

# The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

## Memories About Loyalton

By Elda Fae Ball, curator of the Milton Gottardi Historic Park and Museum in Loyalton

July 4, 1946

**M**y mother, stepfather and I drove into town at about four in the afternoon.

All the buildings on main street except the Loyalton Hotel had false fronts and board sidewalks. It looked like a town out of an old western movie, and some of the people looked like it as well. There were quite a few colorful people when I first came. People were allowed to be different back then.

We moved into an apartment upstairs in the Loyalton Hotel. It was a nice, rather elegant place at the time. It had a nice bar and restaurant on the main floor. It's a shame it has fallen into such disrepair.

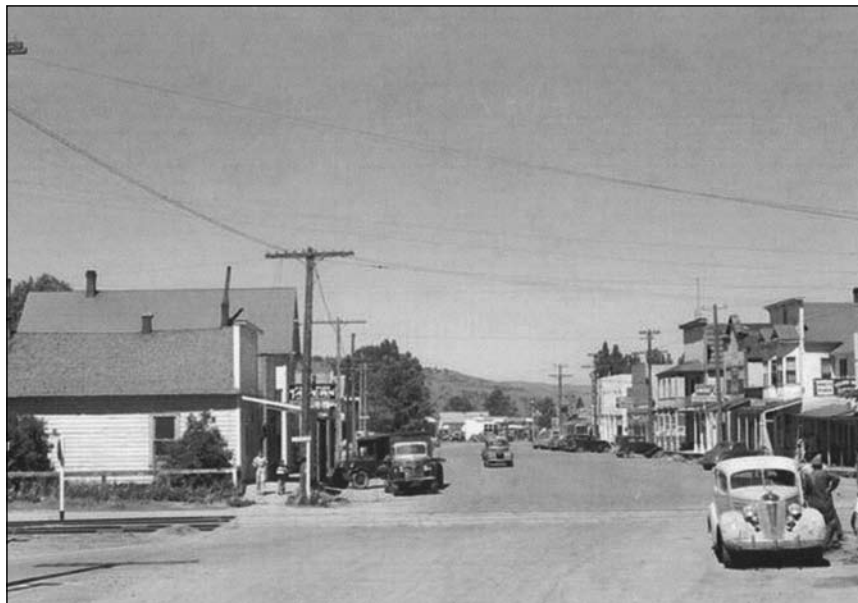
The theater was in an old gym built in 1905, but it was fun going to movies there. It sat across the street from the Sierra Booster office. A couple of years later another theater was built across the street from where the post office is now. It caved in from snow in about 1995.

There was a dance a couple of times a month in the old Masonic hall. Both older and younger

people attended. We all danced to the same music and had a good time. We seemed to understand each other better back then.

They didn't clean the snow off the street in those days. They just pushed it up in the middle of the

street. You had to climb over it to cross the street. The post office was where the vegetable department is now in Leonards market. My mother thought it was a good job for me to climb over it and get the mail. The new post office was built sometime in the fifties.



Loyalton, 1949. (Photo courtesy Kentucky Mine Museum)

The mill (Clover Valley Lumber Co.) had a saw mill, planing mill, and box factory. A logging train came in every few days with ten or twelve cars full of logs. I used to like hearing it come across the valley. There's no sound like the sound of a whistle from an old steam engine. People called the engine four spot. It was a nice time for Loyalton. Everyone had a job and I don't remember any one being on welfare.

Memories (Continued on Page 3) —



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

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Museum Curator - Virginia Lutes

Assistant - 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

## New Fundraisers For the Kentucky Mine Museum

**DONATE BOOKS** – Donate your used history related books to either build our archives, reference library, or for resale in our gift shop. Highly desired books include the James Sinnott books relating to Sierra County history and other books on gold mining and Sierra County history as well as books by local authors. (Non-fiction and fiction are both accepted, as well as audio books.)

If you have books you would like to donate, please drop them off at the Kentucky Mine Museum, 100 Kentucky Mine Road in Sierra City. If you have questions about the books we would like to have please call the museum at 530-862-1310.

**PHOTOGRAPHS** – This is a wonderful idea for raising funds for our museum. Do you have historic photos you would like to print, mount and donate for reproduction and resale? For example, photographs donated from the George S. Baker collection are now available to purchase at the Kentucky. These photos were printed and mounted by Betsy Webb and include Hawley Meadows, Gold Valley, Gold Bluff and Young America Mines.

Pass the word! Your donation may be tax deductible because we are a registered non-profit organization, and donations are always appreciated.

## Mark Your Calendar Now

### SCHS Annual Meeting

**When:** Sunday, September 19th at noon

**Where:** the historic Romano Ranch  
(Peterman Ranch between Sierra City  
and Downieville off Hwy 49.)

This year lunch will be provided so bring a lawn chair and come for an afternoon of sharing history with the Peterman Family.

Memories (Continued from Page 1) —

My first day in Loyaltown High School I didn't know any of the kids in town. A cute little dark-haired girl came across the street as I neared the school. She asked, "Are you a freshman?" I said, "Yes." We now have been friends for 63 years. Velma Martini's father, Louie, owned the pool hall on main street.

All the boys and men hung out in there. Girls just didn't hang out in Louie's. I was only there a couple of times when Velma went in to see her dad. The pool hall burned down about 1970. All the boys and men in town went into mourning.

I also met Dolores Belato that first day of school and we're still friends. Another friend of mine was Joyce Vallery. Joyce passed away a few years ago. She is still missed. She introduced me to Bobby. I also became friends with Barbara Williams. She lived in the apartment over the pool hall. I've lost track of Barbara. She had a colorful mother. Freda was her name. She dyed her hair fire engine red, and put a big red velvet bow on top. She had a big black Cadillac, and drove around waving to people. I thought she was very amusing.

Velma and I rode bikes up to the apple orchard above the mill and picked apples. Up on the side of the hill above the orchard was Indian Town. It's not there anymore. I don't know about the orchard. I haven't been up there for a long time.

I married Bobby Ball. We had three children. They grew up here. Bobby worked in the mill. You could hear the whistle of it too. If it blew anytime except starting time and closing time it meant

something was on fire. Even in the middle of the night the men would hit the floor running. Their fast moving action kept it from burning many times. Sadly, after 98 years the mill closed in January of 2001.

There have been many fires in town. The pool hall and the old Madearis Mercantile, the building next to it, burned together. A few years later the

old pharmacy and Perks clothing burned down as well, and then later on Pat and Jim's. Then the red and white grocery store and the Yuba pass tavern burned. White's station burned too, but they built it back up. There were also many fires before I came. The fires changed the face of main street.



Loyaltown, 1962. (Photo courtesy Kentucky Mine Museum)

With the closing of the mill it seems as though some of the heart and spirit have gone out of the town, or maybe it's just people have changed over time.

From the history I've learned about working at the museum, Loyaltown has seen many ups and downs. So I have hopes that one day we'll get back to the boom days, and the spirit I saw when I first came here.

It's hard to believe it's been so many years since that fourth of July in 1946.

Elda Fae Ball

*Elda also serves as a director of our Historical Society*

### Postscript

Bobby died in March of 2008. He was a descendant of William Ball of Balls Canyon and Joseph Dyson of Dyson Lane. He was a life-long resident of Loyaltown.

## Hot Rock Cooking in Sierra Valley

(A continuance of excerpts from a thesis entitled "Prehistoric Use of Hot Rock Cooking Features: Archaeological Investigations at the Webber Gravel Pit Site, Sierra Valley, California, by Judy Lawrence)

### Artifacts

The artifact assemblage at the Webber Gravel Pit site (Table 2) does not exhibit the tool diversity that would be expected at a permanent site. No burins or crescents were present and only one scraper was excavated, indicating

Table 2. Lithic Artifacts Recovered

Artifact Type	No.
Projectile Points	17
Unhafted Bifaces	29
Cores	12
Ground Stone	122
Unifaces	46
Debitage	892

that animal processing was not taking place at the site. Basalt dominates the assemblage—projectile points, stone tools, and ground stone. This would be expected as there is a prehistoric basalt quarry at Gold Lake (Figure 17), approximately 26 kilometers to the west (Payen and

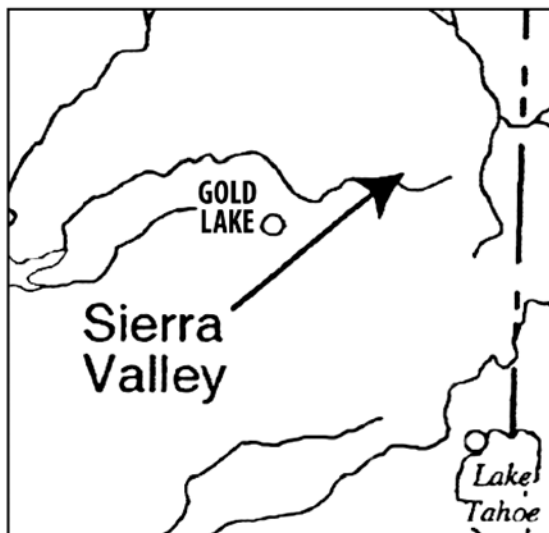


Figure 17. Drawing of Gold Lake Quarry Location.

Payen 1996). Two samples of the very small number (3) of obsidian tools collected at the site were submitted to Geochemical Research Laboratory for XRF analysis. Both specimens were imported from sources outside the area, a finding that coincides with most of the obsidian collected at other Tahoe Sierra sites. Trace element data indicated that one specimen was manufactured from obsidian of the Napa Valley chemical type, while the other sample was South Warner Mountains obsidian (Figure 18).

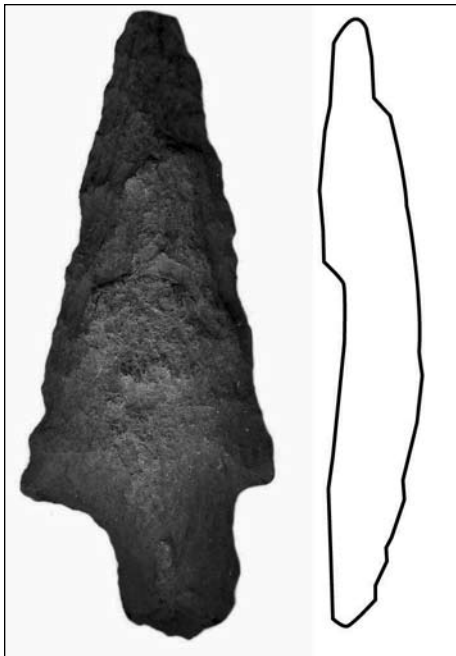


Figure 18. Obsidian Sources for Samples from the Site.

Although the sample size is small, it can be useful in making some interpretations about the people utilizing the site. Either they were traveling over the Sierras to the Napa Valley quarry, located in the North Coast Ranges in central western California, a distance of approximately 288 kilometers, or they were trading with groups who lived near, or had visited the Napa Valley quarry and brought

**Native Americans (Continued from Page 4)** —

obsidian to Sierra Valley. The South Warners are located in northeastern California approximately 354 kilometers from the Webber Gravel Pit Site, posing the same questions concerning travel or trading, or both. These out-of-area obsidian source locations were also represented in the Buttes site flaked tool assemblage.



*Large Contracting-Stemmed*

The small projectile point assemblage from the Webber Gravel Pit Site differs from the much larger Buttes Site collection. Basalt was the predominant point material—88% of total—at the Webber Gravel Pit site. Basalt is also the most represented material at the Buttes site. However, the projectile point assemblage at the Buttes site is dominated by obsidian Rose Spring points. Twelve of the 31 points collected are Rose Spring, compared to only four Rose Spring types in the 17 points collected at the Webber Gravel Pit site. Waechter and Andolina (2004) suggest that two different occupation time periods are represented at the Buttes site, a Late Archaic component and a Middle Archaic component which correlates with a

Late Martis/Early Kings Beach interface. The Webber Gravel Pit projectile point group with more large, basalt points could indicate a Late Martis emphasis.

**Unhafted Bifaces, Unifaces and Cores**

Unifaces, stone tools that have been flaked on one side only, make up 53% of the remaining tools in the assemblage, while 33% are bifaces, stone tools that exhibit flaking on both sides, and only 14% are cores, rocks from which the



*Figure 28. Hand Stone with End Battering.*

unifaces and bifaces were flaked away. The bifaces exhibit mainly earlystage reduction with little edge retouching and no continuous retouch pattern. The predominance of unifacial



*Figure 29. Portable Metate.*

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tools also suggests that the site was an early-stage reduction site. However, only 7% of this group—bifaces, unifaces and cores - displayed the presence of even minor cortex, which would be expected in greater proportion in a site where mainly early-stage reduction was taking place. This tool type profile, more initial stage tools than finished stage tools, would indicate that the Webber Gravel Pit Site was used on a more permanent basis, rather than as a task-oriented site. However, the presence of a nearby source for basalt, which makes up 84% of the tool material type, could explain the early stage production at the site, as basalt could have been collected and brought to the site without a great output of time and energy, even during shorter-term seasonal visits.

### Ground Stone

One of the unexpected outcomes of the excavation at the site was the large amount of ground stone encountered in and scattered between and around the features. There were few complete manos and metates but abundant fragments of both types. Of the 147 mostly fragmented ground stones collected at the site, 58 are identified as manos or mano fragments (handstones) (Figure 28), 50 are metates or metate fragments (milling stones) (Figure 29), eight are cooking rocks (Figure 30), three are

non-classified modified rocks, and 28 are unidentified fragments. Basalt is the only material represented in the collected ground stone. The large number of manos and metates, 73%, is another indicator that the Webber Gravel Pit Site was a Martis Complex seed grinding/processing site (Heizer and Elsasser 1953).

The metates and manos that had been incorporated into the structure of the features were used in the lining of the basin sides as well as being placed on the bottom of the basin structures, suggestive of a “flat plate” cooking surface, one of the hot rock cooking structure types.

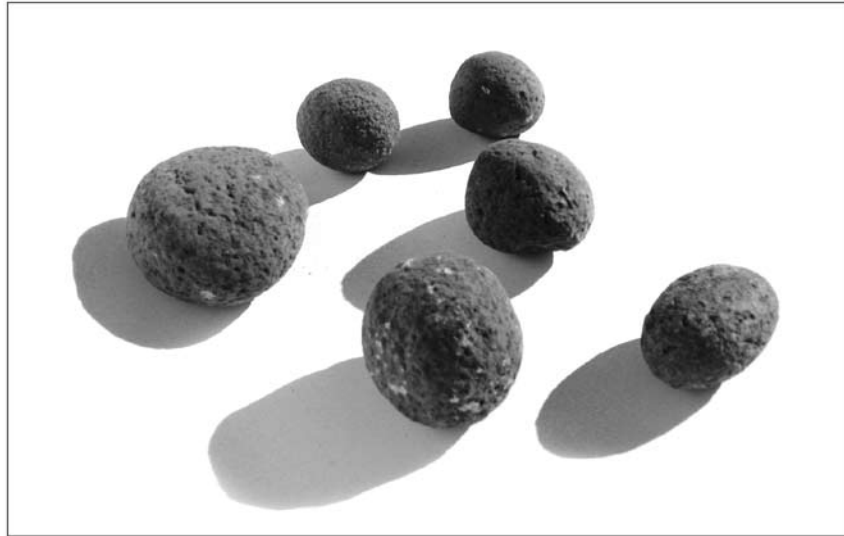


Figure 30. Cooking Rocks with Heat Discoloration.

All three of the features (rock-lined cooking ovens) identified at the site included ground stone in their construction. Feature 1, a shallow rock-lined basin located in unit 4, had several pieces of ground stone fitted into its basin sides, and a metate fragment and mano in the basin bottom structure (Figure 31). Feature 2, a rock-lined basin similar to Feature 1, had a mano positioned near the center of the basin bottom (Figure 32). Feature 3 was a shallow, rock-lined basin that exhibited a metate fragment built into the rock-ringed edge of the basin. These features will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

The presence of cooking rocks located in and around the hearth features would suggest that

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container cooking, as described by Nevers (1976) among the Washoe, had been utilized at the site. The cooking rocks were heated and stirred with sticks in a container used to cook pine nut or acorn mush and probably carried with the group for reuse. The cooking rocks display some burning discoloration which would be expected as they were probably placed in direct fire for heating.

Rocks that have been heated for cooking can provide insight into cooking practices, estimated duration of site occupancy, as well as chronological data and site structure information. Fire-Cracked Rocks (FCR), rocks that have been cleaned from a hearth after use, are useful as indicators of the presence of features (ovens). Rocks that display sharp, jagged-edge fracturing and red, pink and/or blackening discoloration are generally recognized as FCR.

## The Features

Finding hot rock cooking features at sites in Sierra Valley and interpreting their use in Native American resource processing is the focus of this thesis.

Excavations at the Buttes site, located in the northeast area of Sierra Valley, (Waechter and Andolina 2004) revealed 57 cultural features including hot rock cooking pits and basins. They proposed that the rock-lined and unlined pits and basins had been used to cook camas bulbs, as they were similar in size and construction to other camas ovens excavated in the northwest and other regions of the country. Camas grows plentifully throughout the valley floor, and it seemed probable that

other sites would have been utilized around the valley where the same set of resources and conditions existed.

*(To be continued in the next Sierran)*

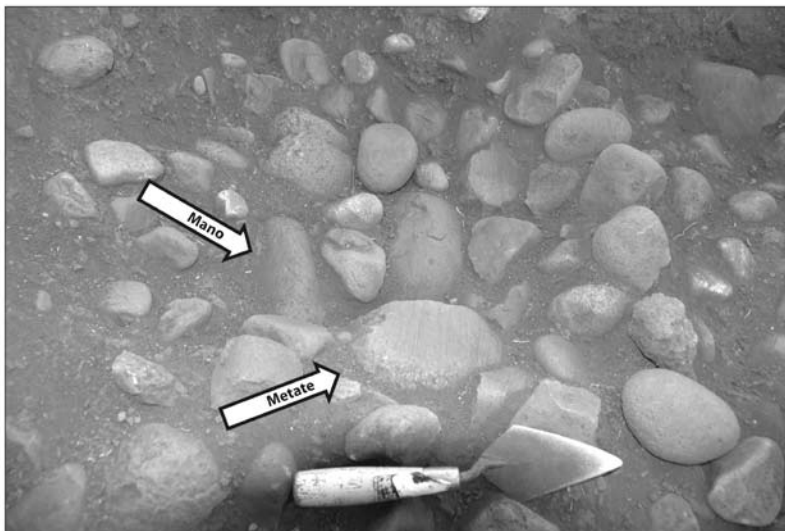


Figure 31. Feature 1, Unit 4, with Ground Stone Identified in Bottom of Basin. (Trowel Pt=n. Trowel L=24cm)



Figure 32. Feature 2, Unit 6, with Mano Identified in Basin Bottom. (Trowel Pt=n. Trowel L=24cm)

# The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

## Experience Yesteryear In Sierra City at the Kentucky Mine and Museum Today!



A new display at the museum at the Kentucky Mine returns visitors to the wild and wonderful days of Sierra City's colorful history. From the busy main street photos of the stage arriving and a tightrope walker crossing high above the livery stable, to the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1897, pageant cast in full costume, the photos bring the town and its inhabitants to life. Gold and the many ways it was valued and bartered are documented in the showcase below the new photo montage. And as the balanced scales featured in the display clearly illustrate, one troy ounce of gold weighs about the same as 10 shiny new pennies but is worth over 10,000 times more in today's dollars!

Stop by the museum and mine soon to enjoy this new Sierra City display and revisit all the other unique displays that bring the exciting adventures of this area's past to life, for us to relive.

*We would like to express our appreciation to the following people and families for sharing their wonderful photographs with us for this display—Lee Adams/Julius Johnson Collections, Lynanne Mehlhaff/Perryman-Palmer collections, Peterman family, Jeanne McMahan, Berger collection, Joel Champion collection/Dee Wallace, Joanne Busch, and Ruth Green.*

