

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

“RANDOLPH HOTEL”

by Virginia Lutes

The Historic Houses of Sierra County in Sierra Valley published by this Historical Society has been reprinted and is available for purchase at our museum during the summer season. To bring attention to this fine publication put together by Maren Scholberg, this article features one of the historic houses in the book.

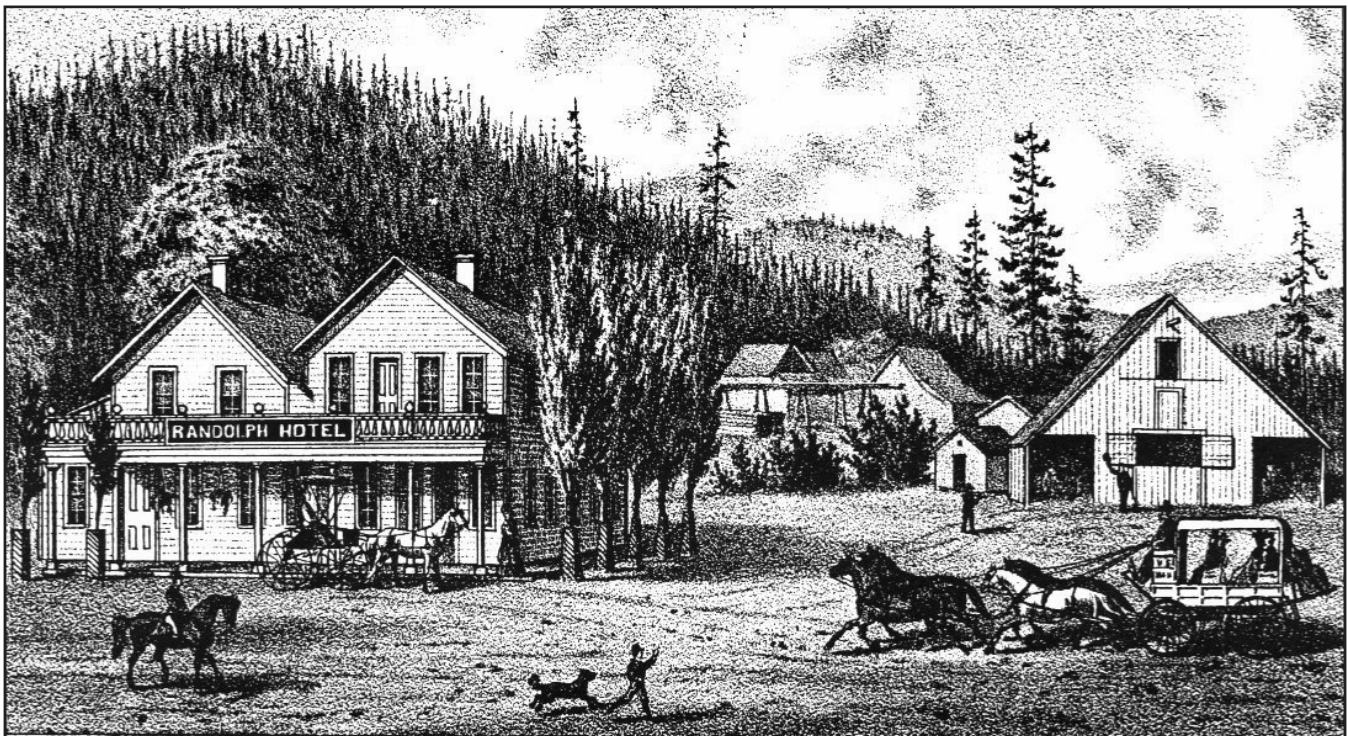
In early days, circa 1863-1970 what we now know as Sierraville was two communities, Randolph, to the south, and Sierraville to the north.

Where the Sierraville School is located was the approximant division of the two communities. There was a rivalry between the two communities, and both had businesses and residences.

As history sometimes happens, there are different stories as to the origin of the Randolph Hotel. It was widely believed by some that circa 1854, Silas Gates

build a house in Randolph, near the corner of what is now Lincoln Street and West Willow Street. Later he built the south portion of the Randolph Hotel, and opened it to the public. Old time residents Mrs. R. E. Yarrington and Harvey Blatchley remembered it differently. They remembered that a man named “Hostetter built the hotel, later Buxton, Slipner, Herb Nichols and Rolly Dolly owned it... The hotel had a large livery and stage barn connected with it.”

The Randolph Hotel (Cont. on Page 3) —



RANDOLPH HOTEL AND STAGE OFFICE, G. Q. BUXTON, PROP'R.
RANDOLPH, SIERRA CO., CAL.

— 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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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
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Presidents Message

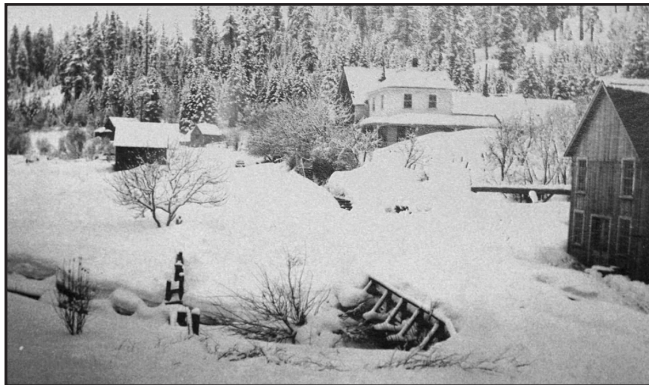
With the 2018 mid-term elections just a week away as I write this, the following quote really resonates with me: ***“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”*** The 2018 summer season exemplified this idea when Sierra County Historical Society members continually stepped up to share their skills: teaching and tour-guiding, editing and educating, researching and recruiting, and yes, even catering. Besides all the “business as usual” of publishing the Sierran, maintaining membership records, teaching classes, producing a concert series, operating a website, developing museum displays, and assisting at the bookstore; our dauntless volunteers also chose to make a couple of biggies happen. They catered dinner for the Achilles Wheel concert crowd, they explained the history of schoolhouses at the Art + Ag Trail, and they hosted a box-lunch social at the Webber Lake Hotel. Perhaps most important, they helped facilitate the nomination of Webber Lake Hotel to the National Register of Historic Places. (Drum Roll, please!) Given the track record of SCHS volunteers, it appears that they have “voted” for a vibrant historic community and I thank them for it.

Mary Nourse

The Randolph Hotel (Cont. from Page 3) —

During its heyday, from the 1860's to around early 1900's, Randolph was a booming center of industry. There was this hotel, livery and stage line, a store, planing mill, shingle mill, two saloons, a blacksmith shop, a shoe shop and a grist (flour) mill. There were around 200 people living in the community.

By late 1867, H. Northrop had acquired this property and offered the Randolph Hotel for sale in advertisement of the *Mountain Messenger* "The subscriber having become the owner of the above property, is desirous of disposing of the same. THE HOUSE IS LARGE and well calculated for the business of a Public House; is supplied with water and is located within about half a mile of the Hot Sulphur Springs. There are Sixty Acres of land of the best quality, a large portion of which has been broken up and cultivated, and all of which can be easily irrigated from the Creek which passes through it. Sierra Valley - November 20, 1867, H. Northrop.



An early advertisement of the Randolph Hotel from James J. Sinnott *Sierra Valley Jewel of the Sierras* as printed in the *Mountain Messenger* of 1867 and 1868 follows"

"RANDOLPH HOTEL, Randolph-Sierra Valley

Having one of the Most Roomy and Comfortable Hotels in the Mountains, surrounded by every convenience for cleanliness and comfort, with the advantages of Country Scenery; the attention of those who desire a quiet place for Summer resort is invited to the advantages which this place possesses over others."

Mr. Rawdon added the south portion to the Randolph Hotel and again opened it to the public.

Ad W.F. Edwards' Tourist Guide 1883

ADVERTISEMENTS.

GEO. HUMPHREYS,

Wholesale and Retail Dealer in

FINE FAT CATTLE,

SHEEP AND HOGS.

Stock Men and Butchers Supplied at the Lowest Market Prices.

Postoffice Address—SIERRAVILLE, CAL.

SIERRAVILLE STAGE LINE,

G. Q. BUXTON, PROP'R.

Stages Leave Truckee for Webber and Independence Lakes, Sierra Valley, Campbell's Springs, Jamison City and Eureka Mills,

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS & SATURDAYS,

Returning on Alternate days.

In 1871 G.Q. Buxton purchased the farm and hotel property of H. Northrop, which he and his wife Lucetta owned and managed for a number of years. It was then known as "Buxton Hotel", or "City Hotel". Mrs. Buxton set a fine table for guests. It became the stage house for several lines.

Fire destroyed a large barn of Buxton's in the summer of 1873, the William Blatchley cabinet; wagon and carriage shop was also destroyed.

In 1876, Buxton bought the stage line running between Truckee and Eureka Mills. He operated a tri-weekly stage line to Jamison and Eureka Mills.

In 1882 Jack Campbell, candidate for Sheriff of Sierra County was sitting in front of the hotel, his niece called him to dinner. When he stepped into the street, he was shot and killed. (This was a previous article in *The Sierran*).

1887 ownership of the Buxton or Randolph Hotel changed hands, George Abbe purchased the hotel and stage line from George Q. Buxton. By 1890 the Randolph Hotel, was now under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Myron Manchester. An article in *The Mountain Messenger* referred to Randolph by the name of Etta. This name was chosen by the people of the Randolph area to be used for their Post Office. It was determined that another community in California

The Randolph Hotel - (Cont. on Page 4) —

The Randolph Hotel - (Cont. from Page 3) —

already had the Etta name, so it was denied. (In future years, the post office was in Sierraville, and the name Etta was rarely used, reverting back to being known as Randolph.) The 1890 newspaper article noted among business in Etta: "Randolph Hotel, Manchester and Abbe, Proprietors, who also own a stage line between Truckee and Sierra City; their sulphur plunge, fifteen minutes walk up the road, is free to their guests; shoe and boot store and post office, H. Northrup, owner and Postmaster who makes the best boots in the mountain; blacksmith shop, Wm. Blatchley".



Randolph Hotel circa 1900, when owned by Rolly Dolly

Other owners of the Hotel were Henry Slipner, Herb Nichols and then Rolly Dolly. Dolly converted it into a dwelling and attempted to move part of the hotel

to Sierraville, but the building collapsed after moving about a quarter of a mile (another version of history says part of the building burned.)

Others who used it as a residence were Susie Smith, Algiers, Frank Werry and then Kelso and Columbine Deller.



Current view of residence, part of the Randolph Hotel

The remaining portion of the hotel, a residence stands on the corner of Lincoln and Willow and is known as the Deller house, owned by grandchildren of Kelso and Columbine Deller. On one of the interior doors of the house a faint number 3 still remains a relic of the Randolph Hotel days.

THE BRICK AND STONE BUILDINGS OF DOWNIEVILLE

by Cory Peterman

Sierra County residents and historians have much to owe to James J. Sinnott, the man who spent years researching local history and compiling it into a six-volume series. Unfortunately, he passed before I was born, and I never got the chance to meet him. When his books were published in the 1970s, Sinnott didn't have access to the large internet databases of newspapers, images, and so forth; he had to rely on

word of mouth, personal research, and assumption. Though much of the information in his books are correct, there is a lot that isn't. When a great fire occurred in Downieville in 1852, Sinnott hypothesized that four fireproof buildings were built immediately afterwards the same year: the current St. Charles Saloon, Downieville Grocery Store, Downieville Museum, and Mountain Messenger Building.



However, through my research, none of this is true. None of these buildings were built in 1852. The earliest of these buildings is the grocery store, which dates from 1855 – and it is impossible to change my mind on that. The other three, based off my own conclusions, date from the following decade.

The ECV plaque on the grocery store refers to it as the Hirschfelder Building of 1852. This is wrong. The building was originally built by Julius Meier in 1855 (the families were related through marriage, however, and E. Hirschfelder later owned the building). A stone exists in the front yard of Enid Costa Williams's home that is the original cornerstone of this building, with the writing "J. Meier, 1855." The Costa family were later owners of the grocery store. The *Sacramento Daily Union* of July 6, 1855 refers to the laying of this cornerstone in Downieville:

"Corner Stone Ceremonies – From the Sierra Citizen we learn that the laying of the cornerstone of the first fire-proof brick building in Sierra County was accompanied by interesting ceremonies... The building, when completed, will be elegant and substantial, founded as it is on a rock, after excavating the earth to the depth of twenty-four feet; it is to be built of stone, fronting fifty feet on Main street, and forty feet on the Plaza. The digging of the cellar occupied nine men five weeks, although they worked to great advantage, sluicing off the dirt and saving from five to sixteen dollars a day – not to the man, but altogether."

These dimensions match the original part of the building that exists today. Another common story thrown around Downieville is that the town existed at a lower level in the 1850s and that the current cellars of many old buildings are their

original ground floors. This is incorrect as well, as it was thought the store was a two-story building by locals; the article above states directly that the cellar was dug by hand.

Later writings state that the grocery store was the only building to survive the fires of 1858 and 1864 on the Main Street and business sections of town, as it was "the only fireproof building," though it received a severe scorching. In my later articles, I will refer to these fires more to help further my point that the other buildings were built after the fire of 1864.

So, to conclude – the Downieville Grocery Store should not be referred to as the "E. Hirschfelder Building of 1852," but rather the "J. Meier Building of 1855."



Now let's move on to the current St. Charles Saloon on the corner of Main and Commercial Streets.

As I said in my last article, local historian James Sinnott assumed the current brick and stone building was built immediately after the Great Fire of 1852 by J. Craycroft. Was a new building built? Definitely. Records show Craycroft opening back up for business immediately after the fire. Was it the current brick and stone building? No, not really. Instead, it was a large wood-frame building with a stone foundation, 80x50 feet, running lengthwise along Main Street, 2 ½ stories high.

DOWNIEVILLE - (Cont. from Page 5) —

A description of this building occurs in the Grand Raffle in Downieville in 1853:

*"1st Prize: The spacious, elegant and well known Craycroft Saloon and Lot... the house is 2 ½ stories high, **regularly framed and braced**, first floor is the Saloon (one room, 80 feet by 50, and 17 to the ceiling); the Bar is 48 feet long and doing magnificent business. There is a bath house in the basement. In the second story is the county court room, with 12 other spacious and well-furnished rooms... with Lodge room 40x20 above... the building was erected last season, at a cost of over \$45,000!"*

So, it is obvious to note the building is regularly framed (implying wood frame construction) and has a bath house in the basement. Also, the building is 80x50 feet, totally different dimensions of the current brick structure, which itself runs lengthwise down Commercial Street. However, when accessing the basement of the current building, the original basement of the 1852 building can be seen on the Main Street side. Measuring 50 feet in the southern direction, a large groove can be seen. This is where the original building ended. Measuring 80 feet into the eastern direction, the wall ends (in the basement of the old Forks Restaurant and Bar). Where the groove exists, stone walls were added to support the brick building above. This front room in the basement that measures the same dimensions as the earlier building must have housed the bath house mentioned above. It is of interest to know also that on June 26, 1852, *The Mountain Echo* states "new bowling alleys beneath the Saloon of John Craycroft and Co. about to be opened to the public under the management of John Gardner." These must have been housed in the basement as well.

To further my point that the current brick and stone structure doesn't date from 1852 (other than the front room in the basement), a photo exists taken in 1861 that shows a large wooden building at this location. Not a brick can be seen, and the building is of different size and proportions than the current. Also, all images (drawings and lithographs) I have seen of Downieville from 1852-1856 always show a large 2 ½ story wooden

building at the location of the current St. Charles Saloon, with a large hip roof and dormers, also running lengthwise down Main Street. A closeup drawing is shown in the well-known 1856 lithograph of Downieville showing this building, labeled as J. Craycroft and Company.

After the great fire of January 1858, a list was put out stating the loss of buildings and their value. In the *Daily Alta* of January 4, 1858, an entry exists of buildings destroyed; included is this: Craycroft & Co., \$100,000. It would make sense that this is the wood frame building erected in 1852, due to its extremely high price. The same newspaper of June 13, 1858 also says that "the materials of which the new edifices are composed are of the most combustible character, albeit the fireproof store now standing, is the only monument of the last conflagration, as it was the only one on the burnt district." This proves my point that the store of J. Meier of 1855 was the only fireproof building to exist in Downieville as of 1858 and the only building to survive the fire in the business portion of town, as not once have I ever seen an article mentioning that the Craycroft Building survived the fire.

Since the photo of 1861 shows a wooden building, I am under the conclusion that the current brick building was built after the fire of 1864, not 1852 as James Sinnott wrote. Also, in 1880, Mrs. Austin Boyer wrote, describing the winter of 1853, in her scrapbook that "Craycroft owned the largest saloon outside of Sacramento; it stood where the Latreille Building now stands." Benoit Latreille ran a clothing store out of the current brick building that exists. This implies that the building was replaced as well. The brick building shows up in the 1865 photograph of Downieville.

To conclude, here's a general timeline based from my research:

1850: Craycroft builds the original log saloon

1852: It burns down in the great fire and is replaced with the 2 ½ story wood building

1858: This building is destroyed (being insured for \$100,000) in the January fire

DOWNIEVILLE - (Cont. on Page 7) —

DOWNIEVILLE - (Cont. from Page 6) —

1861: An early photograph shows a wood building still at this location.

1864: Another fire occurs, most likely burning down this building. The current brick structure is built over the basement of the original 1852 building. Support walls are added in the basement.

1865: The current brick building appears in a photo from this year for the first time

In summary, the large brick and stone building referred to as the “Craycroft Building of 1852” was, in my opinion, not built until 1864 and has no association with John Craycroft whatsoever. The ECV plaque should read as “The Site of the Craycroft Saloon,” as it was not built by Craycroft (other than the front room of the basement).

On the front of the present-day Mountain Messenger building, a plaque reads:
Mackerman & Company Building - Constructed circa 1852. Joseph Mackerman used the building as home and brewery. Since that time the building housed a drug store, meat market and California's oldest weekly newspaper ~ The Mountain Messenger. This fireproof building, with its iron doors, three foot thick walls and a four foot thick mud and brick ceiling is a fine example of Gold Rush architecture.

I believe that this building should not be considered the Mackerman building, and that it wasn't built in 1852 (refer back to my writings on the brick and stone buildings of Downieville). First point – Mackerman is the incorrect name; it should be Wackermann (other spellings I've seen include Wackerman, Wackmann, and Workman). Joseph Wackermann was from France, and first arrived in Butte County in 1850, returning to France a few years later to find a bride. He and his wife came back to California in 1856, and first show up on the Downieville census in 1860, him being listed as a saloonkeeper. In 1865-66, he was a steward of the Downieville Masonic Hall, Mountain Shade Lodge No. 18. Joseph returned to Europe in 1866 with his family, where he died in France in 1914.

Joseph Wackermann began a work partnership with Lorenz Nessler and constructed the Monte

Cristo Brewery in Downieville in 1861; it was later operated as the Sierra Brewery. Nessler purchased full interest in 1866; but in 1868, and for eight years after, J. A. Blohm was a partner, Mr. Nessler being now the only proprietor. The brewery was burned in 1864, involving a loss of \$10,000. It was again consumed by fire in 1870 and rebuilt. This structure was located on lower Pearl Street and was torn down in the early 1960s, a new house having been built on the lot (the present Earlene Folsom home). The building was a stone and brick structure in the back, with the wooden front part serving as a dwelling.

To summarize: a Joseph Mackerman never existed in Downieville, but a Joseph Wackermann did – he ran a brewery in town. However, he didn't arrive back to California until 1856, first showing up as a resident in Downieville in 1860. In 1861, he built a brewery in Downieville, and left back to France in 1866. The brewery burned down in 1864 and 1870 and was rebuilt.

So, in my opinion, it is impossible that Joseph Wackermann built the present-day Mountain Messenger building in 1852, as he was not in Downieville in that time, and because he did not start a brewery until he built one in 1861, which was located in a different part of town. The fact that it burned down in 1864 and 1870 as well makes it impossible for it to be the Messenger building as well. Since the Downieville Grocery store has been shown to be the earliest brick and stone building in town according to my research (1855), I believe the Mountain Messenger building dates to within the following decade and has no associations with Wackermann. I would like to thank Sallie Stuart for providing copies of several historic documents about the Wackermann family that helped me verify my research.

Sorry Clampers, many of your plaques needs to be replaced; please don't kick me out of your organization



The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society
P.O. Box 260
Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Hot Springs School Western Sierra Valley, Plumas County - 1872-1940

By Julia Maddalena and Virginia Lutes



Horses pulling buggies began arriving at a new school in Sierra Valley in the spring of 1872. Anxious young students from western Sierra Valley and living south of Beckwourth were prepared to begin their school education.

Established in 1872, the Hot Springs School District was located near present day County Road A-23 and Marble Hot Springs Road in Sierra Valley. If you were to drive east from A-23 on Marble Road, approximately a quarter mile and look to the south, this would be the location. No structures exist today at this site.

