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**SIERRA
COUNTY
Historical
Society**



HATful OF
Gold
Combined  **Treasures**
JIM Beckwourth

BLACKSMITH, TRAPPER, CROW INDIAN?, TRADER,
GUIDE, ARMY DISPATCH CARRIER, STOREKEEPER,
DISCOVERER, MOUNTAINEER, RANCHER,
POLYGAMIST, POLYGLOT, AND
POLISHED GENTLEMAN.

MEMBERS → PEOPLE SHARING
INFORMATION
AND INTERESTS.

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THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

August 24, 1970 Vol. II, No. 2.

THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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EARLY ANNALS OF DOWNIEVILLE AND VICINITY

By One of the Earliest Settlers

Number Three

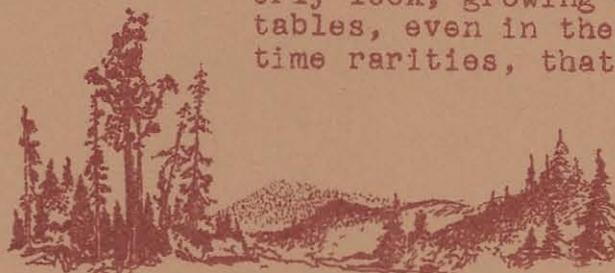
As our readers will recall, "Early Annals" originally appeared in the Tuolumne Courier in 1860, and are the first-hand reminiscences of one of the gold rush miners in this area. Although most of the chapters are concerned with Downieville, Forest City, and the Alleghany area, this, the third installment, describes the early development of some of the gold camps in the high country beyond the Feather River divide, north of Downieville.

The Onion Valley boom provided a lot of excitement in early days. It led to the extensive prospecting of the entire region and the large-scale mining of the Tertiary gravel channels exposed there. La Porte, Howland Flat, Scales and the other camps nearby became well-known as a result. In recent decades, however, this large area, partly in Sierra and partly over the divide in Plumas County, has once again become peopleless and relatively inaccessible and only occasionally frequented by the modern traveler. Thus, our "annalist's" account of the first prospecting expeditions in the area is most interesting and timely. So, without further ado, we turn to "one of the earliest settlers" for his recounting of those far away gold rush days.

--Wm. Pickiepoche

Onion Valley, Poor Man's Creek, Etc.

In the latter part of June or beginning of July 1850, a party of prospectors returning from Nelson Creek encamped on this beautiful flat, and named it ONION VALLEY; from the immense quantity of a species of wild onion, or more properly leek, growing there. And as all vegetables, even in the settlements, were at that time rarities, that such an esculent should at once come into favor, was not to be wondered at. A beautiful creek passed through the valley, the surrounding hills being at the same time covered with broken quartz, known



at that time among the miners, technically, as the "Gold Blossom," gave the idea that rich diggings might be discovered there; especially as only a few miles further on, the rich diggings had been found at Nelson's Creek. They concluded, therefore, to stop some little time and make a thorough reconnoissance of the country. The party was a large one, and was headed by such men as Capt. Hardy, Ellif, of Mineral Point, Wisconsin--familiarly known as Capt. Hardy,-- One Eyed Prospecting Moore, Major Hueston, and other prospecting celebrities. Major Downie, the most celebrated at that time, was not present in the camp. The entire party numbered, probably, one hundred and thirty or forty men, well armed either for fight or prospecting. The next morning the party separated in squads, with orders from Capt. Hardy to rendezvous at night in the valleys, and report the prospects. For the first few days the prospects were not so flattering; until on the evening of the 4th July, One-eyed Moore, who had been out two days, came in and reported having found a creek, which prospected extremely well; showing at the same time some large pieces of black gold, and stating that he found a white man and a negro at work--Moore asked the negro what his prospects were, but he gave him no satisfaction. Moore then went down the creek, and when he

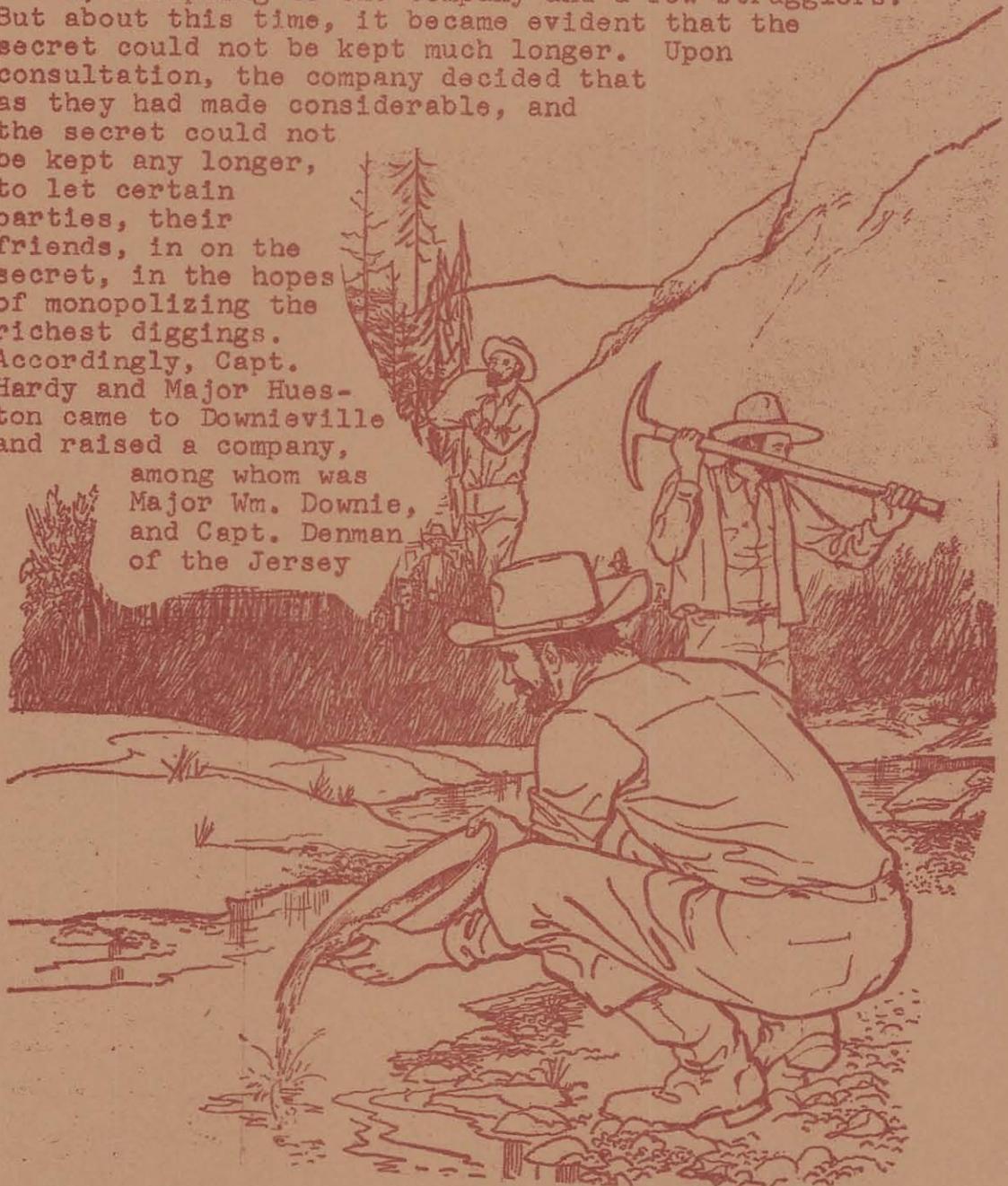


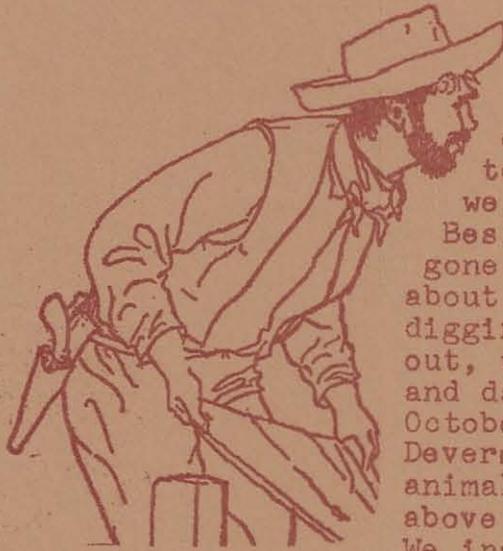
returned, he found the two had pulled up stakes and left. The place that Moore prospected in was at the falls, just above the forks, exactly where the Downie claim was located afterwards.



On Moore's return to the camp in Onion Valley, it was decided to locate a permanent camp in the Valley; for the reason that it was a good location, being surrounded by rich diggings, and the direct trail from Downieville to all of the richest diggings diverging in different directions from this point. Accordingly, some went to work to build log-cabins, some to prospect, whilst the most reliable men were

sent to Downieville to procure a stock of goods and provisions to open a store in the valley. Things went on this way for two or three months; during which time the company, under a man named Dixon, discovered Dixon's Creek, another rich gulch laying between the trail to Nelson's Creek and Poorman's. Up to this time Poorman's Creek was not known, excepting to the company and a few stragglers. But about this time, it became evident that the secret could not be kept much longer. Upon consultation, the company decided that as they had made considerable, and the secret could not be kept any longer, to let certain parties, their friends, in on the secret, in the hopes of monopolizing the richest diggings. Accordingly, Capt. Hardy and Major Hueston came to Downieville and raised a company, among whom was Major Wm. Downie, and Capt. Denman of the Jersey





claim. The advance guard of these prospectors left Downieville during the night and promised to send word to the others. We waited patiently too weeks, and no news returning, we began to think we were sold.

Besides this, as Downie had been gone so long, it began to be noised about that he had again struck richer diggings. Everyone was on the look out, watching the Downie Cabin night and day. On the night of the 11th October, 1850, about midnight, Mike Devermy came back, having left his animals on the upper bench of the hill above town, and told us to pack up. We instantly complied; Devermy showing us his gold, of which he had a large

purse full, all in large slugs from six ounces to pieces weighing one bit--all coarse gold--which he told us he had panned out himself. As secret as we thought ourselves, we were scarcely up the hill, and in the act of packing the animals with our blankets, etc.,

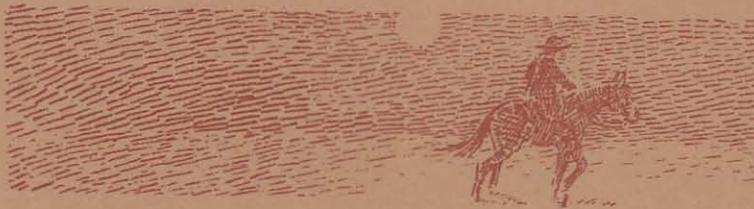
when we discovered three negro men and two whites coming up the hill. It was too late to try and hide; so our plan was made up instantly to compel them to swear not to divulge where we went to. This they readily agreed to. The white men were Wm. McKenzie and Jas. E. Dow, the negroes were named Leroy--a yellow man,--Wm. Taylor, and the last I never knew his name.

On the evening of the 14th October, we arrived at our camp, and the next morning began prospecting our claim. The writer panned out the first pan of dirt, which yielded an ounce and a half,



after removing only three inches of dirt; only a few inches from where Moore had left off. Moore had taken out several thousand dollars in this claim, before we of Downie's party took up the ground. Downie's Party consisted originally of Wm. Downie,

Charles Thompson, Michael Devermy, a Dutch boy named Henry Winters, Thomas Jamison, and the writer. The first day's work yielded \$950. In the first three buckets of dirt rocked out in a small cradle, the yield was \$240, and in the third riddle full there was 14 ounces which would not pass through it; consisting of four pieces; one of which weighed exactly eleven ounces troy. The proceeds of this day's work were paid out to a packer for provisions, and another load ordered in about two weeks. After our cabin was built, he returned and we paid him \$1,500 for his load. In going out of the creek he lost most



of his train in a heavy snow storm.

Onion Valley, in the meantime, had been growing rapidly and a large town was laid out; but the grizzlies now began to trouble the settlers, and a supply of that kind of meat was obtained from two of those agreeable visitants about this time. Pilot Peak now was covered with snow, which continued to accumulate on the hills, and from this until late in the spring of 1851, continued to hide their heads. About Christmas, the town had increased to about 1000 or 1,500 inhabitants; mostly gamblers, storekeepers and miners, waiting the snow to disappear, in order to come into Poorman's Creek, Dixon, and Nelson Creeks. Another considerable settlement had sprung up on the Downieville trail, at Grass Valley, and on the opposite side of the ridge at Rabbit Creek, now Laporte, situate on the dividing ridge between the Yuba and Feather rivers, and on the trail from Bidwell's Bar to Poorman's Creek. Rabbit Creek was so named from the immense numbers of rabbits about, and named by the miner's, who who were





weather bound there, and who found excellent diggings on that creek. About this time a Spanish train was snowed in, between Grass Valley and Onion Valley, and a party of three who had left Poorman's Creek, were lost in the snow whilst trying to find it, to procure provisions. One of the party was frozen to death, the other two reached Kelly & Osborne's store in Grass

Valley, in a deplorable state, but neglected to make mention that they had left their partner behind, for two whole days; and it was not until the third day that news reached Poorman's Creek of the fact. A relief party volunteered to go out immediately; signals were agreed upon and the party set out. After being out two whole days the party returned, leaving behind several on the hill, unable from cold to come in. Another party was started and packed them in, in blankets, to Downie's cabin, where Dr. Bacon of the Butte company attended to their sufferings, and saved them.

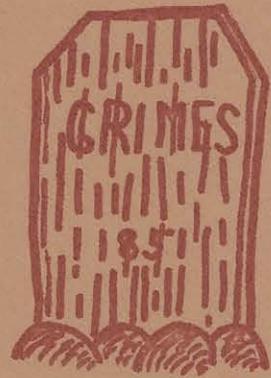
About the first day of January 1851 Mr. Grimes died, partly of dysentery and partly of scurvy; and was buried on the left hand bluff, below the New Jersey claim. This was the first death amongst the pioneer settlers of this creek. Dr. Bacon did all he could for him; but unfortunately had but a small stock of medicines. Our own medicine stock was mostly lost in the hurry of packing over.

About the eighth of Jan. 1851, the writer and a man named Black, butchered the first head of cattle ever butchered above Downieville. Beef readily sold at \$1 per pound in pieces not less than 40 or 50 pounds each.



I forgot to mention that Major Wm. Downie, on Christmas morning, made and hoisted the first American Flag, under a statute to the stars and stripes from all the miners in the creek, with rifles and pistols.

About the middle of January, 1851, the miners in Poorman's Creek having increased to 76, a meeting was called to name the creek, and other purposes. Amongst us, as there



had been considerable robbing going on, as well as gambling, they passed stringent vigilance laws against highway robbery; and no gambler, who DEALT at any game, was allowed to hold a claim. Mining laws were also passed at the same time.

About this time an attempt was gotten up to create an excitement about the mines in Dixon Creek; but it did not amount to much.

Great falls of snow continued to fall in Onion Valley until the town could only be discovered at a distance from the numerous smoke holes in the snow; presenting a very curious appearance.

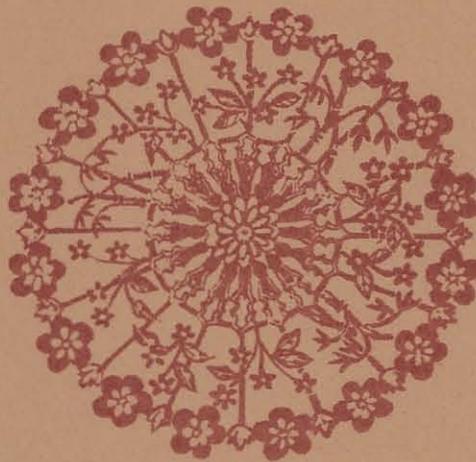
On New Year's morning 1851, our company struck a stratum of gold, and in an hour and a half took rising \$6,000; one piece being \$1800 in gold weight, besides two others, weighing the one, two pounds 12 dollars, and the other, two pounds; and numerous smaller slugs, besides the small gold. This was the largest strike made up to that time on the creek; but a few days, afterwards, the Butte company turned over a large quartz boulder, and took from under it, half a man's hat full. If we had known how to work sluices at this time, we could have made, at the least calculation, one hundred thousand dollars apiece. As it was, the writer went out of this creek with over two hundred pounds troy of gold. Charles Beard, of the New Jersey claim bought an \$1,800 piece, for which he paid company \$1,875.



Early in the spring of 1851, the great rush came; and the place was called, ironically, POOR-MAN'S CREEK NORTH, to distinguish it from Poor-man's creek on the south fork of the

Yuba, discovered by Richard Poorman. Poorman, however, laid claim to having discovered this creek also; and as this soon became the most celebrated, the name has ever remained unaltered. The name proposed for the first settlement was Jamestown; there being a majority of the miners named James on the creek; but the name never came much into use, and soon was dropped. During the big rush, another and larger settlement was located in the big bend above the Falls.

In April 1851, a man was murdered in his tent, and suspicion rested on his partner, who was arrested on a Sunday; but they could not prove anything against him, and he was eventually liberated, with a polite request that his room was more acceptable than his presence. He accordingly left. It was never known certainly, whether he committed the act or not; but public opinion was against him.



A Visit To The Downieville Museum

A visit to the Downieville Museum is a must for anyone who may be passing through, staying at, or visiting near the historic and picturesque old town. The museum is housed in an ancient, rustic stone building constructed in 1852. The building was first used as a Chinese store, as it then stood in the center of the Chinese district of Downieville. The store passed into the hands of the Meroux family. In 1932 the building was donated to Downieville (and Sierra County) by M.B. Meroux. The Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West act as custodians of the museum now, and the hostess who greets visitors is Mrs. Ruth Drury.

Mrs. Drury is a pleasant woman who came to Sierra County many years ago to teach school, married into one of the pioneer families of Sierra County (in the Goodyears Bar area), and has lived in Sierra County ever since. She knows the history of the area because of her own interest, and she has studied the various displays in the museum so that she can tell an interesting tale about everything on display. She is more than happy to talk to any interested visitors.

There is no specific plan or order to the displays in the old museum. They simply went on display as they were donated. To the purist the displays may seem somewhat confused and crammed into available space, but for the history buff wishing an enjoyable hour or two of viewing pleasure, the effect of the displays is one of a charming historical potpourri. Each display has a small card telling what it is, when used, and in some cases, by whom donated. Further information can be supplied by Mrs. Drury.

It would be impossible to list all the displays at the museum in a short article. Those displays which seemed to be the most interesting to visitors on August 10, 1970, have been included in the following brief description:

1. In the back of the museum is a stack of some twenty old cash books, ledgers, account books and receipt books. These come from such places as Alleghany in 1881, Forest City in 1897, Alleghany mines in 1874, Eureka in 1878, and many other parts of the County.
2. In two main areas (but also posted all over the museum) is a great collection of pictures from all parts of Sierra County. This year Mrs. Drury is featuring a display of old pictures of Sierra City which were recently donated to the Museum. Another display of interest is one of the Young America Mine; all pictures in this display were taken before the turn of the century. Of special interest are pictures of many settlements which have ceased to exist.

3. Roller skates made in the 1870's and used in Downieville at the Stackus Skating Rink in the 1880's are on display. Following is an advertisement for the skating rink taken from the Sierra County Tribune (Downieville), June 7, '83:

STACKUS HALL SKATING RINK
SKATING SCHOOL

Every
Afternoon and evening!

Mr. Harvey Slade
Gives exhibitions of Fancy
Skating every evening, and is
present at all times to assist
those who desire to learn to
skate.

Admission:

Ladies as spectators.....	Free
Skaters.....	25¢

Rink open afternoons from
2 to 4:30
Evenings from 7:30 to 10:00

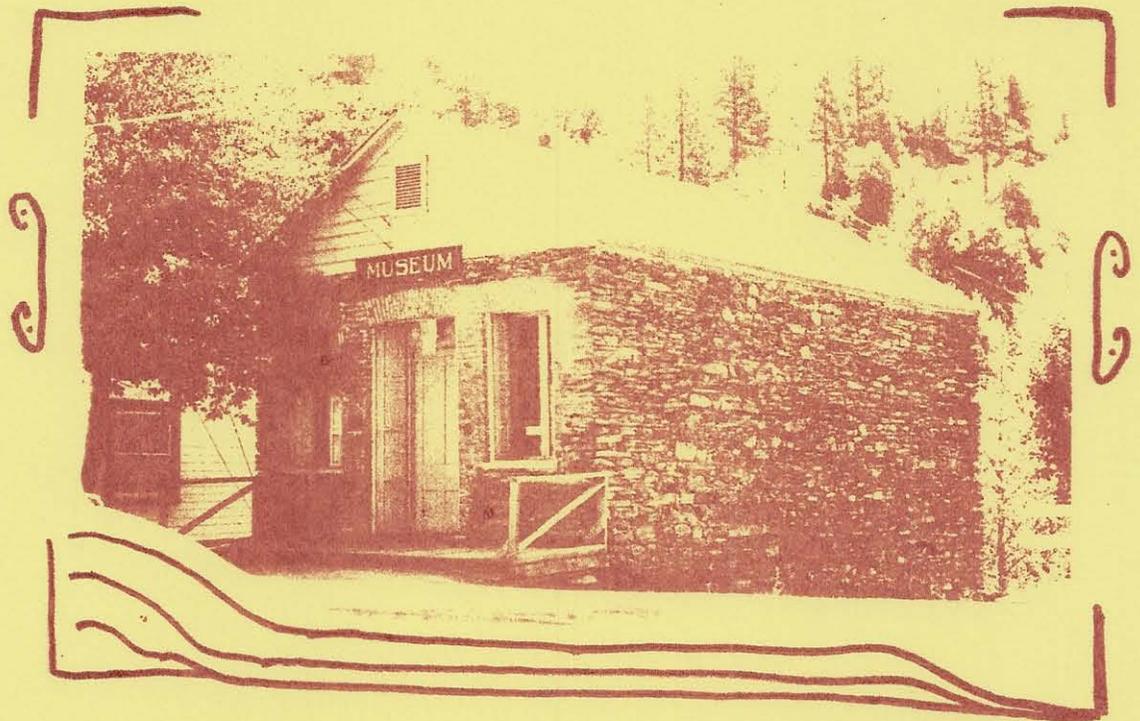
4. Old Clothing. The museum has several old dresses which are well preserved and would be of interest to those interested in styles and fabrics worn by Sierra County ladies over the past 120 years.
5. Old Skies. Several old pairs of skies, over nine feet long are on display. (For people interested in the history of skiing in Sierra County see Sierra County Historical Bulletin, Vol. II, #1.)
6. A Chinese tea canister, some four feet high, made of tin, but obviously oriental in design, was used in the store in the days, before the 1870's, when the museum area of Downieville was a Chinatown.
7. There is an excellent display of Civil War muskets, as well as other old guns used in the Gold Rush Era.
8. A beautiful gold scale used in the Forest City area is on display. Gold from the Bald Mountain Mine, the Ruby Mine, the Bald Mountain Extension, and other mines, was weighed on the scales. Although made some hundred years

ago, it is said that the scales can weigh the mark of a pencil on a piece of paper.

9. There is an interesting map of Sierra County made in 1874, which shows many of the then existing camps which no longer exist.
10. Leather fire hoses from the Downieville Fire Department of the 1880's are on display. The department was then known as the Mountain Torrent Department.

The museum has on file newspapers published in Downieville from 1854 to the present time. This collection of newspapers is reported to be one of the best in California. The Museum and Museum annex (across the street from the museum building) has an excellent reproduction of a gold stamp mill. This display alone would be worth a special trip to the museum. There are many other displays-flags, china, wooden washing machines, books, magazines, etc., which will fascinate any visitor to the museum.

The museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, except for Monday, when it is closed. It opens in May and will close this year (1970) in late October.



The Downieville Museum as it appears today.

Editor's Note: On September 13, 1970, the Native Daughters of the Golden West, Sierraville, Sierra County Chapter (Imogen Parlor), will dedicate a parking area a few feet from the original Beckwourth cabin and ranch. Because of the work done by Imogene Parlor, N.D.G.W., and the activities which will take place during September, we feel that the following article is very timely.

JIM BECKWOURTH
SIERRA VALLEY PIONEER

Snuggled up to the eastern crest of the magnificent Sierra Nevada Mountains, at an altitude of about 5,000 feet, lies the beautiful Sierra Valley. Completely surrounded by mountains, its peace and beauty is magnetic.

For the past century the inhabitants of this valley led quiet and industrious lives, ranching and logging, the supporters of those who dynamically moulded the history of the surrounding area. During the "Era of Gold" they provided food for man and animal and timber for mines and railroads.

But this was not always so. The history of this valley begins with "tourists". The first such tourists to see this beautiful valley were the Gold Lakers in 1850--men who traveled from the Downieville area in search of the lake of gold. Some of these men returned the following year and staked out a different kind of claim, giving up prospecting for farming. Today there are still those who, once having visited, feel compelled to return and settle, giving their families a little less of the material world but a little more of God's world.

The most notorious wanderer to come under the magnetic spell of this piece of earth was James P. Beckwourth. For thirty eight excitement filled years Jim Beckwourth traveled the western United States as a mountaineer (connected with Bent, Ashley and the Sublettes), a Crow Chief, a trader, and an Army Scout. It is no wonder then, that while traveling the Pitt River country of California in the early spring of 1851, he thought the low place in the mountains to the south to be a pass through the formidable Sierras. With a small party he went to scout the area while his companions went to prospect. In April he entered the Sierra Valley at the head waters of the middle fork of the Feather River and found his guess about a pass to be true. He returned to American Valley, Bidwells Bar and Marysville to obtain subscriptions for a road through this pass. After an enthusiastic welcome for his idea, and the promise of financial aid, he put men to work on the road and returned to the Truckee Meadows to divert a wagon train. In August he reached Marysville with the first train of 17 wagons to cross into California by this new route. The financial aid

he hoped for was not forthcoming because the Marysville businessmen had to rebuild after the fire that leveled Marysville in that month. Jim reported that he spent \$1,600.00 of his own money to improve the road, for which he was never reimbursed.

In 1852 Jim returned to Sierra Valley and established a trading post and hotel for the emigrants who were now using his recently discovered route. Sitting on the porch of the first building erected here he says of this place:

"My house is considered the emigrants' landing place, as it is the first ranch he arrives at in the Golden State, and is the only house between this point and Salt Lake. Here is a valley two hundred and forty miles in circumference, containing some of the choicest land in the world. Its yield of hay is incalculable; the red and white clovers spring up spontaneously, and the grass that covers its smooth surface is of the most nutritious nature. When the weary, toilworn emigrant reaches this valley, he feels himself secure; he can lay himself down and taste refreshing repose, undisturbed by the fear of Indians. His cattle can graze around him in pastures up to their eyes without any danger of being driven off by the Arabs of the forest, and springs them as pure as any that refresh verdant earth."

Here Jim greeted the emigrants and supplied some of their needs. He is said to have never refused any one in need, whether he could pay or not. In the winter of 1854-55 Jim relaxed and dictated his life story to Mr. T.D. Bonner. (Copy of original contract for this story is at end of article.)

He was born in Fredricksburg, Virginia, on April 20, 1798. His father served in the Revolutionary War as a Major. A Denver paper, years later, noted that his mother was a slave and his father an Irish overseer. When Jim was eight years old, his father moved the family and 22 slaves to "Beckwourth's Settlement" at the fork of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. At the age of 10 Jim was sent to St. Louis to school, where he studied for the next four years. He was then apprenticed to a blacksmith, but at 19 he had a fight with his boss, supposedly over Jim's girlfriend, and this led to his father giving him



\$500.00 and sending him off on a hunting trip. Thus began Jim's career in the western mountains.

He joined trapping expeditions, associating with such well known mountaineers as Caleb Greenwood, Jim Bridger, and others of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. His motivation was money enough to make him and his intended bride well off. That never happened, however, for on one trip back to St. Louis he found his love had married another. Jim promptly returned to the mountains.

According to Jim's story it was Caleb Greenwood who, on meeting a band of Crows, told them that Jim was really a Crow who had been captured by the Cheyennes. The Crows told the story around their camps and sometime later, when captured by these tall handsome Indians, Jim found himself surrounded by old squaws eager to reclaim a long lost son. One old mother announced suddenly that if Jim had a mole on his eye lid, he was indeed her son. When the eye lid was inspected, there was a mole! Jim was pampered and paraded as "Morning Star", the son who returned. I wonder if that old mother just happened to notice a mole in all the confusion, and desperately needing a son in her old age, decided that the mark would get her one? Anyway, Jim says he lived with the Crows for 12 years, becoming such a brave and daring warrior that he was made a chief, and at one time had eight wives, with lodges for each.

But the need for money again took him to St. Louis where he traded off his pelts. Hearing of the Indian wars in Florida he headed in that direction and was there for a while. When he returned he joined Sublette and Vasquez in trade with the southern Indian tribes.

This led him to opening his own trading post in Taos, and it led him to another marriage. His wife was Senorita Sander-ville. When he became bored with Taos he loaded a big train of mules with whisky to use for trade for pelts, and traded his way to the "Golden State" that he had been hearing so much about.

In 1844 he was in the Pueblo de Los Angeles when discontent with the Mexican government led to Civil War, and Jim was reportedly in the midst of it! He fought on the side of the revolutionaries until he heard that war had been declared between the United States and Mexico, and that Fremont was coming in from the north. Jim decided it was time to leave. Just to make sure that they wouldn't be used against his own country, Jim rounded up 1,800 horses from the surrounding ranchos, and proceeded to trade his way back to New Mexico. There he joined General Kearney as a dispatch carrier, and it was this operation that led him back to California. His last mission for the army was to

carry messages from Fort Leavenworth to Monterey. In California "gold fever" raged, and feeling that there was more profit in selling than in digging, Jim took a partner and opened a store in Senora. As was his custom, he got bored--sold his share in the store (for \$6,000 he says) and went in search of wilderness, by way of Sacramento, Murderers Bar and then the Pitt River. It was this discovery that led to the discovery of what we now call Beckwourth's Pass.



Jim was not allowed to live out his years here in the peace he wanted. Ours was a new state then, flooded with emigrants in search of gold and riches. What did these people care for an old man full of tales of daring exploits and brave encounters. He had been a Crow, and Crows were notorious horse thieves; why, Jim even bragged about his thieving exploits. Says T.D. Bonner, his biographer, in a manuscript now in the Bancroft Library,

"It is probable his indiscriminate hospitality was cause of his leaving California, for he was charged by the regulators with complicity in the doings of horse thieves. He shook the dust of the state off his feet...."

To New Mexico, Texas and Missouri went Jim, until news of the Pike's Peak gold discovery led him to that area. In the East Jim apparently was given some of the recognition he deserved. The Kansas City Journal of Commerce of September 28, 1859, states:

"This morning one of the oldest, and perhaps the oldest mountaineer now living, leaves this city for the Rocky Mountains. We refer to Mr. James Beckwith, whose autobiography has already been written and published by the Messrs. Harper & Bros.

James Beckwith, the mountaineer referred to, has been a mountain man for the last forty years, and is well known as the "great western" guide and interpreter, being familiar with nearly all the Indian dialects, and speaking the English, French and Spanish languages with equal fluency. In 1837 he held a Captains commission in a muleteer company, under Col. Zac. Taylor."

In Auraria, later known as Denver, he took up storekeeping and bought several pieces of land. In 1859 the Rocky Mountain News noted a visit by Jim.





James P. Beckwourth
This photo made from a Daguerotype
Presented to Ordeli O. Houk in
Loyalton 1855 .

"We recently were honored by a visit from this justly celebrated mountaineer and adventurer, and enjoyed a long conversation, in which he fought his battles over again, and narrated his thrilling adventures by flood and field.

We had formed the opinion, as has, we presume almost everyone, that Capt. Beckwourth was a rough, illiterate back-woodsman, but were most agreeably surprised to find him a polished gentleman, possessing a fund of general information which few can boast. He is now sixty two years of age, but looks scarce fifty, hale, hearty, and straight as an arrow...."

Of his life in Denver, Mumey states;

"Jim Beckworth became one of the early pioneers and citizens of Denver during the formative period, and helped serve the needs of the early settlers by selling them provisions and supplies."

In 1860 he married Elizabeth Leadbetter who is said to have been of Mexican descent; his will left all he possessed to her. Of the two known children born of this marriage, we know only that both died young.

Jim didn't seem to enjoy living with people around him, and he soon sold his store interests and moved to a ranch near Denver. There he lived with an Indian girl named Sue, ranching, hunting and trapping in the Indian manner.

He couldn't quite stay on good terms with the law, even in his old age, having been charged with theft (again) and manslaughter, but he seems to have cleared himself of the charges.

Along with freedom to live a quiet and peaceful life as in the old days, Jim wanted justice for the Indians. Knowing and respecting the Indians, Jim felt compelled to speak in their behalf, and in 1860 he wrote to the newspaper in Denver:

"The Indians are as keenly sensible to acts of injustice, as they are tenacious of revenge, and it is more humiliating to them to be the recipients of such treatment upon their own lands, which they have been deprived of, their game driven off and they made to suffer by



hunger, and when they pay us a visit, abused more than dogs. My advice is, that municipal regulations be made, preventing the sale of intoxicating drinks to them, with such penalties as would make the law respected. And all emigrants who are on their way here, ought to, most religiously, refrain from giving Indians whisky, or trading it to them for their horses, for if he sells his pony, he will steal one from the next white man that comes along. All our Indian troubles are produced by the imprudent acts of unprincipled white men."

Wise words these. Pity they were not heeded!

Jim hated the whiteman's encroachment on the wilderness he loved. Perhaps it was this that led him to sign as an army scout on what was to be his last journey into untamed Indian country. In 1866 he went with Colonel Henry B. Carrington to help build Fort C.F. Smith, in what is now north-eastern Wyoming. He never returned. A Lt. Templeton was stationed at Fort C.F. Smith at the time and recorded the most accurate account we have of Jim's death.

Lt. Templeton writes that on September 29, 1866, Jim and a man named Thompson left the fort for Crow country. On October 20, some Crows reported that two white men were in their village, and that on October 30, Thompson returned to the fort and related that Jim had become ill soon after he left the fort, and had later died in the Crow village. The Crows had buried him after their custom.

On February 8, 1867, the Sacramento Union, in an article taken from the Denver Gazette, informed Californians of Jim's death:

"We learn with regret of the death of Jim Beckworth, on the Laramie Plains. We have known poor Jim for some years, and can testify to the fact that he was ever more sinned against than sinning. There are few men in the world who have passed through a more exciting or eventful history than he, and there are but a few men who had a heart bigger than he. Many of the exciting and startling stories he told of his comrades and contemporaneous pioneers and frontiersmen of the West, together with the romances told of his own personal adventurous history, to many seemed too startling to be true, but there are many men on the western frontier who can vouch for their truth. Poor Jim has gone to his happy hunting grounds and may he rest in peace after his eventful career is the warm wish of many a true friend in Colorado."

When Jim Beckworth died, his deeds were largely forgotten,

Denver people renamed the street and church that had borne his name. Beckwourth Valley became Sierra Valley, and the small town of Beckwourth became Beckwith; people thought it was named after a Lt. Beckwith of the Army Engineers.

Beckwourth himself understood "civilized" ways of remembering those gone when he wrote telling us of his capture by the Crows:

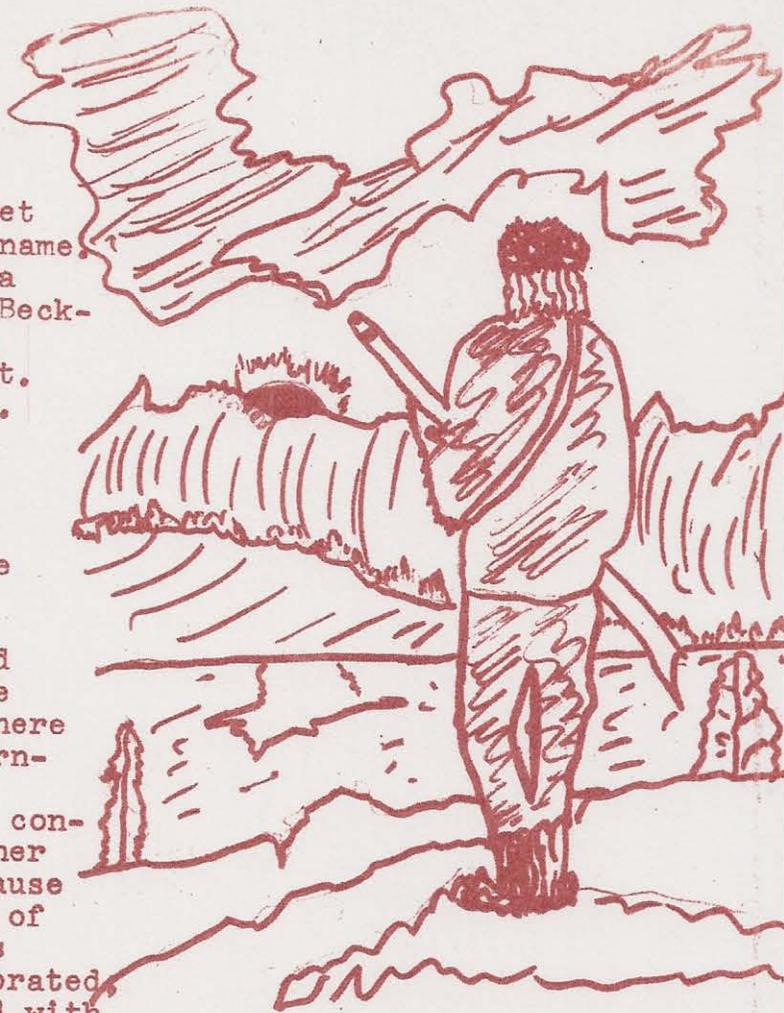
"My death was communicated to the rendezvous when the fall hunt was over, and there was a general time of mourning in mountain style. I say "mountain style" in contradistinction to the manner of civilized circles, because with them, when the death of a comrade is deplored, his good deeds alone are celebrated, his evil ones are interred with his bones. Modern politics have introduced the custom of perpetuating all that is derogatory to a man's fair name, and burying in deep oblivion all that was honorable and praiseworthy. Hence I say, Give me the mountaineer, despite all the opprobrium that is cast upon his name, for in him you have a man of chivalrous feeling, ready to divide his last morsel with his distressed fellow---ay, and to yield the last drop of his blood to defend the life of his friend."

How accurately Jim presaged the manner of our "civilized" remembering. Now that is changing; a reevaluation of this man and his deeds is taking place. It is being noted that his contemporaries in the fur trade gave credence to Jim's book. These mountain men were a rough bunch with the courage to explore the unknown territory and meet the challenges of a new and many times hostile land. Their methods and motives would be highly questioned in a more civilized area, but they did open up the West for expansion---for you and for me.

It is time that Jim Beckwourth received the acclaim he deserves for his many contributions to the West.

Sources:

Bonner, T.D., The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth.



Mumey, Nolie James Pierson Beckwourth, An Enigmatic Figure of the West 1856-1866 (All quotes not otherwise noted are from this book.)

Note: In a letter to Imogen Parlor #134, member Elizabeth Dearwater Brown tells this story:

"James Beckwourth and my grandfather Perry were old friends in the Rocky Mountains long before either came to Sierra Valley. James Beckwourth came first, and when Grandpa started for California, word got to Beckwourth that his friend, Perry, was on his way. He rode east to meet him. This meeting took place at what is now Vinton, and Beckwourth took one of the two Perry babies on his saddle with him, and it was in this way the Perry family reached the beautiful Valley we all love so much. Grandpa wanted to find the shortest route to the Sacramento Valley. This, as Beckwourth pointed out, was the old Emigrant Trail, and it took my grandparents to Marysville. The train separated at what is now Vinton and the 19 other wagons went by way of Quincy, Chico to Red Bluff where they had friends mining."

Mrs. Brown is a member of a valley pioneer family. The Perry's returned to the Valley and settled on what is now the Weber place, just outside Sierraville. Mrs. Brown's mother, Noni Perry Dearwater, passed away two years ago at the age of 97. Noni had many marvelous tales to tell of the "old days".

Note: Mrs. Jane Ramelli, who now owns the original Beckwourth ranch, and the cabin that was Beckwourth's trading post, has done some research into her property records. The first legal owner of this land was a Harriat Kirby, et. al., who filed homestead papers in 1862, and purchased the land and cabin from the government.

Note: The Plumas County records also show two agreements between Beckwourth and Bonner for the writing of Beckwourth's book. The first is dated the 25th of October, and is between Beckwourth and Bonner, and the second dated the 2nd of November, 1854, is between Bonner, Beckwourth and a Joseph S. Davis of Yuba County, who was to pay \$200.00 and a share of the publishing expense to become a full partner in the endeavor. The Plumas Museum in Quincy has the original of one of these.

An interesting article on T.D. Bonner, as Justice of Quartz Township, can be read in the Plumas County Historical Society publication, #15.

Notes on the Author: Mrs. Arlene Amodei, Secretary of the Sierra County Historical Society, submits the article on Jim Beckwourth. Arlene is an elementary school teacher, but is "retired" at the present time while she takes up the duties of a "professional" house wife and mother. She lives in Sierraville with her husband and her 15 month old son. She studied at the University of California at Davis and at Sacramento State.



The Jim Beckwourth "cabin" has it appeared in 1868 and roughly as it appears today.

On September 13, 1970, Imogen Parlor, N.D.G.W. will erect a marker in honor of James Pierson Beckwourth. Today's "tourist" will be able to drive off Interstate 70, just east of Beckwourth's trading post on an adjoining hill, and there, in the quiet shade of the pines, and viewing the same peaceful valley upon which Jim looked, learn a little more about our valley's most famous "tourist".



1970 MEMBERSHIP IN THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We are publishing the names and addresses of our 1970 members in the Historical Society for the information of our members, and in hopes that members may get acquainted and be able to exchange information of interest with each other.

- 1-Florence Alcorn
Arlington Towers-Apt. J539
1121 Arlington Blvd.
Arlington, Va. 22201
- 2-Arlene Amodei
Box 173
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 3-Elaine Amodei
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 4-Associated Students
Loyalton High School
Loyalton, Calif. 96118
- 5-Richard Avignone
783 Rodney Dr.
San Leandro, Ca. 94577
- 6-Frank M. Bacon
3015 Prospect Ave.
La Crescenta, Ca. 91014
- 7-Mr. and Mrs. Steve Beck
Box 1007
Nevada City, Ca. 95959
- 8-Mrs. Theresa Bedell
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 9-Robert W. Bibby
355 Racetrack St.
Auburn, Ca. 95603
- 10-Mr. Bishop
County Assessor
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 11-Theo. H. Blum
Box 131
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 12-Frances Bony
Box 185
Bangor, Ca. 95914
- 13-Amy Bowman
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 14-Rita Bradley
Sattley, Ca. 96124
- 15-Peggy Brooks
Alleghany, Ca.
- 16-Dr. & Mrs. George Caen
7677 Greenridge Way
Fair Oaks, Ca. 95628
- 17-California State Library
Box 2037
Sacramento, Ca. 95809
- 18-Jeanne Carmichael
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 19-Frances J. Carter
Box 175
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 20-Alexander B. Cecil
350 So. Ham Lane
Lodi, Ca. 95240
- 21-Chico State College
Chico, Ca. 95926
- 22-E. C. Christenson
Little Buck Inn
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 23-Winslow Christian
65 Montclair Terrace
San Francisco, Ca. 94109
- 24-Mary Lou Christy
16460 Janine Drive
Whittier, Ca. 90603
- 25-Georgene Copren
Box 98
Sierraville, Ca. 96126

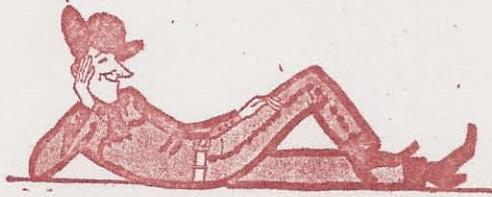


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- 26-Jennie Copren
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- 27-William G. Copren
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Reno, Nevada
- 28-Estelle Deir
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- 29-Donald R. Dickey
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San Francisco, Ca. 94108
- 30-David B. Dickson
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Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 31-Dorothy Dyer
2008 Clinton Ave.
Alameda, Calif. 94501
- 32-H. Ellery
Box 269
Placerville, Ca. 95667
- 33-Sharon Elorza
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 34-Mrs. Fay Farley
Box 81
Sierra City, Ca. 96126
- 35-Willard P. Fuller, Jr.
Box 694
San Andreas, Ca. 95249
- 36-Mrs. Robert Geer, Jr.
311 Gibson Rd.
Woodland, Ca.
- 37-Mrs. Selma Genasci
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 38-Miss Elizabeth L. George
134 So. Auburn St.
Grass Valley, Ca. 95945
- 39-Esther Goss
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 40-Mabel Gossman
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 41-Gottardi's
163 Bret Harte
Reno, Nevada
- 42-Edna Gottardi
Box 305
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- 43-Milton Gottardi
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 44-Betty L. Greene
Box 215
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 45-Mrs. W.E. Greig
Box 627
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 46-Robert Gwinn
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 47-Mary Haggard
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 48-Mr. Harry Halatyn
334 Forum Bldg.
Sacramento, Ca. 95814
- 49-Dr. Wm. Hammerman
10 St. James Court
Daly City, Ca. 94015
- 50-Olea S. Haueter
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Whittier, Ca. 90603
- 51-Jack Hawkins
26464 Taaffe Rd.
Los Altos, Hills, Ca. 94022
- 52-Mrs. Henery
School District Office
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 53-Hugh Herrington
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 54-Annabel F. Higgins
415 Aeolia Drive
Auburn, Ca. 95603
- 55-Mary R. Hope
Box 895
Alleghany, Calif. 95910
- 56-Carl E. Horn
5301 F St.
Sacramento, Ca. 95819

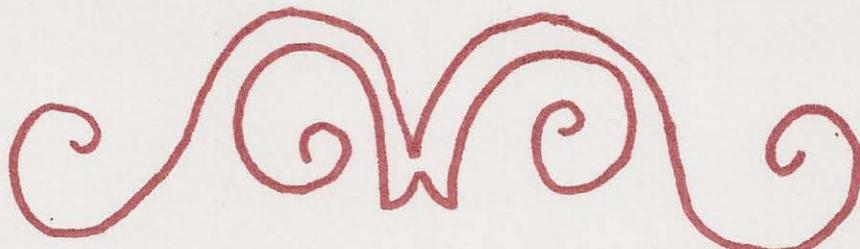


- 57-Mrs. Roy Hutchison
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- 58-Mrs. W.B. Johnson
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- 59-G.J. Kerr
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- 60-Harry B. Klein
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- 61-Vera J. Koehler
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Sacramento, Ca. 95819
- 62-E.L. Labadie
3929 O'Neill Drive
San Mateo, Ca. 94403
- 63-Margaret E. Lambert
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 64-Leona Lindgren
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 65-Earl Little
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 66-Lucille Little
44 Camino Encinas
Orinda, Calif. 94563
- 67-Adella Lombardi
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 68-Louis Lombardi
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 69-Helen M. Lowey
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 70-Mr. & Mrs. Mike Lynch
803 Piere #51
Wenatchee, Wash. 98801
- 71-Jeanne M. Moses
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- 72-James W. May
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 73-Charles McDermid
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- 74-Harold I. McGrath
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- 75-Victoria M. McKinney
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 76-Forrest McMahan
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- 77-Jeanne W. McMahan
Box 67
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 78-Arlene V. Nelson
Box 128
Sierra City, Ca. 96125





- 79-Marilyn Nessler
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- 80-Sam Ogawa
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Riverside, Ca. 92505
- 81-Beverly Perry
3306 Neolopua Dr.
Honolulu, Hawaii
- 82-Dallas Poston
9537 Sara St.
Elk Grove, Ca. 95624
- 83-Joan Roth
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 84-San Jose State College
San Jose, Ca. 95114
- 85-Lou Saralegui
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 86-Edwina Savage
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 87-Carl Scholberg
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 88-Maren Scholberg
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 89-Lotti Schultz
3854 Edgehill Dr.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90008
- 90-Angelina Cabello Sem
Chiesa P. Sondrio
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- 91-Mrs. Harvey Sheehan
Racerby, Ca. 95972
- 92-Sierra College
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Auburn, Ca. 95677
- 93-James J. Sinnott
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 94-Gladys M. Skinner
2204 Silver Lake Blvd.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90039
- 95-St. Charles Cocktail Lounge
Chet & Dori Taylor
Downieville, Ca. 95936
- 96-Moreland L. Stevens
421 Aeolia Dr.
Auburn, Ca. 95603
- 97-Lillian H. Stoner
Star Route
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 98-Arthur M. Strang
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 99-Erma Strang
Sierraville, Ca. 96126
- 100-Vernon Taylor
291 Riverside Dr.
Napa, Ca. 94558
- 101-James Trigg
Loyalton, Ca. 96118
- 102-Sophie Tschopp
Sierra City, Ca. 96125
- 103-Barbara Turner
Box 7
Sattley, Ca. 96124



104-Mrs. Frank R. Turner
Sattley, Ca. 96124

105-James T. Turner
Sattley, Ca. 96124

106-University of California
Serials Dept.
Berkeley, Ca. 94720

107-University of California
Vernon G. Lust
Davis, Ca. 95616

108-University of Nevada
Library
Reno, Nevada 89507

109-Virginia A. Vivian
Forest City, Ca. 95910

110-Thelma Weathers
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

111-Dr. John E. Westfall
Dept. of Geography
San Francisco State
San Francisco, Ca. 94132

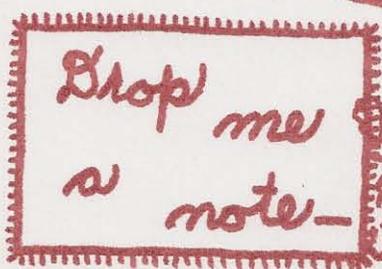
112-Auburn White
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

113-Lynn White
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

114-Norma White
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

115-Roy White
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

116-Bert Whittaker
Loyalton, Ca. 96118



117-Dr. Robt. Winchell
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

118-Earl Withycombe
Box 34
Sierra City, Ca. 96125

119-Bill Woods
Sierra City, Ca. 96125

120-Hal Wright
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

Members missed in our first listing:

121-Alfred Anderson
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

122-Patsy Belli
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

123-Bob Bowling, Jr.
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

124-Roy E. Freeburg
2105 Mar East
Tiburon, Ca. 94920

125-Frederick E. Goodwin
142 Grenada Dr.
Corte Madera, Ca. 94925

126-Vera Gormley
Loyalton, Ca. 96118

127-University of the Pacific
Dr. R. Cokewood
Stockton, Ca. 94541

