

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

This issue of the Sierran continues publication of excerpts from Joshua Breyfogle's diary recounting his journey across America to reach the gold fields of California.

Diary Of Joshua D. Breyfogle, Sr.

Covering experiences during his overland trip to California during the gold rush in 1849.

- Contributed by Skip Breyfogle

Sunday, 13th: Left camp after an early breakfast, passing several companies. This is a real May morning, no wind, and very pleasant. Everything is still and quiet – not even a buffalo to be seen. I am alone on the wide prairie, the teams far behind. Not a single sound greets my ears, save now and then the twitter of some wild bird. It is awfully still. The river here is more than a mile wide and one of the men waded across without getting deeper than the waist and most of the way not over the knee. It seems to be made expressly for the buffalo and Indians. We witnessed a fine chase after a buffalo by the company in the rear of us by horse and foot. We encamped near the river. Had quite a rain in the night accompanied with high winds.

Monday, 14th: We left the river this morning and the road lay close to the Bluffs or Butes as the hunters call them, and it is quite hilly. We are stopped to noon on a small run near the Bluffs. We had a chase after five buffaloes, but did not kill. We drove on about 3 hours and halted for the night, quite a rainy night, on the banks of the Platte.

Tuesday, 15th: Left camp and struck off the river over high rolling ground. We have a beautiful view of the country. The buffalo are swarming on the surrounding hills, but too far off for us. Stopped at noon on a small stream near the river. Continued on and halted near the river for the night, and a beautiful night it was. I came on watch at one o'clock in the morning. It was raining and continued to rain until this morning.

Wednesday, 16th: Still raining. We are about starting, rain notwithstanding. This is the first wet night we have had since starting and it has the appearance of a gloomy wet day. Our fears of a bad day have been realized. It has rained nearly all day, altogether has been the most disagreeable day since we left home. We were all out of humor till we got dry and a good supper. Camped on the river, prospect of a cold windy night. Close to our camps is an Indian buried in the top of a tree.

Thursday, 17th: As I expected, we had a very disagreeable night. It rained the whole night and is still raining. The boys keep close to their wagons and



Wagons fording the river

tents. Astonishing what a difference there is in the temper of men in fair weather and foul. The Indians have buried one of themselves in the top of a tree near us. They first made a platform on the topmost boughs and then sewed up in a buffalo skin, the corpse is placed on the platform and lashed on with rawhides. It looks very singular. We left camp after a late breakfast and in about four or five miles travel met a crowd of Indians painted and dressed and equipped for war. They returned to the ford with us and by the time we got there, there was a hundred or two. We crossed the river, when we were stopped by their great Chief, Red Fish, who exacted toll or black-mail from us and the other trains. We gave him about half a bushel of corn. The others gave him more.

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— 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:** Mary Nourse, Sierra City
- Vice President:** Joleen Torri, Sattley
- Secretary:** Cory Peterman, Sierra City
- Treasurer:** Bill Copren, Sattley

Board members in addition to those previously mentioned are Maren Scholberg (Emeritus), Sierraville; Elda Ball, Loyalton; Suzi Schoensee, Sattley; Bud Buczkowske, Alleghany; James Connolly, Sierra City; Cory Peterman, 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 or email at info@sierracountyhistory.org

Become a Member! Dues for 2013 Payable Now!

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

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



2012 Annual Meeting Well Attended



The Payen Ranch located west of Loyalton on Highway 49 in Sierra Valley was the beautiful setting for the annual meeting of the Sierra County Historical Society. Many members and guests enjoyed a delicious barbeque lunch and interesting program. Pam Payen welcomed the group and talked about the history of the Payen ranch. A brief business meeting was held and the board of directors named officers for the next year. We were pleased to welcome many guests to the meeting and invite them to become members of the Sierra County Historical Society. As members, they will receive the Sierran newsletter throughout the year and enjoy other advantages of society membership including FREE admittance to the Kentucky Mine and Museum! It's easy to join. Simply send your one-year's dues - \$20 individual membership, \$25 family membership - to:

S.C.H.S. Membership Chairperson
P.O. Box 54 • Sattley, CA 96124

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

MUMBO GUMBO will be playing at the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater on SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2013

For more information visit sierracountyhistory.org

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There were two or three hundred of them around us, but were peaceable, perhaps on account of the guns and pistols hanging about the wagons. Money they will not take in exchange for anything. Old clothes, sugar and coffee will buy anything. We bought some moccasins and left them. A great many of them followed us some distance and left us. We are encamped about three or five miles from the river and hope we won't be molested by them tonight. We go to bed without cooking. They are the Sioux Indians and on their way to fight the Pawnees. They are a fine looking sight.

Friday, May 18th: Left camp early this morning without breakfast after a rainy night, and it is still raining. Traveled over a beautiful high rolling prairie without sign of a tree or bush in sight. As we neared Ash Hollow the ground became quite broken and very wild. Our road lay along a narrow ridge and in entering the Hollow we descended an almost perpendicular hill and entered a very beautiful vale covered with fine grass and flowers of nearly every variety, the sides lined with fine ash trees, from which it takes its name. We camped near fine water and good grass for the horses; about noon and intend remaining till morning. We have a very fine heavy thunder shower rain from about four o'clock and is yet raining, sundown and continued raining accompanied with thunder and lightning the whole night.

Saturday, 19th: Left Ash Hollow this morning with much regret on account of its beauty and fragrance. It was covered with fine grass like a meadow interspersed with fragrant flowers which filled the air with perfume. The valley is about two or three miles in length and about 50 rods wide with a beautiful spring running in the center. When we left we struck the river immediately on leaving the hollow, the whole scenery is fine and grand. The flat between the mountains is about two miles wide, the river in the center occupying about half, leaving about half a mile on each side, the hills or mountains rising from two to five hundred feet, almost perpendicular on this the south side, and on one of the highest peaks I am writing this, the road just below my feet. The weather still not settled, cloudy with high winds, which has upset my ink stand, and I must stop for the present, about ten o'clock, drove today about 12 miles, encamped on the river bottom for the night. Had very hard wheeling through deep sand; good grass, weather windy.

Sunday, May 20th: Fine morning, commenced

altering our wagons and repacking our provisions. It commenced blowing and raining about 3 o'clock and we closed out business in a hurry. The day closed with very high winds and heavy rain and continued till near morning, very cold – a more disagreeable night we have not seen.

Monday, 21st: This morning very cold and uncomfortable, everything wet. Got breakfast as well as we could and left camp. Travelled over a very bad road for about twenty miles and camped near the river, poor grass and river water quite thick. Our road today has been most of the time near the river on low sandy bottom which made it very heavy. We had a slight shower today, very cold and windy, sundown quite cold.

Tuesday, 22nd: Passed a very pleasant night. Left here this morning about seven, a lovely morning, but on account of the rains, have a piece of very bad road to go through. Have been looking all day for the Chimney Rock, but have not caught a glimpse of it yet. The boys were after antelopes this morning. They were quite plenty around us. We have passed a very wide low bottom this morning, water standing in pools all around us, which makes it bad for the teams. We crossed a fine stream of clear running water and stopped for noon. I left the wagons and went ahead and am now writing on the prairie some four or five miles in advance, with the prospect of a fine drenching, as there are very black clouds in the west and thunder and lightning in their midst, but I have no resource, no shelter. Well my fears were fully realized. The storm burst upon me in the most terrific form. It was a real hail storm and I with nothing but shirt and pants on, the hail fell in perfect showers, pelting me most unmercifully. I made tracks for the wagons, not knowing there was anyone but myself out, when I came upon Lewis Nanney, stark naked, taking the hail most impatiently. He had taken his clothes off to take a natural shower bath when behold it turned to hail stones the size of walnuts. We was finely battered. I forgot my own troubles in the ludicrous appearance of Lewis. There he stood naked with his pants thrown over his shoulders, every part of his body showing marks of the hail; as soon as it stopped he put on his clothes and we moved for the wagons some three miles back. The company did not escape. This afternoon after the storm we came in sight of the courthouse and Chimney Rock. Encamped on a beautiful spot near the

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river about 20 miles from Chimney Rock, a cold rainy night.



Chimney Rock

Wednesday, 23rd: Left the camp about 10 o'clock in a solid north wind accompanied with rain, continued all day. We are now near the Rock and may camp there. Don't know, however, as the teams are some two miles back, encamped some five miles from the Rock in a low wet spot and poor grass, rained all night. It seems it will never stop raining. It has rained now 9 days every day.

Thursday, 24th May: Still raining. Left camp before the teams and reached the Rock half way up which I am now writing. It is a great curiosity about two hundred feet high. I ascended as high as it can be, I think about one hundred and fifty feet, and was very glad to get down, as it was very wet and slippery. It continued raining till about three o'clock in the afternoon, when it cleared off, and tonight the moon shines bright and looks like pleasant weather, which we have not had in two weeks. We are camped for the night near Scotts Bluffs. Near us there is the most beautiful scenery I ever saw yet.

Friday, 25th: Left camp about 8 o'clock, a fine cold morning, but clear, towards noon cloudy and slight cold shower, cleared again this afternoon. Camped tonight in a valley of Scotts Bluff, pleasant and cool night. Here is a blacksmith shop kept by Mr. Noubau.

Saturday, 26th: Left camp this morning to cross the bluffs. Noon about 10 miles from where we started, a very fine day so far. Just after we left our noon halt we were overhauled by a man from a company from Iowa that we left at our last camp after Doctor Barnes, three men of the company were drinking at the blacksmith shop fell out and one shot the other through the thigh when he in turn was shot through the body and was supposed to be dying when the man

left. Barnes did not go back and we have not heard how they got along. We traveled over a high rolling prairie, crossed Horse Creek and camped on the Platte about 25 miles from where we started this morning – pleasant evening except wind.

Sunday, 27th: Left camp this morning at seven o'clock, traveled about 12 miles and nooned in tolerable good grass and continued on to Laramie Fork opposite Fort Laramie, where we are encamped as the river is too high to cross. We have traveled over a fine high rolling prairie all day. We have had a beautiful warm day and bids fair to be a very fine night.

Monday, 28th: Today we lay opposite the Fort lightening our loads. We sold one of our wagons for twenty dollars and several other articles equally low, but under the circumstances, we did pretty well for some of the Companies left their wagons on the road throwing lots of valuable articles, and we got something. We intend staying over today and going on with four wagons only. Beautiful weather today and a fine day.

Tuesday, May 29th: We left camp at six o'clock and crossed Laramie Fork to the Fort where we stopped a few minutes and nooned about ten miles from our last camp. This afternoon passed the warm spring spoken of by Fremont. It is very clean but too warm to be good. We camped this afternoon about 20 miles from where we started on a very fine stream of water. Today we are in full view of the Rocky Mountains. Very cold and windy and looks like a wet night.

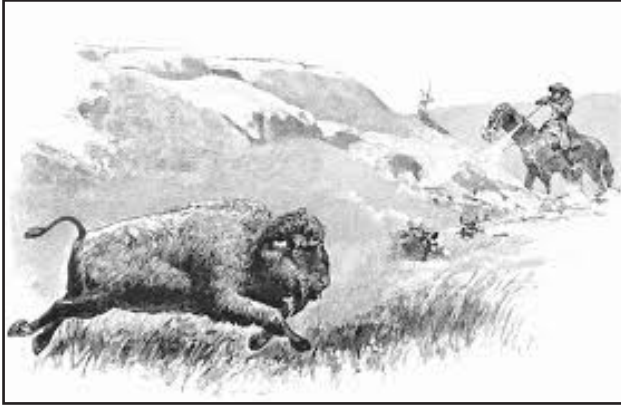
Wednesday, 30th: Left camp this morning at seven. Our road lay directly through and over the Black Hills. The road is good but hilly. Nooned on Horse Shoe Creek about 20 miles from our starting. We have had Laramie Peak in plain sight all day and nearing it gradually. We have a very fine day and a beautiful evening.

Thursday, 31st: Left camp this morning at six o'clock and started right in to the hills. Here are the first bad roads since we left the Fort. We are now passing the peak and it looks grand. The teams are straining up the hills without much difficulty. This by far the most wild and singular part of our journey so far. By mounting one of the many high peaks, we can see for miles around and nothing but hills and hollows, or mountains and ravines. We nooned near a small stream with very poor grass for the stock. We have

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encamped on a beautiful mountain stream and the best grass we have had on the road. It has been a very fine day and bids fair to be a fine night. This has been a great day for us. Our boys were after buffaloes this forenoon and killed three and wounded the fourth. We are all in fine humour. Plenty of buffalo meat and



Buffalo Hunt

fine weather. Nothing makes us feel better than to have plenty of good grass and water for our horses.

Friday, June 1st: Left camp this morning at six o'clock, fine warm morning. We passed over a very rough and hilly road and very hard pulling for the horses. Stopped at noon at 12 o'clock on a very small stream, tolerable good grass, and expect to reach the Platte this afternoon. It is very warm. We drove about 22 miles and camped on Boise Creek, a very pretty mountain stream; fine weather and good grass. We have had a very hard day's drive today. It was up and down hill the whole day through. We are all very tired – a beautiful evening.

Saturday, June 2nd: Left camp at six o'clock, reaching the Platte about half past nine. Noon on the bank of the Platte. Started afternoon expecting to reach the ferry, but were very much disappointed and camped again on the Platte after about 20 miles travel. We had a fine day and beautiful evening.

Sunday, June 3rd: Left camp at half past six, travelled along the Platte till ten o'clock when we came to the ferry kept by a Mormon. He has a blacksmith shop here for the accommodation of the emigrants. He charges two dollars for each wagon and we have to swim our horses over. We wanted to lay by today but there were so many trains close behind us that we dare not do it. We crossed the river and travelled up the right bank about seven miles where we are for the night. On the left bank of the river is a fine low range

of mountains, the top covered with snow where we are some five miles. It has been very hot all day. We are now in the Crow country and have to watch our horses very close as they will steal them.

Monday, June 4th: Started this morning about half past six; very fine morning. Had 12 or 15 miles to go to water. Drove about 12 miles and came to a very fine spring and fine stream of water which we past without tasting, thinking it was poison. About two o'clock came to very poor water and was forced to put up with it. We nooned here and went about six miles and halted for the night. Good grass and water and sage to burn. The Indians are all about us. They robbed some packers of their mules after we left the camp at noon. They are very bold, but our boys are anxious to come in contact with them. I think they would leave as many horses as they took. It has been a very hot and sultry day till about noon when it commenced blowing a perfect gale and we expected another hail storm, but it blew over and we have a pleasant evening.

Tuesday, 5th: Night passed off quietly – no Indians heard from. Left camp at the usual hour, passed Willow Spring and we are now on Summit Hill, the summit between the north fork and sweet water. Here is a beautiful view of the surrounding country, mountains all around and clouds below them, rising gradually screening them from sight. Stopped to noon on Grease Wood Creek. No wood but sage, good water; sage is all the fuel we get now, and it is a very good substitute. It is quite large and burns very well. Today we had a sight of a large band of buffaloes. Did not try to get any.



Sage Hen

We killed some large fowl today called sage hens. They are about the size of a small turkey. We do not know how good they are, but intend to try them this evening. We saw a great curiosity today, the horned toad with a tail. The Indians are still prowling around us, watching an opportunity to plunder. We see them now and then on the neighboring hills, but they keep a safe distance. We have encamped on sweet water under the lee of the Celebrated Independence Rock. We passed the noted and almost fabulous Saleratus Spring and Lake. We gathered some twenty or thirty pounds. It is as good as I ever saw at home. I could shovel up a wagon load in a very short time. Weather rather cool but otherwise pleasant.

- To be continued in the next Sierran.

Editor's Note: The following article titled "Agriculture in Sierra County" is reprinted from an earlier Sierran printed in 1974.

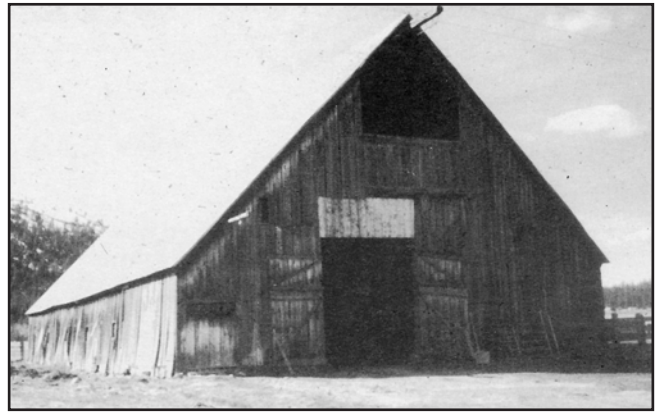
Creameries, some made out of brick, were small factories organized, basically, on the assembly-line principal. Until the latter part of the decade the dairies were powered by water wheels or tread-mills. Furnaces and coolers were so arranged that the temperature selom varied more than two or three degrees from the optimum – somewhere around sixty degrees. The first steam cream separator was brought into the valley by A.S. Nichols in 1888. It had a capacity of sixty gallons per hour but were powered by a tread mill until the following year when a five horsepower steam engine was finally connected. By the end of the decade steam power was swiftly replacing water wheels as the principal means of driving the separators and other machinery needed to make butter.

Butter was the leading money product of the dairy business. The process by which cream was turned into butter and readied for transport and sale was described by a correspondent of the *Nevada City Daily Transcript* in 1881.



Firkins were used to store and protect butter during the 1800s in Sierra Valley.

The milk is first put into one of William & Hammon's Champion milk coolers' having four pans, each pan holding forty gallons. Under these pans are false bottoms for the purpose of putting in warm or cold water, according to the temperature, in order to set the cream. After remaining 48 hours the milk is skimmed, and the cream put into cans, where it remains overnight. Next morning it is transferred to a patent churn, capable of making 75 pounds of butter at one



The Martinetti barn still stands in Sierra Valley.

time. This is run by water power. About 30 minutes in summer is required to make the butter, 45 in fall, and about one hour in winter. The churning process being over, the butter-milk is drawn off at the bottom of the churn, and given to the hogs and turkeys, as is also the milk after it is skimmed. The butter is then worked with cold water in the churn and is afterwards taken out and placed in the butter-worker which is about six feet wide, four feet long, and six inches high, and is placed at an angle of about 20 degrees. A movable wooden lever is forced down upon the butter until all the milk is forced out. The butter is then washed with cold water and again the lever is forced to bear upon it, and once more it is deluged with cold water so that not a particle of butter-milk remains. It is then spread out on the butter-worker to about the thickness of half an inch, when it is salted. One and a quarter ounces of salt is used to the pound of butter for home consumption and one and a half where it is packed and shipped. After being salted and thoroughly worked in with the lever, the butter is placed in a large pan and put in the buttery where it remains 48 hours. This rest changes the color of the butter from white to a rich yellow. It is then again taken to the butter-works and goes through the same process (except salting) when it is ready for packing. Firkins are made in Sierraville of fir wood and holds 118 pounds of butter. The firkin being filled, brine is poured on top, which finds its way down the sides as the butter shrinks. In winter it is moulded into two-pound rolls, wrapped in cloth and packed in boxes containing 25 to 50 pounds each. The dairy being described is the J. Miller dairy near Sierraville.

The Sport of Kings in Sierra Valley in the 1880s!

It's hard to imagine horses racing around an oval track while crowds cheered on their favorites from grandstands at track side! But the Sierra Valley Stock and Agriculture Association began operating just such a racetrack and accompanying grandstand and other buildings after their initial incorporation on August 8, 1887. Maurice Pritchard was the driving force behind the effort to create the racetrack and was the President of the association. Little is known about the short-lived enterprise but if you look closely out the window of an airplane flying over Bill Copren's property located just outside Sierraville along Highway 89 heading west, you will be able to make out the outline of the racetrack among the vegetation that has reclaimed the track.



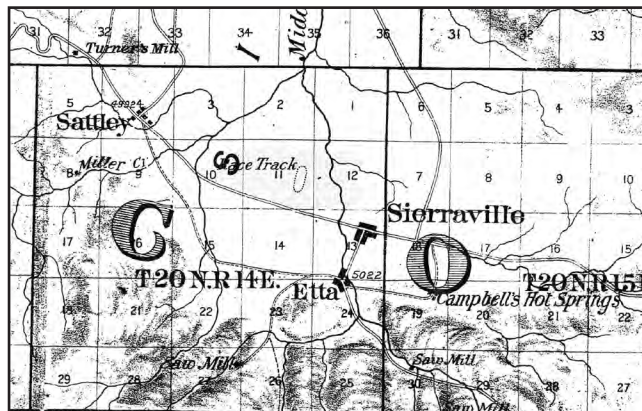
This enhanced photograph includes the sawmill that existed across the road from the field with the racetrack faintly evident at the top right.

A Ball of the 4th of July, 1889." As to the selling of the stock of the Association, the following guidelines were put in place.

"Those who now hold or will purchase \$50.00 or more worth of the Stock of the Assn., shall be entitled to a life membership, holding a life membership will be entitled to admission free, themselves wife and minor children to the track of the Assn. at all races upon said track, while they continue to own such Stock. In case one member holds \$100 worth of Stock, he or she shall be entitled to take two friends with their family to the track, and in case of a young or single man holding \$50 worth of Stock he shall be entitled to admission free to one lady, for each \$50 worth of Stock held by him, in case the lady is accompanied by the owner of such stock."

On February 10, 1889, the Sierra Valley Stock and Agriculture Association had a meeting to set out their business plan and specifically plans for the 4th of July. "It was decided to have races (providing the business people of the place subscribe the necessary funds.)

There is little information available about the eventual fate of the racetrack but there are many pages of court records describing suits and countersuits by outside suppliers and between the corporation officers evidencing many financial problems that probably spelled the end of the short-lived Sierra Valley horse racing venture!



The outline of the Sierraville racetrack is recorded on this early map of the county.

SIERRA VALLEY STOCK AND AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION.—The Sierra Valley Leader says:

The meeting of the Jockey Club last Wednesday was not largely attended, but those present were in earnest and alive to the interests of the community. The name was changed from "Jockey Club" to "Sierra Valley Stock and Agricultural Association." M. Pritchard was elected President; H. Lewis, of Loyalton, First Vice-President; W. A. Sperry, of Beckwith, Second Vice-President; E. Danforth, Secretary; J. Olsen, Treasurer; D. D. Newman, S. T. Burton and H. Quigley were elected a committee to draft By-Laws. The Secretary was instructed to see what land could be secured for a track. The society will incorporate and issue stock. There is scarcely a doubt but that enough enterprising men can be found in this Valley to take stock enough to secure the land, build stables and fence it this Fall. Every raucher and business man will be benefited, and we believe they will aid the new enterprise. Those who have already signed are expected to use their influence to induce others to take one or more shares of the stock as soon as it is issued. If every member will hand in two names for membership and stock during the next ten days, all the stock to complete the track will be taken and work can be commenced.

The organization of the racetrack group was reported in the local newspaper circa late 1880s.

Some Notes From the Kentucky Mine



The 2012 summer season was a disappointing year in that many fewer visitors came to the mine because of the summer-long road construction and pilot car lines. However, the summer had many bright spots including the internship of Matt Walker, who worked with curator, Virginia Lutes, on the time-consuming task of assuring the proper accessioning of all items loaned or donated to the Kentucky Mine and Museum. He also did research in Downieville to add to our knowledge of the past in the area.

The Oral History Project progressed during the summer with the recording of many interesting and important remembrances of the history of Sierra



County as seen through the eyes and minds of those who have lived through past times. This project will continue to add much understanding and unforgettable stories of this county.

We were fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers helping out on a daily basis at the mine this summer. They led tours, adding their own insight to our knowledge of the mine's colorful history, and

helping out in many other ways to make the Kentucky Mine an outstanding experience for visitors.

We look forward to a wonderful 2013 summer season filled with providing a unique, fascinating experience for visitors to Sierra County and our one-of-a-kind Kentucky Mine and Museum!