

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

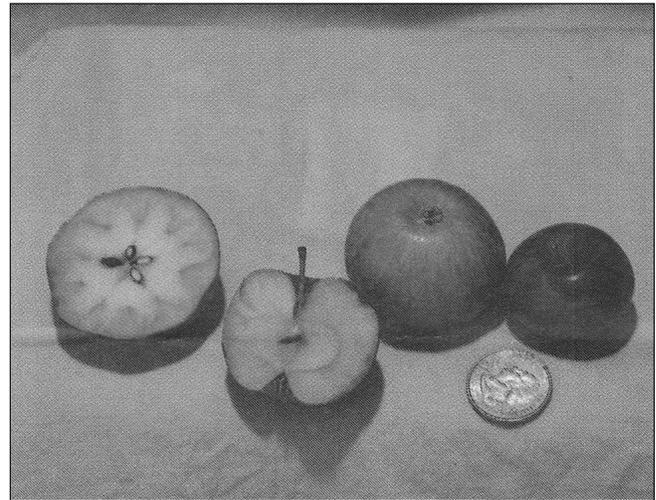
“History Is Growing All Around Us... Let’s Preserve It”

by Jennifer Kennedy

Editor Note: Jennifer has been studying our fruit trees for a number of years now, she is well known throughout the Sierra Valley, and is dedicated to preserving and bringing into our future fruit trees. We are proud to say that she is the daughter of Bill and Nancy Harnach of Calpine, and granddaughter to a person who donated so much time to our Historical Society, Rita Bradley, who also had the Sattley Store and Post Office for many years. Jennifer’s roots grow deep in Sierra County.

Have you ever glanced around on a beautiful spring day and seen trees in bloom and wondered where they came from and what they were? I remember riding the bus to school and seeing all these trees blooming in people’s yards and noticing that sometimes they bloomed where a house used to be. These trees were survivors living alone with only memories of human care. Years later I realized that these trees represented a living time capsule of a past era when humans in Sierra County relied on these fruits to feed them in the summer and through the winter. I have been slowly and surely working in Sierraville and sporadically around the Sierra Valley figuring out some of the old varieties and grafting them to new rootstock giving them another 150 or so more years.

Many of the varieties in Sierra county, yes, both sides of the hill, are very old; almost forgotten and maybe even deemed to be extinct. These apples, pears and cherries were brought by the European pioneers to provide them with fresh fruit and the basis for preserves, cider and storage fruit. As a society we have lost the collective knowledge that our forefathers had in regards to the keeping and use of these hardy fruits. We no longer know which trees produce the apples that if picked ripe and kept cool will mellow out in storage for our enjoyment all winter long, and possibly into



June. When Europeans first settled in this valley they brought with them the ideas of creating orchards that would provide valuable commercial fruit to sell to the mines and mills that were being created in the Sierras and in the Comstock. That did not pan out well due to climate and unpredictable weather. Sierraville boasts the remnants of at least two of these orchards, one reputed to be five acres (Sierra Valley, Jewel of the Sierras by James J. Sinnott 1976 pg. 92). A fire swept through the area killing off much of the orchard but there are some survivors and they are still living and bearing. There is another orchard that was said to be 100 trees and I have found thirteen that are left.

Most exciting to me is trying to put names to these forgotten fruits. Some are very easy and some are almost impossible. Three are trees that I have found and can identify. They have names such as: Maidens Blush, Yellow Bellflower, Porter, Chenago Strawberry, Alexander, Lowell (Greasy Pippin), Snow (Fameuse), York Imperial, Ben Davis, Sops of Wine, Cox’s Orange Pippin, and Ralls Janet, to name a few. We are lucky to have trees that bear from late July to early August, all the way through November, filling our houses full of apples. Pears fruit very well in this area as do plums, though they are a bit more finicky about those late frosts.

History Is Growing All Around Us... (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

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

Kentucky Mine Bookstore Has Something for Everyone!

The bookstore at the Kentucky Mine has expanded its inventory. We now have approximately 100 titles. There is something for everyone. We have begun to carry some historical fiction, as well as non-fiction. We cover every subject from Art to Rockhounding. Recently the Historical Society had the "Historical Houses of Sierra County", and "Historical Barns of Sierra County" reprinted. They can be purchased in our bookstore. Some additional titles to note are "Gold Miners Daughter" by Mabel Thomas, and "Elevation: 6,700 by Ernest Finney". "Gold Miner's Daughter" is an account of Sierra City in the late 1800's. Mabel Thompson's father was a foreman at the Sierra Buttes Mine. The account is of Mabel's life at the Sierra Buttes Mine, and in Sierra City from the age of 8 until age 10.

"Elevation: 6,700" is a work of fiction that takes place in 20thcentury Sierra County. Ernest Finney earned the 2016 California Book Award for Fiction, as well as the 2014 Clay Reynolds Novella Prize for the book. He is a part time resident of Sierra County. In addition to expanding our new book titles, we have greatly expanded our antique, rare, and used book section. There are gems, and some great deals out on the book cart. We are still accepting used books. If you have some you would like to donate bring them by the museum. We would like to look them over before you leave them. We may not accept all the books you want to donate, but any that we do accept help to bring much needed revenue into the museum.

The Kentucky Mine Bookstore is a great stop to get some early Christmas shopping done. We have books for everyone on your list as well as some very nice gift items. Stop by this summer when you are in the area.

History Is Growing All Around Us... (Cont. from Page 1) —

Many fruit trees were brought by people from their home places because they were fruit that had specific purposes or were well liked by the family. One orchard I have been looking at, on the Plumas side of Sierra Valley, reportedly was planted with varieties brought to California from the family home in Italy. Many of these apples and pears look nothing like any of the American or English bred apples and pears that I am now familiar with, thus leading me to believe that they really did come from Italy.

Luckily there are a few of us folk who are busy investigating historical fruit trees and passing them forward to another few generations to enjoy. I am working in the Sierra Valley and Eastern Plumas. The Felix Billet Institute is busy working on the west side of Sierra and Nevada Counties. If you are interested in learning more or sharing your favorite fruit tree history, or if you know names of fruits, or want one identified, contact me: Jennifer Kennedy, 530-430-7900 or 530-250-7308, malusmaniac@gmail.com. If you live on the west side of the county and want to share, or have fruit identified, you can contact the Felix Gillet Institute at 530-292-3619 or email thefgi@gmail.com



ALICE WING REES Coroner, Public Administrator, Undertaker and almost Sheriff in Sierra County

By Elda Ball and Virginia Lutes

Alice Wing was born in Augusta, Maine, circa 1880, and died in 1962 in Plumas County. She was the daughter of Civil War Veteran Gorham Wing who had served in the First Regiment of Maine Volunteer Cavalry. Mr. Wing was in the Army of the Potomac in a company of one hundred six, which came out with only five members of the original company at the end of the war. He received a Medal of Honor from the state of Maine for his distinguished military service. Mrs. Wing passed away prior to some of the family moving from Maine to California where they settled in Loyalton in 1889. It was recorded that Alice was twelve years old at that time (which does not match the birth year located for Alice). One of Alice's first jobs was working at Lewis Mill on the re-saw.



Photo: Milton Gottardi Museum
Loyalton, home still stands in Loyalton

Walt Rees family home, Loyalton
Alice Rees on balcony, in dark dress

Alice Wing married Jesse S. Rees of Loyalton in 1901. They remained married for over 60 years. Jesse's parents were Cyrus W. and Mary A. (Lewis) Rees who were early Loyalton pioneers. Cyrus was an ordained minister of the Baptist Church and was the pioneer preacher at Loyalton where he organized the Baptist Church. To them, eight children were born. Some stayed in Loyalton, others moved on. Son Jesse was known to be a very capable and talented man. He built a hay loader which loaded the hay on a wagon from the field, an ingenious and useful farm implement. Jesse and his brother Walter were grandsons of Hiram and Sarah Lewis of Lewis Mill and Ranch fame. These two brothers later became the owners of the Lewis property.

Alice Wing Rees - (Cont. on Page 4) —

Alice Wing Rees - (Cont. from Page 3) —

Alice and Jesse Rees had two sons, Donald, born in 1902, followed by a brother born in 1903 named Kenneth. Donald pursued courses at the University of California medical school, but prior to receiving his degree he died from the effects of an operation. Kenneth attended the University of Nevada and became a respected dentist in Portola. The young family left Loyalton for a time, moving about California and Nevada before settling back in Loyalton where Jesse farmed and Alice continued her profession as a nurse. She was trained in Los Angeles County Hospital while the family lived in that area. During that training, Alice was called upon to lay out patients who had died in the hospital. She thus acquired the principles of preparing a body for burial.

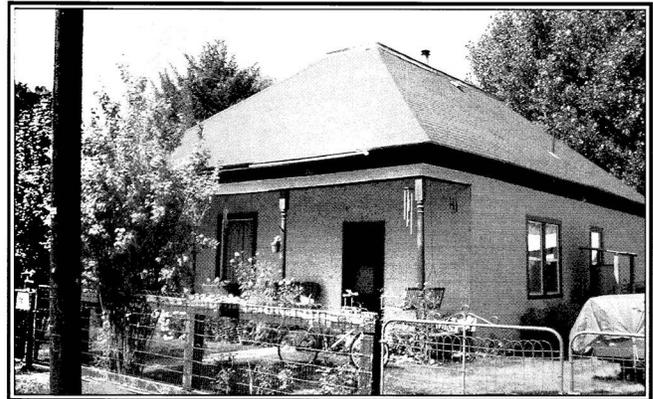
It should be stated here that the articles we have included here are mostly due to sound research, but there are times when the retelling of old stories proves to be of interest. A few of those tales are in this article.

Alice Rees was a woman with unusual skills. In 1922 through 1929 she was Public Administrator and Coroner for Sierra County. She was seen always wearing black, a rather somber appearance. Loyaltonians remembered that she was sometimes called (behind her back we assume) the “Black Crow” or “Black Buzzard”, and children were at times kept in line with the threat of this woman in black coming to get them. Many anecdotal stories circulated about Mrs. Rees and her duties. Milton Gottardi, (past board member of the Historical Society and Loyalton teacher) as a child always attended all the funerals in the Sierra Valley with his mother, Edna, who was a school teacher. He remembers that Mrs. Rees always was in black at the funeral. When the preacher was done with his duty, she and he would step back from the grave, and then both would light up a cigarette and smoke. When the mourners were finished, Mrs. Rees would stomp out her cigarette, step to the grave, grab a handful of dirt to spread, and say “Dust to start, to dust returneth”. That was the signal that the service was completed.

Another interesting story that circulated was that Mrs. Rees had a car (she was a very modern woman), and drove to a friend to visit. A man was seated in the car. The friend asked Alice to invite the man in, but was told, “Oh, that is just a body I picked up”.

One day two ladies were out for a walk and found the body of a man. They returned to town and found Alice. “We think he is dead”, they said, and took her to the site. Alice squatted over the man and said “Yes, he

is dead”. The women were appalled and indicated they thought the squat improper. Mrs. Rees commented that “he is dead, he cannot see under my dress”.



Built before 1900, this was originally a farmhouse that was moved into Loyalton by Jess and Alice Rees it was used as mortuary and added shed in back that was presumably the preparation room.

Photo from “Historic Houses of Sierra County in Sierra Valley”, book available at Kentucky Mine Museum for purchase

According to the Sierra County Historical Society publication “Historic Houses of Sierra County in Sierra Valley”, a house on Alleghany Street in Loyalton was used as a mortuary. A shed was added in the back that was presumably the preparation room. “Alice Wing Rees was the mortician and the attic of this house had embalming equipment, shrouds, a box of old gold teeth and a child’s coffin”. When the house was sold in the 1940s, the new owners “found the coffin and wanted it removed. Jim Gillen and Tom Lonergan carried it out of the house and around the corner to the garage, singing a Latin dirge that delighted the neighborhood children.”



Alice Rees served the county of Sierra well in the administration of her duties. In 1925, when Sheriff Julius Johnson passed away, Alice Rees as Coroner and Public Administrator stood ready to become Sheriff of Sierra County. A story in the “Sacramento Bee,

Alice Wing Rees - (Cont. on Page 5) —

Alice Wing Rees - (Cont. from Page 4) —

Superior California News" of January 31, 1925, follows:

Sierra Woman Official Known as "Dead" Shot
Mrs. Alice Rees, Who Said She Would Serve
As Sheriff if Needed, Outdoor Fan

Downieville (Sierra County, Jan. 31 - Indicative of the fearlessness of woman of to-day under emergencies was the announcement this week by Mrs. Alice Rees, corner and public administrator of Sierra County, of her willingness to server as sheriff of the county if her services were needed.

Following the death in Sacramento a week ago to-day of Sheriff Julius Johnson of Sierra County it was announced that Mrs. Rees automatically became sheriff under California law and would serve if emergency demanded.

But the emergency did not arise, inasmuch as the board of supervisors soon appointed the late official's son Lloyd Johnson. A petition was circulated asking the supervisors to name young Johnson as sheriff.

While authorities are not agreed as to whether Mrs. Rees would have become sheriff in fact, no doubt exists in Sierra County as to her ability to handle the sheriff's job.

Likes to Hunt

While not a two-gun artist, she is known as a "dead shot". Her chief recreation in the open season is a spirited deer hunt or an expedition into the mountain after other denizens of the forest. And she has had her share of success too, for the head and horns of two deer killed on recent hunts hang on the wall of her home.

She also likes fishing and never a summer goes by that she doesn't spend a great deal of time in the woods.

Bootleggers and law breakers would not have had an easy time of it if Mrs. Rees had been called upon to go after them. And they're not likely to have any easier time with young Johnson as sheriff. With his late father's record as an inspiration to guide him, friends are predicting that the new sheriff will prove himself capable. He was a deputy under his father.

Alice Rees was a licensed embalmer and funeral director in both Sierra and Plumas counties. Her husband Jess was associated with her in this business.

In 1930 Alice Rees resigned as coroner of Sierra County to become a candidate for that same office in Plumas County, she and her husband moved to Beckwourth.

At the time of her resignation, she favored her brother-in-law Walter Rees for the position. Mrs. Rees did achieve the office of coroner in Plumas County where she served a number of years.

Thanks go to Jackie Mitchell, curator of the Milton Gottardi Sierra Valley Museum in Loyalton, for assistance with this story.

MRS. ALICE REES, Sierra coroner, who stood ready to serve as sheriff, and LLOYD JOHNSON, son of late sheriff, who is named father's successor.



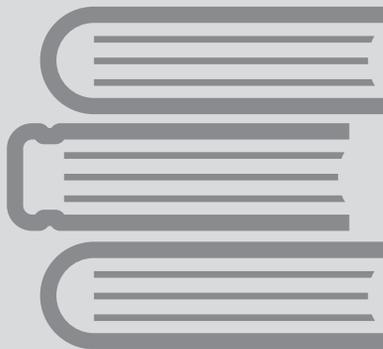
Sierra Woman Official Known As "Dead" Shot

Mrs. Alice Rees, Who Said
She Would Serve As Sheriff
If Needed, Outdoor Fan

Sacramento Bee, Janu 31 1925

BACK TO SCHOOL !

Sierra County Historical Society
Invites You to Attend Its
Annual Meeting
Sunday, September 10
1:00 PM
Sierraville School
305 Lincoln St.
Sierraville, CA
No need to brown bag it -
We'll provide lunch!



At recess Talks and Tours will be provided by Sierraville School Alum Bill Copren & Architectural Historian Corri Jimenez.

Visitors are welcome. Schoolyard bullies, please play hooky!

Season's End @ the Kentucky Mine

The Music @ the Mine 2017 summer series will present the final two concerts of the season on Saturday, August 19th and Sunday, September 3rd. Whiskey Pass, an excellent country band based in San Jose, comes to the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater on August 19th. Fronted by award winning vocalist and songwriter Christine VanHoy, Whiskey Pass performs “hi-octane” country music that includes cover versions of classic and contemporary songs, as well as, their original compositions. Whiskey Pass easily inspires the audience to the dance floor and “line dancers”, in particular, are afforded the opportunity to “strut their stuff”. The positive and up-beat nature of a Whiskey Pass performance will delight and leave the audience calling out for more. The pre-show BBQ will commence at 6:00 PM (\$16) with the concert beginning at 7:30 PM. Tickets (\$16adv./\$19 door) and information about the event can be found at www.sierracountyhistory.org or by calling Chris @ 530 862-1076.

The final show of the season features an Americana/Celtic infusion featuring the “cowboy music” of Dust in My Coffee and the Irish folk rock of One Eyed Reilly. The show is scheduled for Sunday, September 3rd @ 2:00 PM. Dust in My Coffee will open the show performing their unique, contemporary take on the music that originated “around the campfire on the American west” during the post-civil war western migration. Dust in My Coffee’s songs often have a Celtic flavor, the result of the influence of Irish laborers who played a major role in the building of the transcontinental railroad.

One Eyed Reilly will headline the show and perform a rowdy mix of traditional Irish/Celtic stylings and modern “pub folk-rock”. One Eyed Reilly delivers both up-beat, raucous (though very melodic) tunes and beautifully rendered Irish ballads. The bottom line is a One Eyed Reilly show will joyously take the audience on a musical ride that embraces both Irish traditions and nods to the Americana landscape. We do not offer the BBQ option on our Sunday afternoon performances but, as always, you are welcome to bring your own food and refreshments to any show. Tickets are \$16 adv./\$19 door. Tickets and information can be obtained on the aforementioned website and/or by contacting Chris at 530 862-1076.

Classic Covers & Originals!

WHISKEY PASS
 SATURDAY
 AUGUST 19TH
 7:30 PM
 KENTUCKY MINE
 STEERVA CITY, CA
 \$16 ADV/\$19 DOOR,
 BBQ @ 6PM \$16

High Octane Country!

Kentucky Mine Amphitheater
 Music at the Mine

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

THE SIERRAN

SUMMER 2017

CALPINE SCHOOL

by Bill Long

Editor's Note: This is a short excerpt from our continuing series of articles reprinted from the publication History of the Schools of the Sierra Valley.

Before there was a Calpine, there was a school district and a school there. The district was called Clare, founded in 1881. Calpine did not come along until 1919 when the Johnson-Davies Lumber Company established a large milling operation, supported by a wholly-owned company town, named Calpine. The town was built "overnight" in one great burst of energy.

Calpine, the company town, was replete with family houses sized and segregated by job levels, bachelor quarters, a dining hall, a huge recreation hall, a company store, and a brand new school house, erected on the original Clare site. The area bustled and boomed.



The original Calpine Clare school was located directly across from the railroad station.