

# The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

**Editor's Note:** In this issue of the Sierran we are featuring the Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley, published by the Sierra County Historical Society in 1997. The book was compiled by longtime SCHS board member, Maren Scholberg who, accompanied by her husband, Carl, photographed the barns featured in the booklet. A preface of "Agriculture in Sierra County 1880-1890", which first appeared in the Sierran in 1975, provides the background for the construction design of the Sierra Valley barns that are featured in this issue. Unfortunately, many of these barns have fallen, or been torn down which makes these wonderful photos and historic notes even more valuable to understanding the rich agricultural heritage of Sierra Valley.

## Agriculture in Sierra County 1880-1890

**H**ay was one of Sierra Valley's main products and mechanization was coming to the hay fields. Horse-drawn moving machines had replaced the scythe in the 1870s. During the eighties steam hay presses, mounted on skids, were used to bale hay that was exported to outside markets. In Sierra Valley large hay crews worked from dawn to dusk during the harvest season and two or three hay-presses ran at full capacity. By 1889, wire was used to bind bales, in place of rope. Hay grown for local fodder was put up loose in barns built specifically for this purpose. These barns were noted for their size, never ceasing to amaze outsiders who described them as "massive" or "commodious." The specially designed hay-barns, and inclined planes used to move hay inside, apparently originated in Sierra Valley and were in general use there. Perhaps the best description of one is that of a Reno Evening Gazette reporter:

... as hay is the principal product of Sierra Valley, the question of handling and storing it with economy is very important. To meet this demand, a barn of

peculiar construction has been developed. It is usually very large and roomy and the wagon loaded with hay is carried to the top on a runway that starts up on a steep grade outside the building, and enters just beneath the comb of the roof low enough to admit the load. The sides of the wagon drop on the opening of a latch and the hay almost unloads itself. The barn is sometimes filled entirely with hay, but usually the first floor is divided into stalls for cattle and horses, and a store-room for wagons and machinery. Over this is a loft and a very wide space on each side of the runway capable of holding immense quantities of hay. A Gazette reporter recently took measurements of J.L. Crow's barn in Clover Valley. The runway is 600 feet in length and rises to a height of 27 feet and is eight feet wide. The wagon is drawn up by a whim worked by a horse. Heavy timbers are spiked on the outer edge of the runway and guide the wagon. Anderson of Fish Springs, Flint of Sierra Valley, and many others use barns of this pattern and are satisfied. The patent originated in Sierra Valley.

## Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley

By Maren Scholberg - (selected excerpts)

### Frank and Russell Turner Barn

The lower barn is across the highway from the ranch house. It was built in the early 1860s with hand hewn timbers and mortised joints with a rock foundation.



Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. 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

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If you have any suggestions or comments, feel free to contact any board member or email at [info@sierracountyhistory.org](mailto:info@sierracountyhistory.org)

## 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 person/couple) .....	\$300.00

In addition, Museum Renovation Project donations are gratefully accepted.

Please send dues and donations to:  
S.C.H.S.

c/o Don Yegge, Membership Chair  
PO Box 336, Loyalton, CA 96118

## Sierra County Historical Society 2016 Events Calendar

Lee Dummel- Stagecoach History	Sat., May 14	1:30 PM	Yuba Theatre
KY Mine Workday	Sat., May 21	9:00 AM	Kentucky Mine
Night at the Museum BBQ	Fri., May 27	5:00 PM	Kentucky Mine
Museum Opening	Sat., May 28	10:00 AM	Kentucky Mine
Mumbo Gumbo	Sa., July 9	7:30 PM	Kentucky Mine
Museum Closes	Sun., Sept. 4	4:00 PM	Kentucky Mine
Annual Meeting and Picnic	Sun., Sept 11	1:00 PM	Loyalton Park,then tour of Loyalton Museum

**Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. from Page 1) —**

The original barn had a long ramp that came up to the gable end of the barn. The wagons were drawn up the ramp to unload the hay. This ramp was removed in later years. A severe snow storm caved in the roof which was rebuilt with a flatter pitch. The galvanized roof was added later. The feeding shed on the north side was added about 1946. History: Merrick Turner was the original owner in 1856. He was killed in 1859 and his brother, Harwell Franklin (H.F.) Turner took over the ranch with another brother, Henry K. Turner. The ranch passed on down to Frank R. Turner. His son, Russell, and grandson, Kevin Turner who, with his family, resides in the ranch home, operate the ranch today. The Turner Ranch is a member of the One Hundred Year Club. Location: ½ mile west of Sattley.

**Humphrey-Russell-Roen Barns**

There are four old barns on the ranch. The two barns by the house have hand hewn timbers and wooden pegs. One was a horse and dairy barn; the other a hay and feeding barn. At least one of these barns was constructed in 1879. A third barn is nearby.



Joe Goss, resident of Sierraville, worked on this ranch from 1923-1930 and at that time, Mr. Goss said there were eleven hay barns on the property. One that was completely full of hay burned to the ground when it was hit by lightning.

History: George Humphrey (1834-1894), a native of Maine, bought the ranch in 1864 and resided in a house a quarter of a mile east of the present ranch buildings. He enlarged the ranch holdings in the 1870s and in 1879 the larger ranch house and building were erected. This ranch was in the Humphrey family through the 1940s. Other owners: Gordon McMillan; Terrill Sartan and Dan Russell, who bought the ranch in 1966. The present owner is the Paul Roen family. Location: County road A 23 on east side of road.

**Pasquetti-Van Vleck Barns**

History: William Tate was an early owner of this ranch.

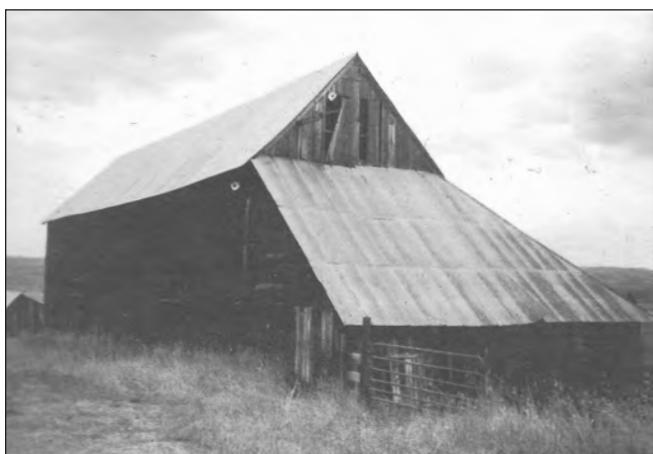


He sold to Charlie Pasquetti in the early 1900s. Louis Garino owned the ranch in 1946-47. Gordon VanVleck purchased the property in 1948 and with his son, Louis, operate the ranch currently. When Charlie Pasquetti owned the ranch, he had started to build a new barn and had the frame up and the roof on when a severe wind storm destroyed it.

Location: On the east side of the road between Sattley and Beckwourth on County Road A23.

**Albert Church-Gordon Church Barns**

These two barns are among the first built in the Valley. They have hand hewn timbers, wood pegs and the foundation is cedar blocks on rock. The barn across the road from the Robby Church home was called the milk barn. The other barn, close to Dale Church's home, was in two sections. The south end was removed in recent years and the timbers used in the Randy Church home in Westwood, CA. Location: North end of Sattley on County Road A23, one on each side of the road.

**Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. on Page 4) —**

**Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. from Page 3) —****Strang Barns**

The original barn was built down by the creek in the late 1850s. In 1880 it was moved up to its present location and is the west half of the present big barn on the east side of the ranch. An addition was added in 1890. This was known as the cow barn. Originally there were stanchions on three sides, but the south side was taken out later. Another barn, called the horse barn and wagon shed was built in 1910. There are 50 feet hand hewn beams in both these barns, with piles of rock for their foundations. Railroad ties placed in concrete with posts bolted to the ties have replaced the old rock foundations. Location: 1 ½ miles east of Sattley on Hwy. 49.

**Small-Monico Barn**

An older barn, for it has hand hewn beams, mortise and tenon joints and wooden pegs, and has the original shingles on the roof. The horse drawn hay wagons were driven on a ramp in the back where the loose hay was then pulled by nets into the barn. A shoot-out was held in front of this property in which jack Campbell, owner of Campbell Hot Springs, was killed. Location: Less than ½ mile west of Hwy. 89 on West Willow Road.

**Attillio & Jim Genasci Barn**

This barn was built in 1909 on a cedar block foundation. It has milled timbers with some mortise and tenon joints with wooden pegs. The stanchions have been removed and the barn is now used for storing hay. History: John Genasci, who came into the Valley in 1893, bought the Dan Ebe Ranch and part of the Gloster ranch in 1909. The ranch belonged to his son Attillio (deceased) and grandson Jim Genasci. In 1909, when the Dan Ebe barn was being constructed, a high wind out of Antelope Valley blew the barn down and scattered the boards one half mile down the field. Location: About 5 miles west of Loyalton on Hwy. 49.

**Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. on Page 5) —**

**Barns of Sierra County in Sierra Valley - (Cont. from Page 4) —****Webber-Blake Barns**

The two barns built near each other are very old. They were dairy barns with stanchions and mangers. Hand hewn timbers and wooden pegs were used. Both were used for storing hay; only one was for feeding. The heavy rains of January 1997 washed through the barns and left a great deal of debris both in and around them. These barns have been resorted and strengthened where needed by the present owner, Lucy Blake. Location: East of Sierraville at the entrance to Lemon Canyon, on the left.

**Leon Dotta-Rees Barn**

This barn was built about 1922 by Amos Hathaway. It has 10 large milled timbers, 5 on each side as main supports with cedar block foundation. There are stanchions on one side. It was used as a milking and hay barn. The barn is in good condition and is used for storage and baled hay. Location: About 1 ½ miles north of Loyalton on Country Road A24.

**Wily-Cassida Barn**

This large hay barn has the original stanchions on both sides that are still being used. There are hand hewn beams, mortise and tenon joints, and a cable and pulley system for loading hay. It has a rock foundation and is the older of the two barns. A metal rood now covers this 100 by 50 foot barn. The Wily's milked their 30 hereford cows here. This ranch is located at the north end of Loyalton on the east side of the railroad tracks, reached by a private road.

**Ramelli Barns**

There are four barns. The two large barns are pole barns with stanchions and a pulley system for loading hay. The barn at the south end has some hand hewn beams and some milled. Previous owners were issued homestead papers signed by Ulysses S. Grant in 1872. Location: About 3 ½ miles west of Loyalton, off Hwy. 49 on Genasci Road.

## President's Message

The historical society may appear to be dormant in the off-season, but we are actually not in hibernation. While the bats are away, we snuck in some much needed maintenance on the Kentucky Mine Stamp Mill. Between winter storms, Mother Nature blessed us with a balmy stretch, and Dennis Smith was able to apply linseed oil to the exterior of the building. This was no small feat, and it could not have been accomplished without the use of a boom lift generously provided by Karla and Al Pombo.

We are also the recipients of a tremendous number of books donated by Leonard Berardi of Nevada City. Len closed his shop, Mountain House Books, and is passing on out-of-print books to us as well as to Downieville Library, Sierra City Library, and Downieville School Library. The collection of around 400 titles includes works on California and local history, geology, and some fiction. We are indebted to Len for entrusting us with his legacy.

Joleen Torri is stepping down as vice-president and her positive energy will be sorely missed. Her dedication to Sierra County Historical Society is unsurpassed, and she is the one who took on the onerous task of cleaning up after the critters at the miners' cabin every year. No one can fill her shoes, but give me a call if you'd like to try.

As we look forward to spring and summer, our 2016 calendar is taking shape. We're planning two history re-enactments, a night at the museum, and of course another Mumbo Gumbo concert. Our annual meeting will be held in Loyalton this September—a picnic in the park followed by a tour of the museum. Check our website [sierracountyhistory.org](http://sierracountyhistory.org) for specifics. Please join us in our pursuit to keep history alive in Sierra County.

Mary Nourse



## Update on the Webber Lake Hotel Restoration

By K.V. Van Lom, Restoration Project Manager  
Truckee Donner Land Trust

Dear Friends,

I'm excited to provide you with an update on the Webber Lake Hotel Restoration since the Land Trust last announced the project in Sierra County a couple of years ago. I know I don't need to detail the importance of this building in California's early history, and the critical need to save it as a standing artifact of our nation's history.

Last summer I spent time with an in-kind photographer documenting historic sites throughout the Webber/Lacey meadows region with a former Webber Lake caretaker of 26 years who has also provided artifacts, photos, and great stories. This is helping me for set up with eventual exhibits.

I also coordinated with the organizer of a group of history buffs that drive the Henness Pass from near Grass Valley to Verdi every fall and stop at every stage stop along the way. All that is left for them to see are markers where buildings once stood. Since the Land Trust now owns Webber Lake, I was able to get the group into the private campground to see the hotel for the very first time. Needless to say, they were over the moon.

In 2015, the Land Trust Board approved funds for an Historic Structures Report, the guiding document for a restoration. The lead architect, Dennis Zirbel, who has done a number of historic restorations in Truckee, completed the document. It cost our small nonprofit a pretty penny, but was the first step required towards the restoration. We have now entered into PHASE II: Preparation, which is approximately \$30,000 for engineering and permitting. Once we get to stabilization and historic remodeling, we intend to utilize workers from Sierra County as much as possible.

Because the Land Trust has closed on or is under contract to close on a number of threatened lands, we have been unable to kick off a full fundraising campaign yet, though I'm on the lookout and am networking to bridge these gaps. I understand that putting the building on the National Historic Register can open it up for funding, so that is my next task.

Looking forward, I believe the restoration of this hotel can cement an entire historical, regional tour spanning a number of counties that would benefit from visitors seeing historic sites from Grass Valley, Downieville, to



Van Lom at her favorite place, the Webber Lake Hotel.

Loyalton, Sierraville, Truckee and even on to Virginia City because Henness Pass played such an important role once the Comstock Lode was discovered. The economic implications are tremendous, as this "regional tour" could even gain a global draw as historical societies, property owners, state parks, chambers of commerce's and visitors bureaus work together to create marketing outreach and materials that would interest millions of people in our special area of the Wild West.

The lake and campground are still private and will not be open to the public until 2017. If anyone would like to get in to see the hotel, please contact me and I will arrange a visit: [kv@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:kv@tdlandtrust.org) or call 530-582-4711.

Lastly, any donations of any size would be much appreciated. Send donations to:

Truckee Donner Land Trust

P.O. Box 8816

Truckee, CA 96162

Note: Webber Lake Hotel Restoration

Or, you may donate securely online at [www.tdlandtrust.org](http://www.tdlandtrust.org). There, you can note the donation is for the hotel as well.

Head to the ground. Nose to the grindstone. Fingers crossed. We're going to get er done!

# The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 260  
Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## **“Cultural History of Sierra County” Course Offered at San Francisco State Sierra Field School**

If you are reading the Sierran newsletter you will probably be interested in a new course being offered this summer at the San Francisco State Sierra Field School campus located on Highway 49 near Bassett's Station. The course will include:

Utilizing short lectures and field trips we will be exploring the human history of Sierra County. We will view Washoe petroglyphs, visit gold mines, follow the B&L railroad bed, compare past and present agricultural and logging practices, and learn about many anecdotes and folk tales of this intriguing part of the Sierra Nevada.

The class, led by Sierra County historian William Copren, will be held from August 7 – 12. For more information about the class and to enroll, visit [www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/](http://www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/).

