sierra City; Mary Nourse, Sierra City; Eli Scholberg, Sierraville; Jane Cooper, Loyalton.

**Museum Curator:** Virginia Lutes

**Assistant Curator:** Judy Lawrence

If you have any suggestions or comments, feel free to contact any board member.

**Become a Member!**

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

- INDIVIDUAL.....\$20.00
- FAMILY & INSTITUTION.....\$25.00
- BUSINESS & SUPPORTING.....\$35.00
- SUSTAINING.....\$50.00
- LIFE (per individual) .....\$300.00

(The board increased membership fees commencing in June of 2008)

Please send dues to: S.C.H.S. Membership Chairperson, PO Box 54, Sattley, CA 96124

**On Our Museum Wish List!**

**T**he Kentucky Mine Museum in Sierra City is in need of a glass display case so that we can display more of the unique and interesting artifacts that folks have so generously loaned or donated to us. The approximate size we can accommodate is four feet high by four feet wide and any depth will work. If you have a case you would like to donate for the museum please contact Virginia Lutes at (530) 994-3386 or email [historicalsociety@kentuckymine.org](mailto:historicalsociety@kentuckymine.org).

**Tour the Old Sawmills of Sierra County**

**H**istorical society members will have the opportunity on October 8, 2011, to visit the sites of two sawmills that were part of the booming timber industry in the county during the first half of the twentieth century. The remains of the Fletcher Mill and the Copren Mill are located southwest of Calpine and offer a glimpse of the timber industry in this area. Bill Copren will lead a tour, for historical society members only, of the two sawmill sites. Members will meet at the Calpine post office at 10 am and travel the short distance to the sawmill sites. Bring a lunch or snack if you wish and wear comfortable walking shoes. To sign up for the tour or for more information call Bill Copren at 530-994-3376.

**Sierra County Pioneers - (Continued from Page 1) —**

Beckwourth whom he had met in the Rocky Mountains. Beckwourth had come to Sierra Valley to trap but after one winter found it was not a success, and he moved his trapping houses below Beckwourth. (This small town carries his name, as well as Beckwourth Pass). Beckwourth heard that his friend, Charles Perry was on his way and he arranged to meet him. He met the Perry wagon train at Vinton, at which place the others in the train divided going to the Sacramento Valley and Charles went to what is now Sierraville. When Beckwourth guided Charles Perry into Sierra Valley, he took little Amanda Perry, who was about 2 years old, on his horse and she rode into the Sierra Valley with him. The Perry's spent the summer and worked for several farmers cutting hay the first year. They then continued through the valley to travel over the Old Emigrant Trail to Marysville. and located at a place called "The Buttes". The family did not like the climate, so they returned to Sierra Valley. During Charles' first year in Sierraville (summer) he had a contract to bale hay for \$25.00/ton and in six weeks cleared \$900.00. Within a few years he "took up" land, amounting to about 400 acres near Sierraville and there engaged in ranching, stock raising, dairying and general farm pursuits.

The winter of 1858 proved to be hard and long. Perry did not have enough hay to feed his cattle through the snowy season and in February of 1859 he began to hunt feed for the cattle. He was accompanied by a man named Howk on this search. They carried little food with them as they expected to find cattle feed shortly. On account of the heavy snow, these two pioneers kept searching, as most of their material possessions were the cattle, who were near starvation. Due to lack of food, they were near to giving up when they spotted an Indian boy who started to run away from them. As Perry had been with the Canadian Fur Company for four

years and had mingled with Indians during this time, he was able to make the boy understand their need and this boy led them to feed and even brought the men some food. Perry and Howk returned and spread the news that feed had been found, and the settlers in Sierra Valley who were short on cattle feed took their stock to what is now known as Long Valley.

Charles Perry also owned a freight company and traveled as far as San Francisco to pick up equipment for many of the mines in Sierra County. Much of this equipment came around the Horn of South America and was off loaded at the docks in San Francisco. He used a twenty-mule team pulling the heavy loaded wagons. They supplied the mines at Downieville and Sierra City with beef, butter and other farm produce. In later years, he made a specialty of raising racehorses.

Children born to Charles and Margaret: Amanda Perry Blasdell born in 1855; George Washington Perry, born 1856; Mary Perry Noblet, born 1858; Stacy Perry Slipner, born 1859; Susan Perry, born 1861; Henry Jackson Perry, born 1863; Charles Perry born 1865; Margaret Honora Perry Swall, born 1867; Sophronia Elizabeth Perry Dearwater, born 1869; and Joseph Perry born 1871.

In 1895, he sold his interests and moved to the Sacramento area. While living in Sacramento Mrs. Perry was stricken with her final illness and asked to be brought "home" to Sierraville to die. This was done and she left this world in 1897. Charles returned to Sierraville to live until 1905, when he returned to Sacramento to his daughter Stacey Perry Slipner, where he died at the age of 81.

Charles and Margaret Perry are buried in Sierraville. Amanda, George, Henry, Joseph and Susan, five of their children are also buried there.

## Flames Destroy Sierra County Courthouse - September 20, 1947

By Virginia Lutes

One of the oldest courthouses in California was destroyed by fire in the early morning hours. It had been in use for 95 years.

The fire was discovered at 12:30 am in the south end of the building where Sheriff W.D. Johnson and family had living quarters. Defective wiring was the generally assumed cause.

Two prisoners being held in the county jail were released. Furnishings and records of value were saved from the building and from the treasurer's vault by county officials, firefighters and volunteers.

The landmark building could not be saved, in part due to the firefighters not being able to get water on the fire due to the pumps not working. By the time they succeeded in getting water through the hoses, the three-story tinder dry wood structure was engulfed in flames. Firefighters focused on preventing the fire from spreading to adjacent buildings.

Construction of the courthouse building began in 1852 from timber grown on the ground and cut by Webber's Sawmill, also located on Durgan's Flat. It was started shortly after Sierra County was formed from part of Yuba County. Some thought the cost of construction was

excessive, the cost was \$12,957. The ground where the courthouse was built was believed to be on virgin gravel believed to be of considerable value.

The courthouse was completed the same year; however, a dispute arose between the three-

man board of supervisors and D. G. Webber, the builder concerning the cost. The dispute was settled two years later when the bill was paid in full. The building was occupied in 1854 and remained in continuous use until the fire of 1947 destroyed the building.

The courthouse building housed the sheriff's office and quarters, the superior judge of office, a courtroom, the county jail, offices of the treasurer, assessor and superintendent of schools. When a trial was occurring, a bell on

the courthouse was rung. This was one of the few courthouses to have a bell. One of the more dramatic trials held in this courthouse was that of a young man, O'Neal who was convicted of murder and was hung at the gallows of this courthouse.

In the courthouse was a massive safe that was saved in the fire by employees pouring



*Sierra County Courthouse*

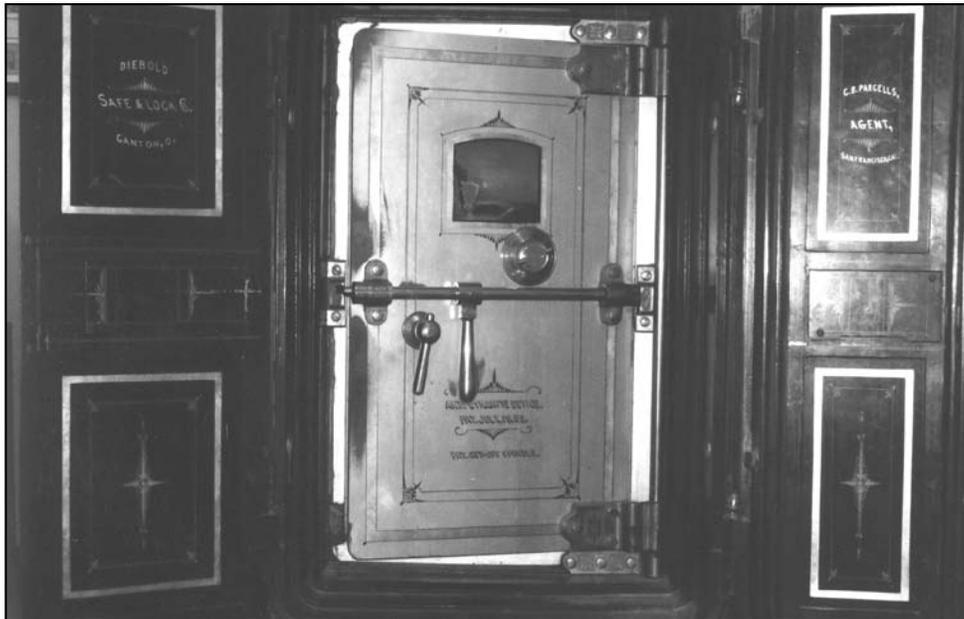
Courthouse - (Continued on Page 5) —

### Courthouse - (Continued from Page 4) —

water over the safe. The safe was purchased and delivered in 1900, and was made by the Diebold Safe and Lock Company of Canton, Ohio. The inside of the safe was constructed of chrome and Bessemer steel. The exterior is

composed of six inch fire proof walls. It was fitted with the latest improved combinations, and the inside door was protected by a Yale time lock. This safe is available for you to see at the Kentucky Mine Museum in Sierra City.

*Photos courtesy Kentucky Mine Museum, text compiled by Virginia Lutes, Curator*



Sierra County Courthouse safe



Lagomarsino Cabin.

### Another Call For Donated Items To Furnish the Lagomarsino Cabin

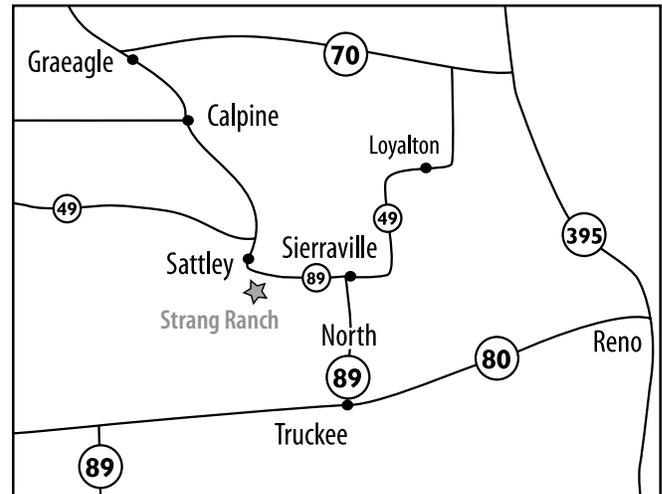
**A**s James Connolly continues to refurbish the Lagomarsino cabin in Sierra City, he has again issued a call for anyone who has furnishings from the 1880s era to donate items, especially furnishings that would have been used in this area during the mining heyday. James has worked tirelessly to accurately replicate what the cabin would have looked like, inside and out, when it was occupied during the 1880s. If you would like to make a donation to help this project, email the historical society at [www.kentuckymine.org](http://www.kentuckymine.org) or call James Connolly at 530-862-1770.

## Annual Meeting Set for September 18 in Sierra Valley

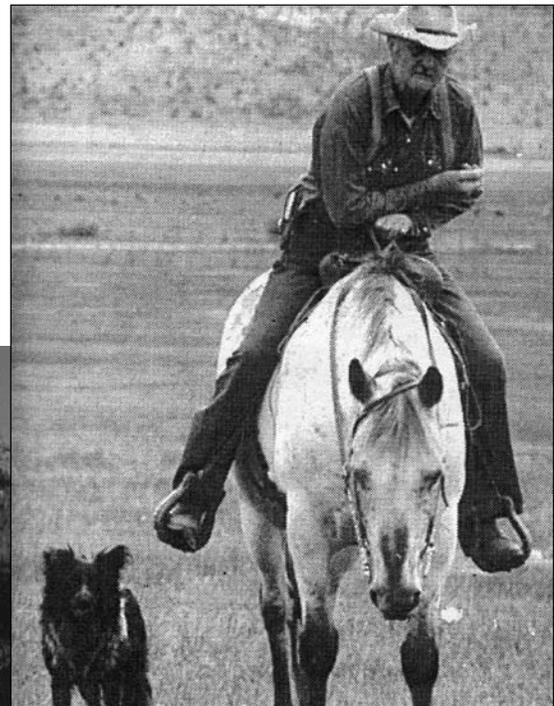
**T**he scenic and historic Strang ranch will be the setting for the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Sierra County Historical Society. The meeting will begin at 1 pm with a delicious barbecue lunch provided by the historical society, followed by a short business meeting and interesting program featuring stories about and quotes from Arty Strang, the colorful owner and working manager of the ranch for many, many years.

The Strang ranch has been a working cattle ranch since the 1850s. And the home on the ranch is a wonderful example of ranch houses from that time period in Sierra Valley. Joleen Torri, our host, has generously offered to open her home to us and answer questions as we tour this beautifully preserved historic home.

All historical society members, and their guests are invited to attend the meeting for an afternoon of good food, greeting old and new friends, and enjoying the lovely setting overlooking the Sierra Valley. Please bring a chair and/or a blanket and we'll meet you at the Strang ranch at 1 pm on September 18!



**Map to Strang Ranch**



*Arty Strang*



*Strang Ranch in Sierra Valley*

## Two Volunteers Extraordinaire!

**W**e have many people who give their time and energy to help the Sierra County Historical Society in its endeavors to preserve the fascinating heritage of this unique region of the Sierras and the American west. Two folks who go above and beyond in their support of the historical society are Sierra City residents Irmke Schoebel and Glenn Diebler.

Irmke spearheaded the historical quilt project that we have featured in a previous Sierran. The quilt, pictured here, was created by Irmke and friends to be raffled off by the historical society to raise funds for ongoing expenses. The quilt is a one-of-a-kind photo montage of scenes from the gold mining era including not only scenes of mining but also the towns and people who made their homes here during that exciting period. The quilt is hand-stitched and made to last as a heirloom your family will treasure if you are the holder of the winning ticket when the drawing for the quilt is held at the annual meeting of the historical society on



*Irmke Schoebel and Glenn Diebler display the historic quilt to be raffled off on September 18th 2011.*

September 18, 2011. We have included an order form for tickets at the bottom of this page. Simply fill out the form with your name and phone number and indicate the number of tickets you wish to purchase - \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00 – and send the form and money to Kentucky Mine, P.O. Box 260, Sierra City, CA, 96125. Tickets must be received by September 17, so we can get your tickets in the drawing box in time for the annual meeting. Then wait for the call letting you know that you are the lucky winner!

Glenn Diebler, pictured with Irmke and the quilt he has helped to promote during the summer, has volunteered as a tour docent for several years at the Kentucky Mine and Museum. He has studied the colorful history of the mine and makes the informative tours both interesting and entertaining. Glenn has been our go-to-guy when tour numbers require more than one docent and we are grateful for his always positive attitude and willingness to pitch in whenever he is needed!

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### Historic Quilt Raffle Ticket Order Form (Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s) for a total payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail this form along with payment to:  
P.O. Box 260, Sierra City, CA, 96125**

*Payment must be received by September 17th.*



# The Sierran

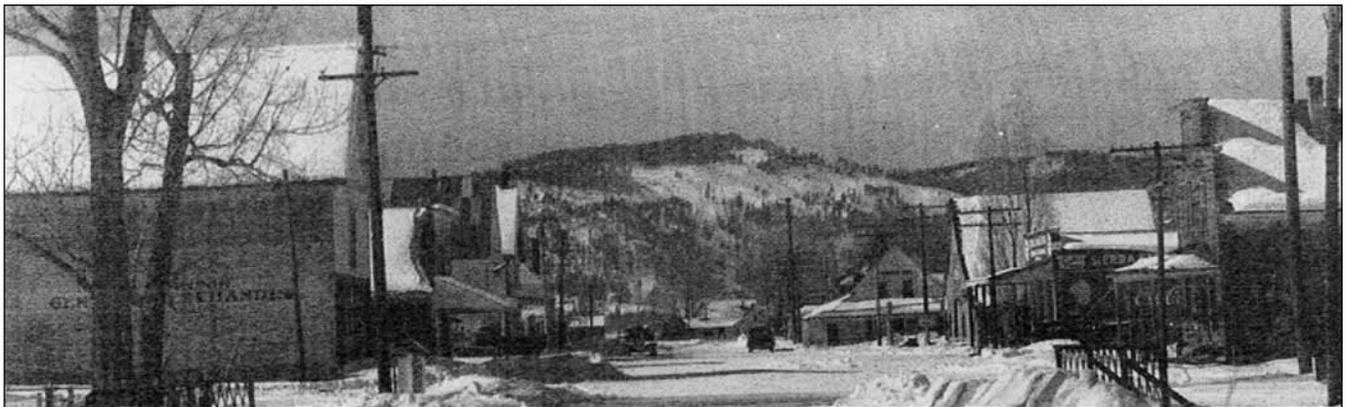
Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

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FALL 2011



## Following Up - "Register" Provides Account of Sierraville History

By Judy Lawrence



When the article about the old Johnson General Store in Sierraville appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of the Sierran, no photos of the general store were available. However, Virginia Lutes, the curator of the Kentucky Mine and Museum, did her usual photo detective

research and discovered this photograph of downtown Sierraville in the mid-1900s, including the Johnson General Store (first building on the left). The two-story building was subsequently torn down.