

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

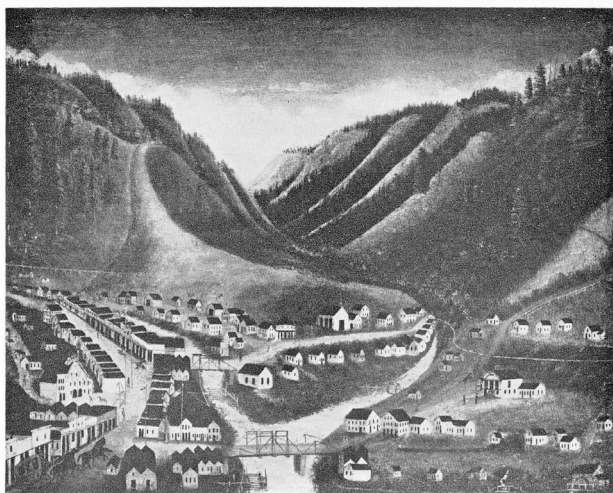
“Life of a Gold Town Doctor, and His Young Wife”

**Dr. Edmund G. Bryant and Marie
Louise Hungerford**

By Virginia Lutes

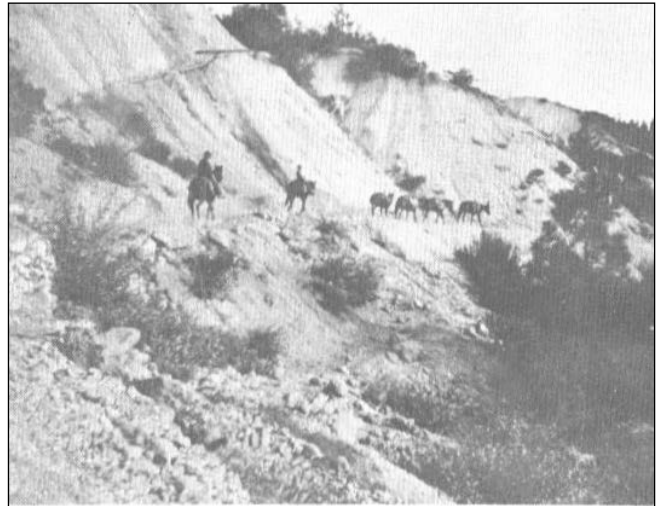
Editor's note: There were numerous connections between California's gold mining industry and Nevada's Comstock Lode. It is strange to think that many of the leading men in Virginia City had been but four-dollar a day miners in Sierra County. We have included a list of books used in researching this article at the end of the article for your further reference. A special thanks to Mike Carnahan at Riverside Resort in Downieville for assistance and suggestions of research material for this article.

In November of 1858, the Sierra County Board of Supervisors directed that the old Fetter House on Jersey Flat be retrofitted to house the first county hospital. The physician appointed to be the first county physician for this facility was Dr. Edmund Gardner Bryant, age 22.



Downieville

Captain S. A. Bunker, artist 1859



Pack train passing the famous Monte Cristo Diggings.

Dr. Bryant had arrived in California as a passenger on the steamship “Golden Age” from Panama on April 13th, 1857. He was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1836, and completed his medical training at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. Dr. Bryant spent a short time in Marysville before choosing Downieville, Sierra County, as a place to practice. He wore a silk hat, polished boots and a frock coat as he made his way among the gold towns. The doctor showed a promising future as a healer and surgeon and traveled to gold camps in the area, showing a fondness for Monte Cristo and the northern Sierra camps.



His future wife was Marie Louise Antoinette Hungerford, daughter of Daniel E. and Meme Hungerford. Young Louise was born in Brooklyn in 1843, and had come west ten years later. She had arrived in Downieville with her mother and grandmother in 1853. They traveled from New York by

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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!

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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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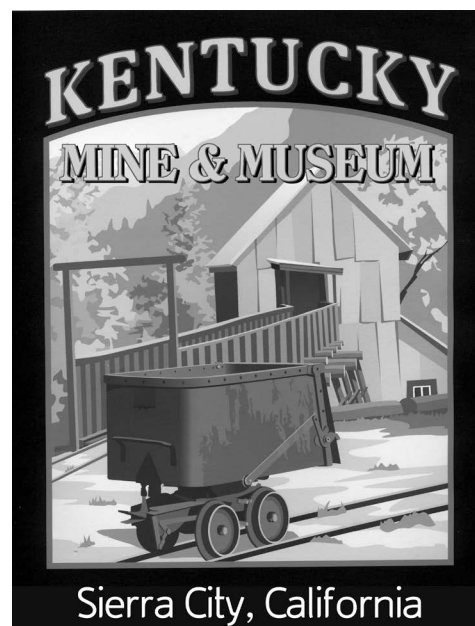
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Please send dues and donations to:
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c/o Don Yegge, Membership Chair
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"Night at the Museum, 2016"

The Sierra County Historical Society invites you to help us kick off the 2016 museum season with a BBQ at the Kentucky Mine on Friday, May 27 at 5:00 PM. Please join us as we grill burgers and hot dogs, and enjoy the music of the Stringalongs. If you would like to attend, please RSVP by May 22 to Mary Nourse at 530-862-1123 or mnourse46@gmail.com



"Life of a Gold Town Doctor, and His Young Wife" - (Cont. from Page 1) —



Marie Louise Hungerford Bryant Mackay

ship, crossing the Isthmus of Panama, catching another ship to arrive in San Francisco, where they were met by her father, D.E. Hungerford. They then continued on by river steamer and stage to Downieville. Her father, Daniel E. Hungerford, had arrived prior to having his family move to set up a business and locate a home. Mr. Hungerford was a barber by trade, but a soldier at heart. He had served with honor as a Captain under Winfield Scott in the Mexican American War then returned to the gold fields following that conflict.

The Hungerfords led a somewhat precarious existence; lean times had come to the gold towns, and money was scarce. Mrs. Hungerford supplemented the family income by taking in sewing and nursing the town's ailing citizens. Hungerford was instrumental in organizing militias known under several names: The National Guard, Sierra Guards, Sierra Battalion, and Downieville Greys. Hungerford was between battles, and he had hopes of a new conflict in which to participate. He was promoted by the Sierra Guards to a major, and was presented with a decorative sword. He worked diligently to train his troops. Dr. Bryant was listed as Surgeon on the militia roster.



Major Hungerford, circa 1890

In 1857 when Louise was 14, the Hungerford's second daughter, Ada, was born in Downieville. Shortly thereafter Louise was sent to St. Catherine's Female Academy in Benicia, California, where the sisters refined Louise's knowledge of French and Spanish as well as skills with embroidery, sewing and scholastics. She also learned to play the piano. The following year the family no longer could finance the education, so Louise returned home to Downieville. She was becoming a lovely young lady - petite, dark haired and blue-eyed. She carried a look of sophistication from her newly acquired education.

Dr. Bryant was an active man of many interests. In newspapers of the time he was mentioned frequently caring for those injured or ill. In 1859 he and two men, John Ager and John Cooper, were trustees of the "California and Utah Camel Association" filing Articles of Incorporation in Sierra County. (See "The Sierran" fall of 2014 for more on Camels). About this time he became acquainted with a young lady, fifteen year old Marie Louise Antoinette Hungerford.

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The two young people found opportunities to meet often "by chance". They fell in love and were married on January 1, 1860 in Downieville, soon after Marie Louise turned sixteen.

The young Bryant couple lived in Downieville on Jersey Flat. They were well liked and had close friends such as William and Anne Stewart who they would remain friends with in later years in Virginia City. William was a prominent attorney who did very well in mining law; he later became a Nevada Senator.

Many changes were in the wind for the Sierra gold camps. Silver had recently been discovered in the Utah Territory and many miners and families were leaving the Sierra camps for the Comstock Lode. Among them was the Hungerford family. Dr. Bryant had his commitment with the hospital, so delayed his family from following, although he saw promise of a future life there. While visiting the Hungerford's in 1860, the Doctor found himself involved with the excitement of the beginning of the Paiute War. Fear for the young Virginia City ran deep, and his father-in-law Major Hungerford was enlisted to organize and gather troops. Bryant rushed home to Downieville, feeling threatened all the way by the Paiute conflict. The Major contacted the California governor for permission to call in troops from California to assist the miners and settlers of the Utah Territory. That permission was granted. Soon after Bryant returned to Downieville a cable reached him: "Send me immediately all the arms and ammunition of the National Guard. Telegraph Lieutenant Hall at Forest City to send all the rifles in his possession. Send to Goodyear's Bar, to Captain Kinniff, to send me all his rifles. Forward as soon as possible. Big fight with the Indians. The whites defeated. Send me your heavy sabre. I hear Meredith and Baldwin killed. (Signed) Major D.E. Hungerford."

Dr. Bryant left for the battle along with about 150 Downieville volunteers. Word was that Virginia City was in danger, and Virginia City was now the home of many former gold camp families and friends. Militias from all over northern California also responded. Major Hungerford rode out to meet his militias and proudly ushered them into Virginia City. From there they went to Pyramid Lake where a bloody battle occurred. This time, the "miners" defeated the Paiute. The conflict was short lived. Sadly, William Spear from Downieville became a casualty. Dr. Bryant returned to Downieville with the rest of the militia; the excitement was over.

For the Bryant family the early years were good; a daughter Eveline Julia, called Eva, was born in 1861. Dr. Bryant was one of the leading doctors in the area and completed his commitment as countywide physician at the hospital in 1862. By then, the doctor had become snared by the lure of silver in Virginia City.

By the spring of 1863, Dr. Bryant made the move to Virginia City; leaving Louise to sell the Downieville home and their interest in the Pioneer Livery Stable.



Virginia City during the mining heyday.

Louise and young Eva traveled by stage and found lodging rooms in Virginia with Edmund. In the young town Louise became acquainted with Father Monogue, who was a former gold miner from the Nevada and Sierra counties; his experience there made him especially caring to the miners and families in Virginia City.

The Bryant family initially prospered. Edmund was successful in several small financial ventures and he was rising in his profession. A new baby girl, Marie, was born but came down with fever and died. Father Monogue consoled the family. Following the loss of the baby, Edmund spiraled down. He and Louise drifted apart. Louise was poor company and Edmund began to spend time in local saloons and partaking of the opiate drugs that were readily available. Both were devastated by the loss of the child. Financial woes visited the family. The doctor had invested heavily in stocks that were not doing well. As income diminished and Edmund began spending time away, Father Monogue found work for Louise as a seamstress. When Edmund was home they quarreled often. One day, when Louise was delivering her parcels, Edmund was in charge of young Eva, who took a horrible fall down stairs that left her with a limp the rest of her life. Upon returning home Louise found another doctor caring for Eva. Edmund was devastated blaming himself for the accident.

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By 1864, it was clear the great days of Virginia City were over. The Hungerfords left for San Francisco, encouraging the Bryants to follow. By this time the Bryants marriage had become greatly troubled. Edmund asked Louise if she wished to divorce. She said no. He asked if she wished to move to San Francisco, again the answer was no. His drinking became excessive, and he soon left for San Francisco without Louise. No word came from him that winter; Louise was forced to move to cheaper lodgings and take in more and more sewing and laundry. She finally received word from her mother that Edmund had disappeared. Louise was determined that she would not leave Virginia City and that Edmund would return to her. Times became very difficult for Louise and Eva, but she was proud and would not accept charity. One of her customers Mrs. Fair, showed her much kindness and friendship.

By the spring of 1866, Edmund still had not returned. Father Manogue brought word that Edmund was very ill in a place called Poverty Hill, near La Porte. There was little hope that Edmund would survive. Louise immediately left Eva with the Sisters of St. Mary's Convent School to travel to Poverty Hill; the weather was cold and snowy and the travel was hard. She was determined to nurse her Edmund back to health. Upon arrival in La Porte (which until 1866 was in Sierra County), she was met by Mr. Haymond and Mr. Delahunty who accompanied her to the little shack in Poverty Hill where they found Edmund. He seemed to recognize her. They decided to move him to La Porte to better accommodations and closer to help for Louise. There he somewhat recovered and they were able to share good memories. A longtime friend from Monte Carlo, Creed Haymond visited often to try to cheer Edmund. On the afternoon of June 19th, Edmund felt well enough to dress and move about before suddenly collapsing. He died on June 20, 1866, with Louise at his side. Creed Hammond took up a collection to pay for Bryant's debts and for the funeral expenses. He was buried in La Porte. (Years later his remains were moved by Louise to rest at Laurel Hill Cemetery in San Francisco.) Louise returned to Virginia City to Eva. Soon after her return three of Edmond's fellow Masons came to her to offer assistance. These friends were Mr. Rosener, his brother, and John Mackay. Louise would not accept their charity, but was willing to have Mr. Rosener help by allowing her to do sewing for his store.

Months passed, and Louise began to heal from the loss and accepted an invitation to Christmas dinner at her friend Mrs. Fair's home. For the second time she met John Mackay. Mackay had mined for gold for seven years in Forest City, Alleghany and Downieville before the Comstock Silver strike. He was on his way to becoming wealthy, and was thought of as a very hard working honest man. He and James Fair were later to be known as two of the "Bonanza Kings" or "Silver Kings". Mackay and Louise were married in 1867 when she was twenty-three, and he was thirty-six. He helped to raise young Eva, and together they had two sons.

This became a "rags to riches" story for a young girl who grew up in Downieville. She went on to travel and live in Europe, New York and San Francisco. The MacKay's were philanthropists, with Virginia City being a benefactor of their charity. In 1876, with the encouragement and support of Father Manogue, the Daughters of Charity opened the area's first facility, "Saint Sister Marie Louise Hospital" financed by contributions from some of the area's most notable figures, John and Marie Louise Bryant Mackay and Mr. and Mrs. James Fair.

Books consulted in writing this article:

Sinnott, "Downieville, Gold Town on the Yuba"

Berlin, Ellin "Silver Platter"

Lyman "The Saga of the Comstock Lode"

Downie "Hunting for Gold"

Hermann "Gold and Silver Colossus"

Mackay "John Mackay, Silver King in the Gilded Age"

Ethel Van Vick Tones "Rocket on the Comstock"

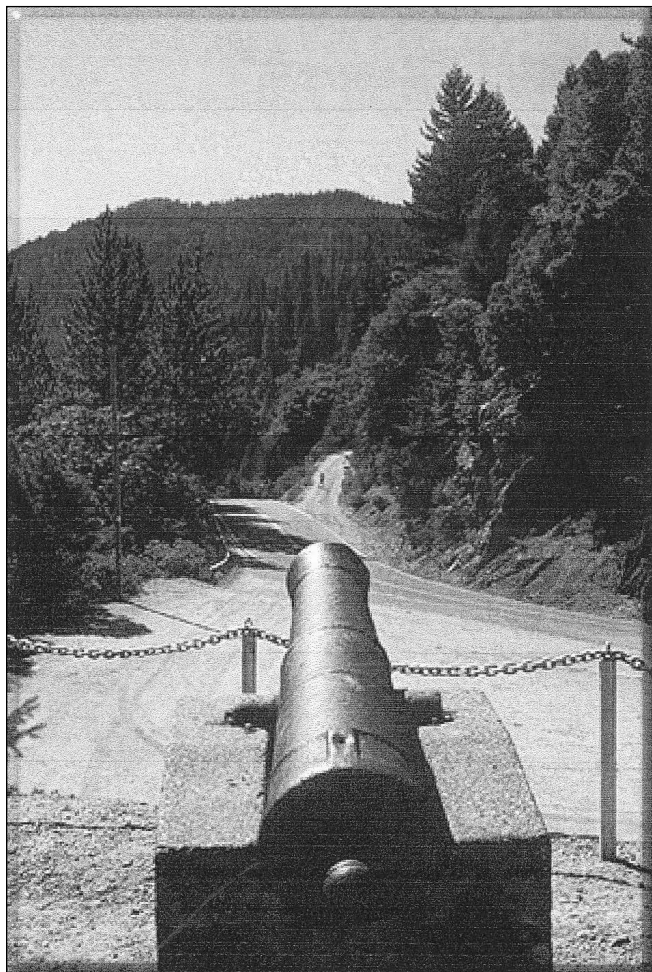


Cannon Point, Downieville

Virginia Lutes

A traveler entering Downieville from the east is greeted by a lone cannon at a point overlooking the town and rivers.

The cannon was purchased in San Francisco by a Downieville physician, Dr. Edmund G. Bryant in June of 1862. It is not known if Dr. Bryant purchased the cannon with his own funds or at the request of the local citizens or local militia, The Sierra Battalion, Sierra Guards.



The cannon arrived in Downieville by freight team on July 1st and was greeted with great excitement. Imagine this cannon weighing about twelve hundred pounds, and firing a twelve-pound ball. It would be fired for celebrations, special events, and Independence Day, to add a special effect to those celebrations.

It is not known if the cannon was placed on the point at that time; or if it was located at some other spot in Downieville. There has been some speculation that the cannon was originally fired from the mountainside north of the Catholic Church. If not originally in place

on what became known as Cannon Point, it soon was in place at that location.

James J. Sinnott, in his book "Downieville, Gold Town on the Yuba", gives this description of a horrible tragedy concerning the cannon in 1863.

"Following is an account of the tragedy as described in an issue of The Sierran Democrat, a newspaper published in Downieville. "TERRIBLE CASUALTY" "On Wednesday last (May 27th) while a portion of the citizens of Downieville were engaged in firing a salute on account of the supposed capture of Vicksburg, 1st Lieutenant M. M. Knox and 2nd Lieutenant Wm. A. Donaldson of Company K, 6th Regiment of California Volunteers, were mangled in the most horrible manner by a premature discharge of the cannon used on the occasion. The facts, so far as they can be learned, are as follows: The cannon was old, had become very rusty, rough and powder-burned inside, has been spiked and in removing the spike the vent had been bruised rendering it a difficult undertaking to prevent air from passing through while loading.

"Several rounds had been fired, when the vent became stopped..., this occurred several times, which proves the cannon was foul. Immediately before the last cartridge was put into the cannon the person tending the vent cautioned Lieutenants Know and Donaldson, telling them that there was fire in the chamber, and not to load until they had cleaned out the cannon; but his suggestions were unheeded by them, and they, both having hold of the rammer, and in the act of pushing home the cartridge, were blown to pieces in the most shocking manner, by a premature discharge. Lt. Knox lost both his eyes, his face was burnt to a crisp, the left hand torn entirely off above the wrist, the right arm badly shattered, pieces of the rammer were forced



Volunteer militia during the Civil War.

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Cannon Point, Downieville - (Cont. from Page 6) —

deeply into the lungs and other parts of the body, which was thrown over a steep declivity and nearly into the river, some 200 feet below. He died about five hours after the accident. Lt. Donaldson was injured in a similar manner. His face being terribly burned, both eyes destroyed, both hands blown off above the wrists, and his left side severely injured. He died at four o'clock the following morning.

"Both were highly esteemed in our community, and all are sorrowing at their untimely and shocking death. The funeral took place yesterday, was attended by the Military and Fire companies, and a numerous concourse of civilians. Military rites were performed over their graves by the National Guard, and they now, side by side, sleep their last sleep.

"Mr. S.W. Forbes was seriously burned in the face by the powder escaping from the vent. His thumb was badly sprained, and his eyes seriously, though not permanently, injured.

"We have just learned that Mr. Ritchie, who has served as gunner on a man-of-war, has examined the cannon, and found in the chamber of large mass of burnt and charred rags, which must have been on fire at the time of the accident."

Adding to this tragedy, the celebration of the capture of Vicksburg had not yet occurred in May of 1863. The report had been false; it was not until July 4th that the city fell to the Union forces of General Grant during the War Between the States.

The cannon was repaired, and was used for celebrations for many years.



Downieville circa 1860s.

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

THE SIERRAN

SPRING 2016

Music at the Mine

June 25th	7:30 PM	James Carlson and the Steadyhand
July 20th	7:30 PM	Mumbo Gumbo
July 30th	7:30 PM	Bob Mora and the 3rd Degree Blues Band
August 20th	7:30 PM	Bob Woods and Swampbilly
September 4th	4:30 PM	"An Acoustic Afternoon" <i>featuring</i> The Juliet Gobert Band and the Rattlin' Bones

All shows will be preceded by a BBQ dinner catered by The Red Moose Café.