

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

The Early Days of Alleghany—A Family History

By Paul Brindle

Introduction By Bud Buczkowske

As long as my name is spoken I will be walking among you.” *Remember Me, Remember Me* is a book about those who have gone before us in Sierra County. *Remember Me, Remember Me* is a cry from the past from those not wanting to be forgotten. Over the past few years I have learned more about the lives of some of the people and the places that they once lived in and have acquired more names of earlier pioneers of Sierra County.

Remember Me, Remember Me is my sixth picture history book base on the pictures, notes and letters that still keep coming in. There is a Chinese proverb which says, “If you sit in one place long enough the whole world will pass you by.” Well, while sitting on the front deck of our home here in Alleghany, the Chinese proverb has proven to be true. Just in passing and taking the time to say hello, I have met many descendents of those who once lived and graced our towns in Sierra County.

Paul Brindle and his wife Judy live on a beautiful yacht in Florida. It was a pleasant summer day when they came strolling by our home here in Alleghany. I invited them to join me on our front porch. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Paul

was the grandson of Elmer Samuel Brindle and that James Evens McCormick was his great grandfather. It was the winter snow of 1956 that caused the old McCormick house to collapse. It was said to be, at the time, the oldest house in Alleghany, over 100 years old, and had withstood the snow of many winters. James McCormick was instrumental in the naming of Alleghany and Elmer Brindle was married to Josephine McCormick and lived a few houses away from ours. Their home still stands to this day.



Elmer & Josephine Brindle

Paul Brindle—A Family History

James Evans McCormick was born in Pennsylvania November 15, 1832 to Hugh McCormick and Elizabeth (nee Veasey). James left home and lured by the gold rush, ended up in Alleghany in about 1856. This would have been at the early stages of placer mining in the Alleghany district. In Bud Buczkowske’s book, *Whispers on the Wind*, my Uncle George (died 1989) is quoted by Helen Armstrong Covell as saying that James was one of the first settlers and was instrumental in naming Alleghany (and misspelling it with an “a” instead of an “e” as it is in

The Early Days of Alleghany (Continued on Page 3) —

— THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY —

The 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: Patrick Manning, Downieville

Treasurer: Bill Copren, Sattley

Board members in addition to those previously mentioned are Maren Scholberg, Sierraville; Elda Faye Ball, Loyalton; Suzi Schoensee, Sattley; Sherrie Allen, Alleghany; Mary Nourse, Sierra City; and Judy Lawrence, Sattley.

Museum Curator - Virginia Lutes.

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

Memberships Due!

Memberships are now due for 2009.

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	\$15.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$20.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$30.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$250.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair:
Suzi Schoensee, PO Box 54, Sattley, CA 96124

Welcome New Lifetime Members:

Glenn Deibler &
Irmke Schoebel Sierra City, CA

Kentucky Mine Museum Update

Donations for the Museum are still flowing in, and once the Museum opens Memorial Day through Labor Day, we will continue to list the donors and items in this publication. Please consider donating Sierra County items, photos, research historical publications etc. We are continuing to add to our reference/research section. Virginia, our Curator is asking for family stories of Sierra County folks from the past, and is working with some of the board to revive a living history project. Are you interested? Do you have information to share? Contact Virginia.

A work day will be scheduled in early May at the Museum and Historic park so anyone who would like to participate watch for the announcement. Volunteers are greatly appreciated, and without YOUR help, the historical society is not able to accomplish near the amount of deeds. Please consider being an active volunteer. If you would like more information, please contact Virginia Lutes at P.O. Box 145, Sierraville, CA 96126, or by email at vlutes@psln.com.

A previous issue of "The Sierran" mentioned our Memorial Fund, please remember that we are a Non-Profit organization, and your donations may be tax deductible. Included here are the levels of contributions for the plaque wall at the Kentucky Mine Museum:

Supporters	\$100.00
Benefactors	\$250.00
Builders	\$500.00
Patrons	\$1000.00
Pillars	\$2500.00

We have a Memorial Book at the Museum that will contain information about your donation, and your family member or other person in who's memory you are making the donation. If you need further information, please feel free to contact Virginia at the above address, or at the Museum during our operating season.

The Early Days of Alleghany (Continued from Page 1) —

Pennsylvania). I remember family stories that he was involved in a gun fight feud over claim rights but I don't know any details.

On August 20, 1868, at age 35, James married Catherine Young, aged 29, in Downieville. Catherine was born in Scotland and came to gold rush country about 1860 to keep house for her prospecting brothers. The couple lived in Alleghany the rest of their lives and had four children, Elizabeth, Josephine, Hugh, and Charles. Elizabeth married William A. Askew

(actor, singer, and miner) and had no children. Josephine married my Grandfather Elmer Samuel Brindle (detailed below) and had five children, all born in Alleghany. Hugh remained a bachelor and was a cattle farmer around Alleghany and Marysville. Charles married (name unknown) and had a son, Raymond McCormick, who was later scalded to death in an accident at the Richmond Oil Refinery.

Catherine died November 30, 1910, at age 71, of apoplexy (we would now call that a stroke or cerebral hemorrhage). James died two years later on April 14, 1913, at age 80. His cause of death is listed on the Death Certificate as general debility and "grief from death of wife." I should also note that the Death Certificate lists the signing Doctor as W. A. Clayton and the undertaker as Armstrong Bros. Both of them are mentioned in detail in your book *Whispers on the Winds*, as a part of Helen Armstrong Covell's history.

Elmer Samuel Brindle was born May 2, 1868, on his family's farm near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. He was the fourth of six children of George Washington Brindle and Elizabeth (nee Keller). The farm has been in the Brindle family continuously since about 1790 to the present.

Elmer had lung problems as a child and he left home at age fourteen, about 1882, heading west to drier air.

He stayed in Minnesota, then Denver, first selling newspapers and then learning the blacksmith trade. He arrived in Alleghany in about 1886. He worked as a miner at several gold mines in the district and left Alleghany in 1918. He "retired" as foreman at, I believe, Tightner. That was the year Frank Searls formed Alleghany Mining Company and took over the Tightner, so he was probably invited to retire.

Elmer married Josephine McCormick, native of Alleghany and daughter of James Evans McCormick. They lived at the house that is currently 115 Main Street. They had five children, all born in Alleghany

- Catherine Margaret (Peggy), 1903, Dorothy Elizabeth (Betty), 1905, Helen Josephine, 1907, George Washington, 1909 and finally my dad, Harry Martin, 1915.

Elmer died in Oakland March 6, 1948, at age 79 of kidney failure. Josephine died May 3, 1961, of the same thing her mother did, cerebral hemorrhage.



Brindle family home in Alleghany

Postscript by Paul Bindle

I have visited Alleghany twice now. The first time was in 1962. My parents and three aunts came up from Oakland. We stopped at the house, 115 Main St., where my dad and his sisters were born and visited with the family living there at the time. I remember that the wife was of Hawaiian descent. I have attached a copy of the picture dad took of the house then. It has a sign on the porch that says "The Fare Manor the Giles." We were very pleased to see that the house (outside) looks almost the same in 2008, but couldn't meet the current residents. Incidentally, I should mention that my dad was profoundly influenced by the vocations of his father and grandfather. He gained a degree in Mining Engineering at UC Berkeley and I grew up in the copper mining towns of Kimberly, Nevada, and Toquepala, Peru, South America.

Setting the Stage

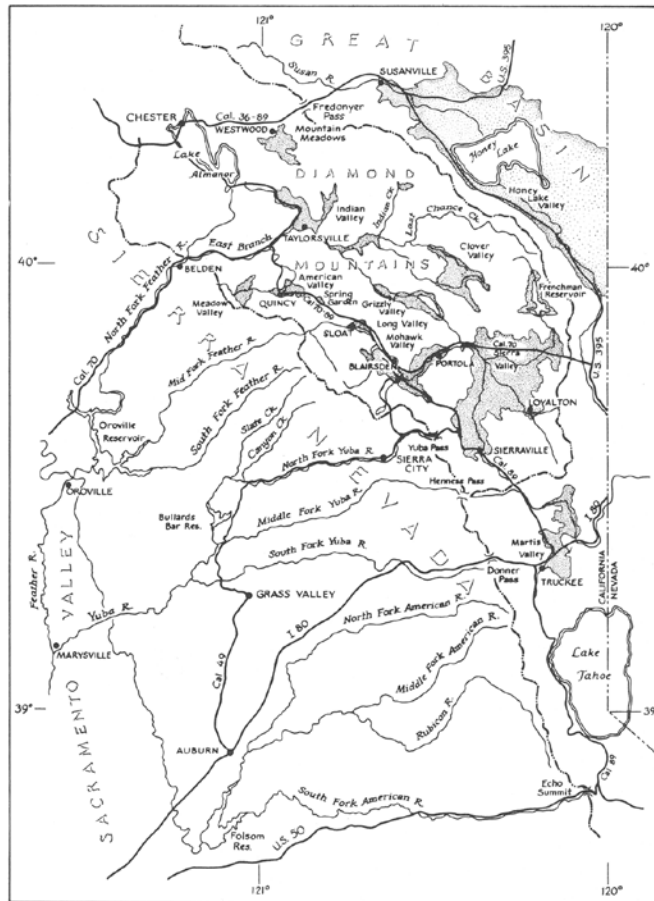
By Judy Lawrence

In order to fully understand the Native American resource strategies in Sierra Valley, a look back at the environment they encountered is useful. The following excerpt from my thesis project sets the stage for the Native American arrival in Sierra County and their utilization of its resources.

Natural Environment

Geology of Sierra Valley and Webber Gravel Pit Site

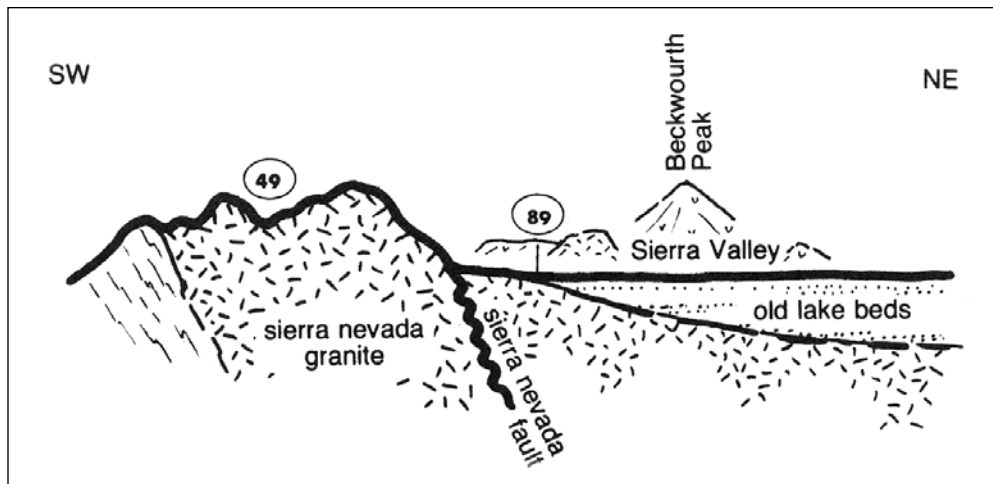
Sierra Valley, which is located on the eastern side of the northern Sierra Nevada, was formed in the Quaternary period as the result of faulting along the northeastern face of the Sierra Nevada. During this period, the basin-and-range structure developed wherein large blocks of the country were pushed up to become mountainous areas and other blocks were depressed to become basins including Sierra Valley, which later became filled with water (Durrell 1987: 212). The resulting lake, known as Lake Beckwourth, occupied an area of about 180 square miles at an altitude of about 5,100 feet. The depth of the lake has been calculated to have been about 5,100 feet at its optimal, dropping to 160 feet deep as water drained intermittently through an outlet channel from Lake Beckwourth into Mohawk Lake, culmi-



The drainage pattern of the northern Sierra Nevada and Diamond Mountains and the extinct lakes. (Durrell 1987)

nating in a perhaps sudden, final draining event about seven or eight thousand years ago, when the level of Mohawk Lake declined to a level below that of Lake Beckwourth (Durrell 1987: 256).

The filling and draining phases of the pluvial Beckwourth Lake are evidenced in the record of glacial lacustrine deposits and interglacial peats that have accumulated in the valley floor to a depth of more than 600 meters. It is these deposits that act as a holding agent for the abundant groundwater available in the valley (Wigand 2004: 6). These lake deposits cover the west side of Sierra Valley, including the area around



Section across the steep eastern face of the Sierra Nevada. Most of the hills in the Sierra Valley are volcanoes. (Alt and Hyndman (1975)

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*Faults in the Mohawk Lake Beds. The nearly horizontal layers of white volcanic ash are offset across the faults. A road cut on State Highway 70 a half mile east of its junction with State Highway 89 near Blairsden. (Photo reprinted from *Geologic History of the Feather River Country, California*, Cordell Durrell (1987).*

Setting the Stage (Continued from Page 4) —

Sierraville where the Webber Gravel Pit site is located, while much of the valley floor is overlain with volcanics which would be expected as most of the hills in the Sierra Valley are volcanoes (Alt and Hyndman 1975: 128).



The Webber Gravel Pit excavation site, looking north with Randolph Hill in the background.

Glaciers flowing from the west have deposited moraines which blanket the sides and bottom of Sierra Valley, also building up lateral ridges at higher elevations. Sand and gravel deposits on the margins of Sierra Valley today are evidence of the glacial flows (Grose 2000). The Webber Gravel Pit is located on the valley floor but would appear to be the extended isolate of a moraine that has

its origin to the south above the valley floor, gradually extending toward the gravel pit mound. The higher elevation of the moraine is alluvium which is unconsolidated sand and gravel grading into colluvium, lake deposits, and morainal debris. At the Webber Gravel Pit site the lake deposits are made up of sand, silt, clay, and fine gravel (Grose 2000). This could be an important factor in the choice made by Native Americans to utilize this site for processing and cooking resources.

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Setting the Stage (Continued from Page 5) —**Prehistoric Climate and Environment**

The early Holocene period, ca 8000 BP, was a period of climatic warming in the northwestern region of the Great Basin and northeastern California. The valley floor of Sierra Valley would have been a marsh environment. Pine forests and juniper stands would have moved to higher elevations, followed up the slope by shrub steppe. During the middle Holocene, ca 8000-5500 BP, a series of droughts would have caused the marshes in Sierra Valley to dry up and while the conifer forests retreated from the valley, ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, and incense cedar expanded into the valley. Grasses became more prominent in the valley, and oaks may have been present at this time (Wigand 2004: 6). Around 5,400 years ago, the climate throughout the northwestern Great Basin and Sierra Tahoe region became warmer and wetter. The floor of Sierra Valley returned to

a marsh environment and the montane forests began to expand to their pre-drought regions. This time period coincides with a radiocarbon date of 5310 cal BP returned from a rock platform feature excavated at site PLU-1487/H in Sierra Valley (Waechter and Mikesell 2002). This is the earliest archaeological date for the use of the valley by human groups, so far.

The warmer, wetter period of the middle Holocene was followed by a warmer and drier period which began about 1,900 years ago. During this period, which lasted until ca 900 BP, pollen studies reflect a drop in juniper pollen in relationship to that of shrubs and grasses (Wigand 1997). Pinyon pine made a comeback during this time due to increased summer rains and milder winters, but with the return of severe drought conditions ca 1,000 and 500 years ago, juniper, fir, alder, willow, and sedges declined and saltbrush expanded (Wigand 2004: 6).



Moraines on the south side of Sardine Creek and Lower Sardine Creek viewed from the Gold Lake Highway between Bassetts and its junction with the road to Sardine Lakes. (Photo reprinted from Geologic History of the Feather River Country, California, Cordell Durrell (1987)).

Townsend's Big-Eared Bats at Kentucky Mine

The Kentucky Mine Museum and Stampmill hosts a maternity colony of Townsend's big-eared bats. They are a medium sized, light brown bat.

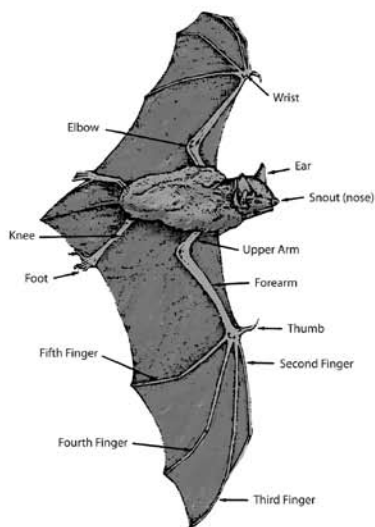


- The Townsend's big-eared bat is typically a cave-dwelling species, but also roosts in man-made structures like our stampmill. They are slow, but agile fliers and they primarily eat moths.
- Females give birth to a single young, called a pup. The babies develop rapidly: they are able to fly by three weeks, nearly grown by four weeks and weaned by six weeks.
- This species is very sensitive to human disturbance. The maternity colony here at the Kentucky Mine Museum Stampmill provides an unusual experience for visitors to see a Townsend's big-eared bat without detriment to the species.

Please be respectful of this colony, it is critical to the survival of the species.

Kentucky Mine Museum— New Additions

At the Kentucky Mine Museum two beautiful new signs by Judy Lawrence have been placed by the Stamp Mill describing the bat population that graces the stamp mill. Many of our visitors are fascinated with being able to view the bats, and these new informational signs are a welcome addition to the grounds. It was funded by RAC.



Bats, Like Humans,

- ...have 5 fingers
Their fingers are elongated and connected with a thin membrane that allows them to fly.
- ...and 5 Toes
Their toes are connected to their tail with a membrane, to help them fly.
- ...have only one young per year
They may occasionally have more.
- ...have newborns who are highly dependent on their mother
- ...form complex social interactions
Female bats here have been observed cooperatively assisting another's young that has fallen to the ground.
- ...are long lived
Some bats may live up to 35 years.

Bats are closely related to humans

Their bodies are so similar to ours, that scientists once classified them as Primates, along with humans.

Unlike Humans, Bats Are...

- ...struggling to survive
Many populations are declining.
- ...displaced from their natural habitats
Humans disturb caves that may support large colonies of bats. Humans disturb and remove cave-like structures (mine tunnels, abandoned buildings) that house bats.

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

Recipes Wanted

Bill and Nancy Harnach are looking for “wild and free” recipes for a fund raiser cookbook. These recipes should be from things grown in our area, could include anything to do with apples, plums, wild ferns, dandelions, elderberries, goose berries, camas, etc. Jams, jellies, preserves, wines, main course dishes, or any wild thing your imagination could dream up. They can be contacted by email billh@psln, or mail: Harnach’s, P.O. Box 28, Sattley, Ca. 96124.

Contact Us: Sierra County Historical Society

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