

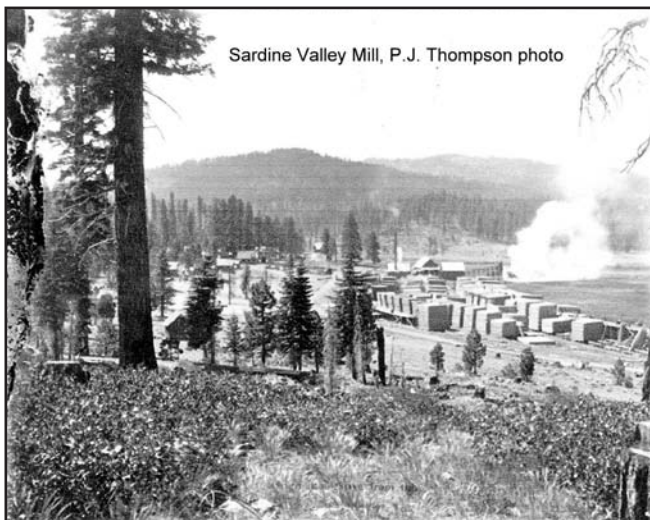
The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

An Introduction to the History of Southeastern Sierra County

By Bill Copren

The native-Americans resided and moved through the area that is now southeastern Sierra County for thousands of years. There are a number of National Register of Historical sites in this area including the Kyburz Flat prehistoric site, the Sardine



Sardine Valley Mill, P.J. Thompson photo

Sardine Valley Mill

Valley Archaeological District and the Stampede Prehistoric site. The first non-native Americans in the region of which there is a record were the members of the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy immigrant party of 1844. They ascended the Truckee River to Lake Tahoe, then crossed the mountains to the American River. Their route up the Truckee River through the canyon was subsequently always bypassed because of the difficult passage. They did, however, open the Truckee River route into California. The following year John Greenwood's party opened the trail around the north edge of the Verdi Range via Dog Valley and down into the present site of Verdi while returning to the states, traveling west to east. From 1845 on, this route up the Dog Valley Grade, into Dog Valley, Stampede Valley, the Little Truckee River, Prosser Creek and on to

Donner Lake became a principal branch of the famed California Trail known as the Stephens-Donner route. The Donner Party traversed this region in 1846 and numerous immigrant groups used the route during the gold rush of 1849. This road continued in use for over two decades.

The Lemmon brothers (early Sierra Valley settlers) opened the Hennes Pass trail in 1853. This route used the eastern portions of the Stephens-Donner trail in the area of Dog Valley and Verdi. The Surveyor-General of California initiated a survey of the Hennes Pass route in 1855. This report was favorable to the point of misrepresenting the difficulties of the terrain. Great numbers of immigrants to California used the Hennes Pass route and thousands crossed the Sierra along the road in the exodus from California during the rush to Washoe in 1859 and 1860. The completion of the transcontinental railroad cut traffic across the Sierra by road along all the routes. Yet previous to this time much work was done on the Hennes Pass road by turnpike companies and a significant amount of staging east-west and north-south occurred in the eastern region of Sierra County. The north-south staging and freighting continued in this area, from Truckee and Boca to Randolph and Sierraville, even with the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad. There were numerous stage stops and station houses in the general area used during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. (Louis Payen was certainly the best resource person on the exact location of these sites. Unfortunately we have lost Mr. Payen and with him a great source of knowledge.)

Some mining was carried out in the general area during the 1860's. The St. Mary's Mining District was organized in the Sardine Valley area in September 1865 and its mining laws can be found in the Mountain Messenger (Downieville) for September 16, 1865. The district became known as the Star Valley Mining District in 1866. Mines incorporated in 1865-67 which

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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

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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
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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 and Museum Open For the Summer!

A visit to the Kentucky Mine and Museum, located near Sierra City, is always a great way to spend a summer day in the Sierras, but this summer we invite you to come see the freshly painted museum and newly refurbished exhibits at our incredible museum! Crews of volunteers worked many hours during the off season to give our museum and mine site a new look and feel. This unique county park is open Wednesday through Sunday, from 10 am to 4 pm, with guided tours at 11 am and 2 pm. The tours feature visits to a miner's cabin, the mine portal complete with ore car rides, a journey through our one-of-a-kind stamp mill, and time to tour our unique museum. The museum gift shop features fun and informative items from the rich mining heritage of the region as well as a great selection of books from reference guides to the plants, animals and trails of the area, to colorful historical reference sources and novels! Whether you've visited the Kentucky Mine and Museum in seasons past or planning your first visit to the area, please stop by to say hello and step back into the exciting past of this historic region!

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may have been in the St. Mary's District include: California Mining Company, Ditto Gold & Silver Mining Company, Winniford Consolidated Gold Mining Company, Fall River Gold & Silver Mining Company, Iowa Mining Company, Fashion Gold Mining Company, Pittsburg Mining Company, and the Nip & Tuck Mining Company. It should also be pointed out that either Governor Frederick F. Low (Union Party, 1863-67) or Governor Henry H. Haight (Democrat, 1867-1871) was involved in the mines of the St. Mary's District.

Also during the 1860's the Bear Valley Silver Mining District was formed. These mines may have covered the ridges throughout southeastern Sierra County. Mines in this district included: The Abe Lincoln, The Nightingale Company, The Pioneer Company, The Phil Simdom, The Hampton Company, The Grand Ledge, the Philadelphia Company, the Red Ledge, the Little Savage, and the American Chief. In addition, there was also a mining district known as the Dog Valley Silver Mines in this general region during the 1860's.

Agriculture became a prominent industry in the region during the 1870's. Livestock and dairying operations were extensive in Sardine, Dog and Stampede Valleys with livestock grazing the surrounding mountains. The first agricultural operations included those of Prosser and Son, John Fleckenstein and Joseph Woodward. Some of the more prominent ranches of the era subsequent to the 1870's were the Dry Valley Ranch, Bill William's Ranch, Perazzo Dairy, Hoke Dairy, Sales Dairy, and the sheepman, William H. Johnson.



Logging near Lewis Mill

Logging in the region had been carried on to some extent beginning in the mid-1860's but it was not until around 1886 when the three Lewis brothers joined

forces with the two Peck brothers to build Lewis Mill, seventeen miles north of Boca in Smith's Neck Canyon that logging really got underway here. In 1887 the Lewis brothers also established a box factory at Verdi. The route used to move the lumber from Lewis Mill, followed the trail up Smith's Neck Canyon into Sardine Valley to Merrill, then passed over Dog Valley Summit and down the Dog Valley Grade to Verdi.

A John J. Roberts joined the Lewis' organization in 1888. With him came a fleet of steam wagons (also called traction engines) which were used to tow trains of lumber wagons from the mill to Verdi. They were ponderous machines, weighing as much as twenty-nine tons, resting on huge six-foot wheels with a single center-front driving wheel.

By 1900 Messrs. Lewis and Roberts had tired of their lumbering steam wagons and determined upon a railroad to provide the faster, more efficient transportation required by that time. However, to avoid the second summit of the route to Verdi, the new line would run north from Boca, up the valley of the Little Truckee River, and would extend beyond the Lewis Mill, down Smith's Neck to Loyalton on the southern edge of Sierra Valley.

By 1907 four sawmills and three box factories were keeping the economy of Loyalton in a high state of preservation; all fed through the lifeline of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad. Many spurs served the mills, while others ran into the timber where the camps supplied the raw material to fill the pipelines of industry. Between Boca and Loyalton, alone, there were 15 such spurs reaching into the trees of southeastern Sierra County and northeastern Nevada County. The Boca and Loyalton Railroad finally went out of business in September, 1916.

Verdi, like most of the Truckee River towns, came into being as an active lumbering center for the primary purpose of supplying ties to the Central Pacific Railroad when that line was constructed across Nevada in 1867-69. Cross ties continued to be a major product of the area as the Southern Pacific Railroad reached across Arizona in the early 1880's. When the nearby timber was cut, the loggers worked back into the hills to the west of Verdi and entered the Dog Valley country of eastern California creating a problem in logistics in supplying the timbermen as well as a problem in transportation to bring the felled timber to

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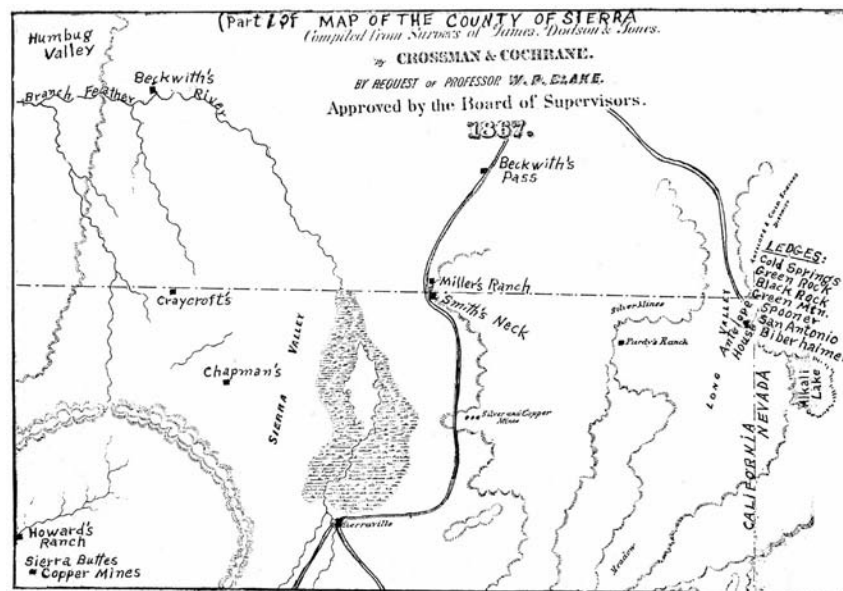
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the mills. Flumes were used for a period but eventually railroads were determined upon. The Verdi Lumber Company provided the impetus and financial backing for the railroad. Once the decision for the railroad was made, grading commenced on the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad in late 1900. M.J. Curtis, the Reno architect, was retained to direct the construction of the railroad's bridges across the Truckee River. Seven cars of rails arrived in Reno in February, 1901, but their advent proved somewhat premature as the scarcity of workmen in Verdi delayed progress more than had been anticipated. However, by August of that year, five miles of railroad had been completed up the steep acclivity of Dog Valley Creek, two switchbacks being used to overcome the abrupt change in elevation.

The Verdi Lumber Company railroad transported logs to the Verdi sawmill over the years pushing the spurs into the woods whenever and wherever needed. In 1904, it was extended northward, then eastward to Port Arthur, eleven miles north of Verdi. In 1905, an even longer branch pushed northward to Long Valley Canyon near Purdy, thirteen miles north of Verdi. The lower portion of this line constituted a relocation of the old main line and incorporated a switchback near Lazy Station to alleviate the steep grade for the original roadbed. At the upper end between Lakeview and Long Valley a continuous series of five switchbacks were necessary because of the steepness of the country there. Because of the steep grade and sharp curves, Shay geared locomotives operated into the woods, making two round trips daily.

In 1908, A.L. Revert, using profits from his prosperous Tonopah Lumber Company (a retail enterprise serving the Tonopah-Goldfield area) purchased the Verdi Lumber Company and operated it until its final dissolution in 1926. One of his first acts was to commence construction of the extension of the railroad, and, over the succeeding years the rails were pushed up the switchback to Dog Valley Second Summit and on to Merrill where the Boca and Loyalton was crossed without stopping. Track continued along Davies Creek into the mountains. In contradiction to the experience on the Port Arthur branch, a 1912 relocation of the main line on the east slope of Dog Valley Second Summit eliminated the switchback on that section of line. In 1917, after the north side of Davies Creek had been logged, the railroad built a spur with a series of switchbacks using grades up to 13% to climb into the hills above Bear Valley. Cutting proceeded there for the next year, following which the railroad branched out again, this time westward from Davies Creek to the hills on the south side of Lemmon Canyon. Logging continued at this point for another five years when the logging switched to the north side of the same canyon for several more years.

Scrapping of the railroad began shortly after the mill closed in late 1926. By May, 1927, virtually all the rails had been removed and dismantling of the sawmill commenced. A large portion of the Verdi Lumber Company's railroad is still visible as an abandoned roadbed today.



From James Sinnott, "Sierra Valley Jewel of the Sierras"

Remembering the Hotels of Loyalton

By Elda Fae Ball

In the early years of the last century, Loyalton was a busy little city. It had five lumber mills and four hotels to accommodate the workers and visitors to the city.



Loyalton Hotel circa 1940, courtesy Elda Ball and Milton Gottardi Museum, Loyalton

Loyalton Hotel

The Keys Hotel sat on what is now called Beckwith Street on the east side of what is now White's bus barn. The little stone building which is still there was built to serve as the hotel's ice house and became the Loyalton City Jail; and was such for some time into the 1950's.

There was another hotel known as the Loyalton House. It was where the Post Office is now. I believe it burned; but I cannot seem to find out when. In 1903, the Golden West was built at its present location on Main Street. There is a good story about the Golden West Hotel written by Milton Gottardi's mother, Edna Westall Gottardi, and can be found in the Milton Gottardi Museum and the Loyalton Library.

In 1901 the Lewis brothers brought their railroad known as the Boca and Loyalton Railroad to Loyalton, this was known affectionately as the B&L Railroad. The Lewis brothers built a hotel across from the train station on Railroad Avenue; where a row of houses are now. The B&L Station was later moved across the street and is now the city barn and used for storage. The hotel was called Hotel Sierra. A man named J.W. Bybee was hired to manage this hotel. It went through several different owners over the years. Then like many of the old wood buildings it burned down in 1923. The register for the Sierra Hotel is in the Milton Gottardi Museum. W. D. Thorne is listed as the proprietor in 1923. The James Sinnott book "Sierra Valley Jewel of

the Sierras" lists a Mr. and Mrs. Johnson as proprietor of the Sierra Hotel at the time of the fire. The fire insurance money on the Sierra Hotel was used to build the Loyalton Hotel. By this time Main Street was considered to be a better place for a new hotel. Milton Gottardi told me Loyalton Hotel opened in 1925; the Sinnott book says the spring of 1928.

When the Loyalton Hotel opened the proprietors were Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Johnson. They had experience in the hotel business. They had operated the Hotel Veale in Richmond, California, before buying the Sierra Hotel in Loyalton. Mr. Johnson died not long after it opened and his wife Carolyn, took over. This is a quote from Sinnott's book: "The Loyalton Hotel has a fine coffee shop which is outfitted with the finest equipment." An account from the Mountain Messenger in August of 1929, further describes "the furnishings of this up-to-date hostelry are equal to any first class hotels in a large city, and the conveniences and arrangement of the building are very pleasing. The lobby is spacious, comfortably furnished and has a nice outlook through large plate glass windows upon the main street of town." One old timer I talked to remembers Carolyn Johnson and said she ran the hotel very well. It soon became the best in town. Carolyn had other people operate the restaurant. Louie Martini ran the restaurant for some time when he first came to Loyalton. He later owned and operated the Smoke House also known to the younger generation in Loyalton as the Pool Hall. I would like to do a story on Louise Martini for the "Sierran" in the future. Carolyn Johnson sold the Loyalton Hotel sometime in the early 1940's. I moved to Loyalton on July 4, 1946, and we lived in the Loyalton Hotel. A man named Bob Davis owned and operated the hotel which had two apartments upstairs, and two apartments downstairs. Davis also had others run the restaurant. Clara Vallery ran the restaurant when I first came to Loyalton. After Clara quit, my mother managed the business for several months; she made me wait tables after school and on weekends. I really did not mind and the tips were not bad!

Davis sold the hotel to Hazel Sommers around 1948 or '49. Hazel built a new restaurant on the west end of the building around 1951. It was very modern, and first class. Before that the café was in the room behind the bar. I believe Hazel ran the Loyalton Hotel better than anyone that ever owned it before her. She was

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Hazel's Cafe and Loyalton Hotel

Hazel's Cafe and Loyalton Hotel

Older men seemed to really enjoy talking and watching the snow come down on Main Street. It also had a nice bar that always seemed full. The bar was horseshoe shaped with beautiful old fashioned beveled mirrors behind it. I was too young to spend time in the bar, but it sounded like they were having a good time. I thought the Hotel was an elegant old place and I still do. After Hazel Sommers sold the Loyalton Hotel it went through several more owners and seemed to be going downhill.



Hotel Sierra early 1900's Loyalton

Hotel Sierra

The story would not be complete without mentioning the Johnson Cash Store. Harold and Stella Johnson had a small "mom and pop" store in the west corner of the building. It had a little of everything in their small corner. It was piled clear to the ceiling with boxes, of well, a little bit of everything. I do not think Mr. Johnson ever slept. You could go up to the store at midnight and he would be open. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson lived in the brick house behind the Loyalton Hotel.

On March 6, 1966 around midnight, Mr. Johnson closed the store and on his way home he collapsed and died. His wife, Stella, tried to run the store alone. Her health was not good and she eventually closed the store.

The Loyalton Hotel had been closed for more than



Elda's family moved to Loyalton when she was a teenager, this photo is of Elda in 1947 with a little girl who also lived at the Loyalton Hotel

Elda 1947

(Editor's note: Elda Ball was a long time Curator of the Milton Gottardi Museum, and recently retired from the Board of the Sierra County Historical Society. Elda has remained active in our Oral History Project, and has many wonderful stories of the Sierra Valley.)



**SIERRA CITY
SESQUICENTENNIAL
JUNE 21-22, 2014**

BBQ Tickets -\$16

Make checks to:
Bob Morales and
Send to:
Mary Jungi
P.O.Box 412
Sierra City, CA 96125
or purchase at
Sierra Country Store



HERITAGE STATION

On Saturday:

10 AM Opening Ceremony-Downtown Sierra City

**11 AM-3 PM History Demos, Vintage Portraits, and
Historic Photo Exhibit-Community Hall**

**Craft Fair, Mock Jail, Gunfight Reenactments,
Town & Cemetery Tours-Downtown**

11 AM and 2PM Mine Tours-Kentucky Mine

5-6:30 PM - BBQ Dinner-Kentucky Mine Picnic Area

ADVANCE BBQ TICKET PURCHASE RECOMMENDED

7 PM "Never Trust a City Slicker"- Kentucky Mine Amphitheater

On Sunday:

10 AM Coffee and Pastries- Visitors' Center

Methodist & Catholic Churches-Open at 10 /Services at Noon

2:00 PM 150th Birthday Picnic in the Park-at the Playground

Kids' Games, Wagon Rides, Community Photo

BYO LUNCH & CHAIRS-CAKE WILL BE PROVIDED.

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

Summer 2014 Concert Series News!



PRE-CONCERT BARBECUE!

A tri-tip BBQ will be available for \$16 per person beginning at 6 pm in the picnic area at the Kentucky Mine before the concerts.

Mumbo Gumbo
at the Kentucky Mine Amphitheater
July 12, 2014 - \$25 per person
Concert begins at 7:30

August 2 - Bourgeois Gypsies!
Tickets - \$15

August 16 - Local Bands Night!
The String Alongs
& Runnin' 4 Cover
Tickets - \$10

Tickets available online now!

Visit SierraCountyHistory.org to purchase tickets through PayPal.