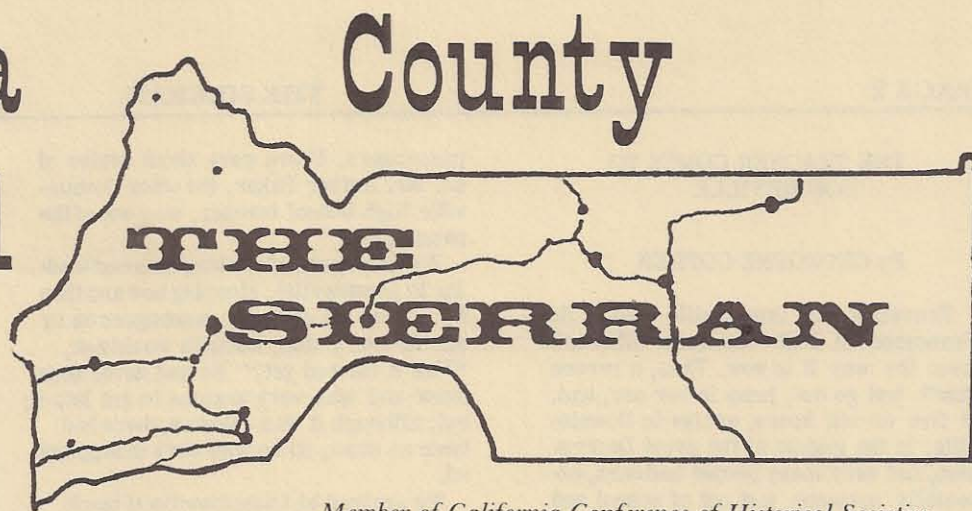


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Sierra Historical Society



Member of California Conference of Historical Societies

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The Local Historical Society As A Community Resource

By President Herbert Ely Garcia

*California Conference of
Historical Societies*

You are important to your community whether **they** know it or not. Who are **they**? The ones unaware of the existence of the local historical society or association. And further, **they** are often asking, in essence, "Where can I find out something more about this area? How can I assure the survival of that structure, or recognition of this site? What should I do with these materials?"

For several years in the near past, there has been a drifting away from the study of history.

We are today seeing a resurgence of interest in history and in genealogy. Individuals, groups, and entire communities are once more searching for their past and attempting to preserve for the future things of yesterday and today. Of course, there have always been those who have encouraged, nurtured and maintained historical pursuits. You are the people who have contributed to these tremendously important activities. Now is the time to demonstrate to others just how important a resource our local historical society is.

By the efforts of local historical societies, history is being recognized, studied and preserved. You are preparing the present to accept the past

to shape the future. You are making way for the things which today are "commonplace" but tomorrow will be "historical."

The local historical society must perceive itself as the hunter and gatherer of the present for the future. Too often we expand our efforts only in attempts at finding things of the near or distant past. We must begin today to recognize those subjects and objects which will be of historical significance tomorrow.

It is all-important that we record the reminiscences of those who have contributed so greatly to our development; those who have had unique experiences; have made unusual contributions to our society, or have achieved in a manner which is beyond the norm. However, let us not forget that there are dying arts and crafts which today are taken for granted, yet which tomorrow will no longer be within our ken.

The local historical society, by its example and the encouragement of the communities within the sphere of its influence can preserve and maintain all aspects of history. For instance, how many blacksmiths are still plying their trade? Is there still an herbalist in your town? Can you find a wheelwright or cooper? Is there still someone who weaves wicker? When was the last time you spoke with a harness maker?

Young historians are anxious to be advised. "Where do I go? To whom should I direct my questions? What is the future of history?"

The future is now! The local historical society has at its grasp opportunities in such diverse areas as oral history, preservation, site-recognition, restoration, and the conduct of tours to acquaint the general populace as well as visitors with the wealth of history that is at its doorstep.

A TRIP TO THE NEW LAND

by Julia Cobia

as told to Georgene Copren

We lived in a little town in Italy. It is so long ago now that I don't even remember the name. In 1904 Papa and Ben, my oldest brother who was about fifteen at the time, decided to come to Verdi, Nevada. The next year my Uncle John and Aunt Fena followed them. With them went my two other brothers, Rocco, about fourteen and John who was eleven. All the men and boys worked at various jobs since there were no child labor laws then.

It took a long time for Papa to save enough money to pay the passage for all the rest of us, so it wasn't until 1907 that Mama, Grandma, my three sisters, Mary, Virginia and Emilia and myself were able to leave for the new country.

Papa wrote for us not to buy any new clothes in Italy because they would be different and he wanted us to look like everyone else. However, he insisted that we all buy new hats

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THE TEACHER COMES TO DOWNEVILLE

By GEORGENE COPREN

Traveling to Downieville from San Francisco in 1930 was quite different from the way it is now. Then, a person didn't just go out, jump in her car, and, in five or six hours, arrive in Downieville. In the middle of the great Depression, not very many people had cars, especially someone just out of school and working in a very low paying job. So, when I got an offer to go to Downieville in the middle of winter, transportation was quite a problem.

After five years at the university studying to be a high school English teacher, I found that there were no job openings for high school teachers, especially English teachers, so I took a job in an insurance office as a file clerk at \$60.00 a month. So, when I was offered a temporary job in Downieville at \$180.00 a month, this was a richness that couldn't be refused, so I accepted. Of course, I knew that it was only a temporary position because of the illness of the teacher, but I was young and confident and figured it might work into something more permanent. Now, after forty eight years in Sierra County, I think it might be considered permanent.

But to get back to the transportation problem. I was informed that the bus for Downieville left Sacramento at 5 a.m. The earliest train from San Francisco didn't arrive there until much later. The only thing left to do was to go up the river at night on the Delta King. The boat arrived in Sacramento some time during the night, but passengers were allowed to stay in their cabins until they were ready to leave.

That trip was one of the most beautiful I have ever taken. It was a gorgeous night with the full moon shing on the smooth, wide Sacramento River. The gentle rocking of the boat lulled one to sleep like a babe in a cradle.

Anyway, bright and early the next morning, I was ready for the trip to Downieville. My younger brother, Kenneth, who had just graduated from high school, was given the trip to go with me as a graduation present. Actually, I think my mother was a little bit worried about what would happen to her only daughter when she got out in the hinterland. I'm sure city people at that time though Indians and wild animals still roamed the streets of the town.

When Kenneth and I arrived at the place we were to meet the "bus", we found a rather decrepit 1912 white truck with canvas sides and benches for the

passengers. There were about twelve of us. Mr. Arthur Baker, the other Downieville High School teacher, was one of the passengers.

We slowly rambled along the road leading to Downieville, stopping now and then for gas or oil or to let passengers on or off. At every stop, Kenneth would ask, "Has it snowed yet?" He had never seen snow and was very anxious to get into it; but, although it was January, there had been no snow, so he was very disappointed.

We arrived at Camptonville at lunch time and stopped at the hotel there to eat. The view was breathless, with deep green canyons on one side and steep cliffs on the other. The waitress kept us regaled during lunch with tales of all the accidents they had around there, and of finding people draped on the trees down in the canyon. Not a very cheerful luncheon conversation, but youth is always resilient and we knew it wouldn't happen to us. And it didn't!

During the trip, one of the passengers had a flask of whiskey and kept taking a nip now and then. Mr. Baker, who was a tee-totaler, just kept getting blacker and blacker. When the other passengers got out at Camptonville, he stayed behind, found the flask, and threw it down into the trees and bushes below us. The poor drinker must have wondered what happened to it, but he never asked.

We kept on toward Downieville with nary a flake of snow. However, when we got about to Goodyear's Bar, it started to snow --- and it snowed, and snowed, and snowed! It must have snowed six feet during the next week. I remember the snow was halfway up to the middle of the very high windows of the house where I was staying.

Arrangements had been made for me to board with Mrs. Redding, the widow of

the late Judge Redding. She was a lovely, charming lady and I enjoyed living with her for the next three months. We were friends for as long as she lived.

Kenneth stayed at the St. Charles Hotel. After the excitement of the snow, there wasn't much for him to do as he

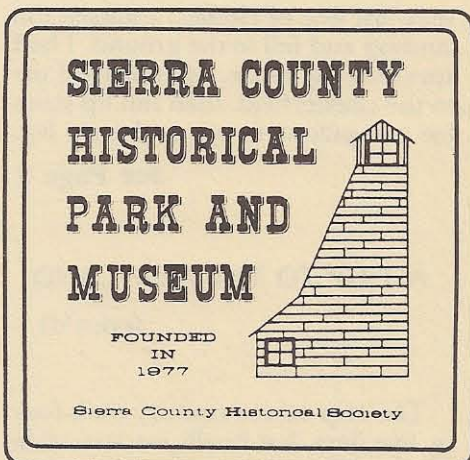


Schoolhouse -- January 1930

Downieville H.S. 1930

Front row: David Ayres, Ralph Costa, Alton Cook, Mary Veek, Mildred Erwin, Second row: Opal Johnson, Mary Ellen Dugan, Bernice Allison, Anna Dubuque, Dolly Myers, Irene Scott, Wilma Erwin Top row: Frank Poggi, Mrs. Copren, Bill Lloyd, Bill Ayres, Willabel Ayres, George Backels.





THE KENTUCKY MINE AND MUSEUM: AN UPDATE

By Jim Fajardo, Curator

On May 29th, 1977, the Sierra County Historical Park and Museum was dedicated by the Sierra County Historical Society and officially became Sierra County's second historical institution. (The Downieville Museum has been in operation for many years under the guidance of the Native Daughters of the Golden West.) Located at the Kentucky Mine one-half mile west of Sierra City on Highway 49, it opened its doors to the public on July 3, 1977. Due to its location the SCHP&M has received the appropriate nickname of the Kentucky Mine Museum.

In its short existence the Kentucky Mine Museum has received well over two thousand artifacts, photos and documents in donations. These items represent a variety of the facets of human life in early day Sierra County: religion, business, agriculture, mining, logging, education, fraternal organizations, etc. There are also some items that pre-date the white man's arrival. Thus, it should not be construed that since the museum is located at a gold mine that it deals only with mining.

A procedure has been established to process donations to the museum and a library set up for the retrieval of information. A library and research area has been set aside on the main floor where the card catalog and research materials will be available for use.

The restoration of the 10-stamp mill and blacksmith shop has been delayed due to a number of reasons, but it is expected to resume shortly. The mill is sufficiently restored to allow safe public inspection, but the blacksmith shop and tunnel require quite a bit of attention. During the open season, tours are conducted daily which includes a view from the outside of the shop interior and a de-

tailed account of the operation of the mill.

Plans for the 1978 season call for the completion of the access road and parking lot, the establishment of a nature trail with identified flora and rocks, the expansion of the picnic areas, the development of a water system for fire protection and the completion of the mill restoration. Future work will include the restoration of the blacksmith shop and tunnel, the construction of a miner's cabin and an amphitheater.

Though the amphitheater is at the bottom of the priority list, its eventual construction would greatly increase the usefulness of the park grounds. In addition to Museum functions, it could be used by various organizations in the area.

Starting May 27th the Kentucky Mine

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A TRIP TO THE NEW LAND

(cont'd)

and wear them when we arrived in Verdi instead of the scarves which we all wore in Italy.

So when we got to Genoa, where we were to get on the boat, we went on a shopping spree and Grandma, Mama, Mary, Virginia, Emilia and I all bought beautiful new hats for our arrival in Verdi. But we wouldn't think of wearing them until our arrival, so it was my job to lug the huge box containing all those hats from Genoa to Verdi. Papa was so insistent that we should look like all the other children that we didn't start to school until after Mama had made a trip to Reno to buy dress material, shoes, and other clothes so we would look like the others.

When we were getting ready to leave, we worried about Grandma because she was very old and we didn't know if she would be able to make the trip. Besides, she always got sick, even riding in a horse-drawn buggy. However, on the two week trip from Genoa to New York Mama was sick the whole time, but Grandma never was, and she took care of all of us little girls.

Finally we arrived at Ellis Island in New York City. This was a terrible experience. No one spoke Italian and we couldn't understand any English so we didn't know what anyone was trying to tell us. When we

were all supposed to do something, they would crack a whip. This was our only communication with the authorities.

We stayed on Ellis Island for three days with no beds or chairs. All we had were hard wooden benches to rest on. We were so tired!! Another thing, the food on the boat had been delicious—just what we liked and were used to. But the meals at Ellis Island were horrible. The food was so different we could hardly eat it.

Another thing that happened at Ellis Island was that we nearly lost Grandma. There was this big empty box-like thing. They put Grandma in it, closed the gate and she went up and up with all of us crying and screaming. We were sure she was going to Heaven! But soon she came back—just the same as ever. This was our first experience with an elevator.

Finally we got on the train to Chicago. Of course, we couldn't afford berths so we had to sleep sitting up clear across the continent. Mama bought big boxes of food for each of us to eat on the train. People sold food at every stop and there were many of those. Also, there were "butcher boys" who went through the train selling delicious looking fruit and other foods, but we could never buy any because everything was too expensive. Once, one of the butcher boys left a lovely red apple for each of us. Oh, how wonderful they looked! Mama said they must have been a gift, so we all ate the delicious fruit. Pretty soon the boy came back and charged us twenty-five cents for each apple!

At one place where we changed trains, Mama met a man returning to Italy. He was the first person she could talk to since we left the boat, and was she happy to be able to talk to someone who could understand her! This man said the best thing about the United States was its beer. That was delicious, he said. Mama asked if she could get some and he said, "Sure!". So Grandma, Mama, the stranger, and we four little girls went over to the first saloon (there were six or seven in the block next to the station), sat up at the counter and ordered beer for all and all were served!

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FROM ROSEVILLE TO LOYALTON

by Gwen Lynch

In 1940, Bob, little Mike (2½) and I were living in Roseville where Bob worked for Huskinsons Pharmacy (Barrett Huskinson was from a pioneer family of Quincy). On a spring Sunday afternoon, we took a ride to Truckee, asked there for direction to Loyalton because we had heard that there was a little Drug Store for sale there and this seemed a good time to make some inquiries about it. After going through snow, hail and rain and with a large black cloud hanging over the town, we arrived in Loyalton.

When we crossed the town bridge, someone waved. A few blocks later, someone else waved. We stopped at the Drug Store where a posted sign stated: CLOSED—Will be back after the ball game. We asked directions of Fred Squires to the ball park and to the residence of the local doctor. We drove to Dr. Bud Moore's place at the old Lavery Hospital building only to learn that Dr. Moore was one of the ball players as was Ernie Spinetti, the pharmacist. We decided to join them so off to the ball game down by the Clover Valley Lumber Company we did go. By now the sun was shining brightly. We found Bud and Ernie and met so many friendly people. After the game, we drove back to the Drug Store and took a look, made the necessary inquiries then started for home. When Bob asked, "Wouldn't you love to live in such a friendly town?", I agreed.

Back in Roseville, we told Barrett about the Loyalton Drug Store. With a promise from Barrett to sign a note for us and with some help from my Dad, "Pete" Berland, we started making plans. We returned the next week to see Joel Conklin, Manager of Clover Valley Lumber Co., to ask about the business future of the town. Joel, with pipe in his mouth, leaned back in his swivel chair and said, "Well, maybe about six months more or less." That didn't sound too good, but Bob said to me, "Let's buy it anyway. With such a beautiful valley and friendly people, it has to have a bright future."

A few days later, Marcel Bony came by the store in Roseville and

urged Bob to come to Loyalton. A few weeks later, our friends, Martha and Lauren Kuhlman, drove us there to see about buying the store. We visited the old Genasci ranch and the McKinneys. Lauren had gone to the University of Nevada with Julio and Attilio Genasci and Louie and Lucille McKinney.

On July 31, 1940 Bob came up to take over the store. Mike and I followed the next day with Athel Smith and a truckload of furniture to move into the Caesar Lombardi house across from the Mercantile Store. But something had happened and we learned we didn't have a house after all! One of the Lombardis had made arrangements with Wilma Spinetti for us to live there while the other had rented it to another party! So Athel took over and brought our furniture to his warehouse in back of the Jamieson Grocery Store, then on to the hotel with our bags and baggage where Carolyn Johnson rented us an apartment downstairs. However, in order to have a private bathroom, we had to rent a bedroom and bath upstairs. So you know where Mike and I spent the next several weeks—up and down stairs, in and out of the warehouse! It was a nice way though, to meet so many people.

That very first Thursday evening, we went to the Golden West Hotel for dinner and were welcomed by Lucy and Axel Masholm, Bing Gee and Amy Westall who was helping them. This was the beginning of many pleasant dinners at the old Hotel and of many pleasant years of association with Amy and her family.

On Sunday, Mike and I went to church. When Mike heard the organ playing, he jumped up on the pew bench and said, "Let's dance, Mom!" Well, you may know that we met everyone after church.

Several weeks later we moved into our first three-story house—the only existing one that I know of that had only five rooms. Yes, it was Caesar Lombardi's house. I'm not sure which one won out, but I was very pleased and excited to have a place of our own. The next morning I washed all the clothes in the house. I hung out line after line. There was a landing that had to be stepped out on to reach the clothes line. On the

very last line of clothes, I missed the landing and fell to the ground. I had sprained my ankle. Mike helped me to the chesterfield, then ran up stairs for two pillows to put under my leg,

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A TRIP TO THE NEW LAND

(cont'd)

The trip across country took four or five days, but finally we arrived in Verdi. We were so tired. It was 5 A.M. in the middle of November, dark and cold, and no one was there to meet us. We waited in the dark, cold station for several hours. All during the trip it had been my job to lug the big box with all our hats. Now we debated whether to wear them or not. Papa's orders had been to wear them when we got to Verdi, but since it was dark and there was no one to see us, we decided not to. So we had carried those hats all the way from Italy to Verdi and never once wore them!

Finally one of Papa's neighbors came and took us to her home and one of our brothers later came and got us. Papa had gone to Reno to meet us as he thought we would get off there! It was quite an introduction to our new home.

We lived in Verdi for a long time. When I was about eighteen, I married Cob. At the time he worked for C.D. Terwilliger, making laths, earning \$2.25 an hour. When Mr. Terwilliger came to Loyalton to manage the Clover Valley Lumber Co., he offered Cob the same job at \$3.25 an hour and promised him winter work, so we packed up and moved to Loyalton.

I hated it. We stayed several years, but in 1921 there wasn't enough work, so we moved back to Verdi. How happy I was!! I told the grocer that I would NEVER be back.

But Cob always had an idea that he wanted to put in a pool hall in Loyalton. So in 1926 we came back and Cob built his pool hall. He bought Dr. Coat's house on Main St. and enlarged it for his business. And we have been here ever since!



MY STORY

by Florence Huntley

People sometimes ask me, "How did you happen to come to Loyalton to live?" It's a long story, involving a chain of events which started way back at the time the Western Pacific railway tunnel was built at Chilcoot. (1910 ?)

An aunt of mine was married to an engineer who worked on this tunnel. During the months they lived in Chilcoot, they looked up some of my uncle's distant relatives, who lived in Loyalton. Evidently they visited back and forth a good deal, and became acquainted with many people who lived here then. Some of these friendships, and one in particular, lasted many years.

After the tunnel was finished, my aunt and uncle moved to Oregon where they lived for many years. When my uncle died, my aunt came to Nevada City to live with our family. That was the year I graduated from high school. When I decided to go to San Jose to school, she thought she would like to go there, rent a house and board me and other girls who were attending school there.

This worked out very well and during the spring of the year I was to graduate one of the women with whom my aunt had become friendly years before in Loyalton came to San Jose to visit her.

I sent applications for a teaching position here, there and anywhere I heard of a vacancy. The lady from Loyalton told us she knew they needed three new elementary school teachers there for the next year, and that I should, by all means, send in an application. This I did.

Loyalton was completely unknown territory as far as I was concerned, but jobs were none too plentiful, so when I received a contract, I was overjoyed. I had a job teaching 6th, 7th and 8th grades and was also to be principal of the elementary school.

Two other girls from San Jose had also been hired to teach in Loyalton. I corresponded during the summer with the one whose home was in San Jose, and we decided to make the trip together, and lend each other moral support to face the unknown! She would start her trip on the Western Pacific in San Jose, reserve me a

berth and meet me in Sacramento.

Everything was looking rosy and I was in high spirits as I set out on the appointed day to go from Nevada City to Sacramento by bus—on the first lap of my journey toward independence.

I arrived in Sacramento in the middle of the afternoon, and dragging my bulging suitcase, walked several blocks to get on a streetcar, which took me to within a few blocks of a friend's house. There I would have dinner and stay until time to catch the train which was around midnight.

One of the daughters in the family had just bought her first car which she drove with gay abandon. She had volunteered to get me to the depot. I was a little dubious about the whole thing as we started out, but by some miracle we arrived all in one piece. She let me out and immediately went home. The train, supposedly, would pull in at any moment.

So, weighed down with my suitcase, I slowly made my way toward the waiting room. Everything seemed very gloomy and when I opened the door, I saw why. The waiting room was almost in total darkness—I could hardly see to stumble through to the ticket office, which was a little more brightly lit. But in the dim light, I observed to my dismay, that every bench was occupied by strange, dark, foreign looking men, all stretched out and sound asleep. (Later I was told they were section hands, going somewhere to work on the railroad.)

The ticket agent looked at me in great surprise and when I asked for a ticket to Loyalton, his surprise was even more evident. He shook his head and told me I'd better come into the office to wait, because the train would be two hours late!

He then proceeded to question me about why I was going to Loyalton—of all places! I must have impressed him as being, not only very young, but completely ignorant and helpless, because he seriously questioned my parents' wisdom in letting me embark on such a venture as going to teach school in Loyalton.

During the two hours I had to wait from midnight to 2 A.M. he lectured me on the dangers of places like Portola, which, he said, was a rough

railroad town and inhabited only by disreputable characters, I gathered.

He relaxed a little upon hearing I was being met by a friend, but by now I had such a vivid picture in my mind of the dangers of Portola that I wished I could by-pass it completely.

It was well after 2 A.M. when the train pulled into the station. Still dragging my weighty suitcase, I ran down the conductor. My friend from San Jose hadn't put in an appearance, but I explained to him that she was on the train and I had a berth reserved.

He was completely at a loss and knew nothing of any such arrangements, but he finally consented to check it out and returned with the shattering news that there was no berth for me and that I would have to ride to Portola in the day coach.

While I had been telling the conductor my story, the section hands from the waiting room had all trooped into the day coach. When I finally accepted the fact that I had been abandoned and was without a berth, I climbed in myself. There they all were, occupying every seat, sprawled out and sleeping again as if their night's rest had never been interrupted.

I traveled the length of the coach. There was not one vacant seat and I was the lone female in the car. Finally I spotted a seat where the man was at least sitting upright. I squeezed in beside him. He opened his eyes for a minute and glared at me, but said nothing.

The train started and I was on my way. Before long, to my dismay, the lights went out, except for one very dim one at the end of the car. So we rode on in darkness through the night—with me hardly moving a muscle, surrounded by snoring men. At long intervals, the conductor would wander through—giving me a slight sense of security, but not really relieving my apprehension.

After what seemed like an eternity, it began to get lighter. The sun came up and by mid-morning we were in the wild, wicked town of Portola.

I retrieved my suitcase and proceeded into the station. Then the

knew no one and I was busy with school. One day he asked Tony Lavezolla what was exciting in Downieville. Tony answered, "Well, tomorrow is the Supervisors meeting. There's always lots doing then." (Things haven't changed in 48 years, according to recent issues of "The Mountain Messenger".) Shortly, Kenneth returned to the city and I was left with my work.

This kept me very busy. As I said before, my training was as an English teacher, but with only two teachers, I taught many other things: Girls P.E., Chemistry, Algebra, Spanish and I even had one pupil in a Latin class. The school was a wooden building, and my chemistry class was in the basement with a narrow twisting stairway as the only exit. In the years since, I have had many nightmares wondering what would have happened in case of a fire.

At home with Mrs. Redding, things weren't going too smoothly. Not personally -- Mrs. Redding was a lovely lady and we enjoyed each other's company. But one of the first results of the storm was that the water and sewer pipes all froze. There we were -- an elderly widow and a callow city dweller with no pioneer spirit. But we coped. We melted snow for water. Have you ever done that? Very little water results from a great deal of snow. We took turns taking sponge baths because there never was enough water for both of us to bathe the same night. Maybe we got a little ripe, I don't remember, but nearly everyone else was in the same situation, so no one minded.

I enjoyed my three months in Downieville. The people were friendly, the children were a joy, and the scenery was magnificent. I spent most of my week ends climbing the surrounding hills and loved every minute of it.

That fall my hopes were realized and I was hired as teacher in the Sierraville High School. Getting to Sierraville from San Francisco wasn't too much of a problem as I took the train to Truckee and someone met me there. I boarded with my great good friends, Marcel and Frances Bony.

However, when I went to visit the new school, I found it was far from finished. Men were busily working; the yard was a litter of boards and cement. We were told that we would have to teach in the Congregational Church parsonage. Mr. Jim Sinnott and I were both starting our teaching careers. We had sixteen students in the four high school grades, so I gain this English teacher taught Chemistry, Spanish, P.E., and Algebra as well as English. Mr. Paul Roscoe was teaching the eight primary grades in the Congregational Church next to us. We used the vacant Methodist Church as a gym and



Sierraville School - Fall, 1930

Part of the Sierraville H.S. Class

Back row: Elizabeth Cattuzzo, Margaret Copren, Lauren Johnson, Gene Turner, Henry Hatager, Tony Cattuzzo
Seated: Rita Martinetti, Beulah Blatchley, Thelma Liechty, Elvie Adams, Jimmy Powers



basketball court.

Teaching in an old house called for all our ingenuity. There was no way to keep the noise down as the walls were old and flimsy. The only water was a well in the yard, and two small buildings out in the back yard served as sanitary facilities. But, again, we coped. The people were kind and the students were helpful. After all, it was just as difficult for them as for us. Luckily, the new school was ready for use after the Christmas vacation, so we didn't have the heating problem to worry about.

CCHS NORTHERN CAL SYMPOSIUM

September 29 and 30 are the dates for this year's Northern California Symposium of the California Conference of Historical Societies. This year's Symposium is being sponsored by the Nevada County Historical Society and will be held in Nevada City. The Sierra County Historical Society has been invited to participate. There will be more information on this later.

*****MUSEUM*****

will be open to the public Wednesday through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. If volunteers are available it will also be open on Mondays and Tuesdays. Three tours will be conducted daily at 10 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. The Admission and Tour fees are as follows: General Admission and Tour for ages 12-18 - \$1.00 for over 18 years old - \$1.50.

A gift shop is located in the museum building. Here items of local and historical interest are on sale with discounts available to Historical Society members.

The Kentucky Mine Museum is operated by the Sierra County Historical Society under a contract with the County of Sierra. Persons who wish to help the Museum, donate articles or want more information should write Box 260, Sierra City, CA 96125 or call (916) 862-1310.

COUNTRY NURSE WANTED by Erma Alexander Strang

1934 was the driest year on record in Nebraska—and it was the depth of the Depression. I was fresh from nursing school and there just was no work in Omaha. I signed into a Registry in Denver, hoping to find a position in a small western community that wouldn't appear as attractive to a city girl. I was rather expecting a place in western Nebraska, eastern Colorado or Wyoming and was surprised to receive an almost immediate offer from "a logging camp in California." I answered, "I'll take it." Then I received the job description—24 hour duty, 10 bed hospital, town of Loyalton, 40 miles west of Reno, Nevada, \$60.00 a month, board, room and laundry. That was all.

I packed up and went to get my ticket. The railroad schedules didn't even list a "Loyalton, Calif.," but upon consulting an atlas, we located it. The map showed a branch spur running from a place called Hawley to Loyalton. By error, the ticket was made out to Hawley so I was instructed to buy a local ticket for the rest of the way.

I left Omaha for Salt Lake City and had to change there, not only cars but depots as well. The only train going west was a daytime run leaving Salt Lake at 7:30 A.M. Every seat was taken and riding a crowded train across the desert in August is definitely uncomfortable. This was a year or two before air conditioning. If the windows were left closed, you suffocated—if open, the car filled with ashes and soot. All the trains were coal burners at that time, so we suffocated!

It was a long, miserable day and no one seemed to have heard of Hawley—not even the trainmen—until I got this side of Winnemucca. I certainly wasn't very well impressed with the desert but knew I would have to stay at least a month until I earned enough for a ticket home. The train was listed as the "Scenic Limited" and I personally agreed that the scenes were definitely limited, but darned if I would have advertised it! They sold souvenir cards and booklets depicting all the

beautiful scenery along the Feather River Canyon, but even if I had been going the rest of the route, I would have missed seeing it for that portion was traversed at night.

As the day wore on I looked for trees, reasoning that surely a logging camp would be near some trees! Finally, about dusk and with less than an hour until arrival time, I did spot a few scattered pines. My hopes revived.

A friendly conductor came to me about then and asked if anyone was meeting me at Hawley. No one was, so he explained that the town was a mile away and I would have to go on to Portola. I insisted I had to catch a train from there in the morning to go to Loyalton. I was told the train made up in Portola so it was OK. As we approached the town, he took me out onto the car platform and pointed out a hotel and told me to go there as it was the only decent place to stay in town, which had a reputation of being "wide open" and I had to be careful. In the years since I have become acquainted with many of the railroad families, I have wished I knew his name. It was a new experience for me to find a stranger so solicitous of my welfare.

Eight o'clock the next morning found me on the train in a car that was half baggage car and half caboose. It had two passenger car seats of an unknown vintage and a potbellied coal heating stove, plus lots of dust, dirt and wear. After a couple of hours of switching around the yard in Portola, we started for Hawley. In Hawley there was more switching and exchanging of cars. We finally arrived in Calpine close to noon. A trainman told me there was a cafeteria in town and offered to come and get me at noon to show me where it was.

I walked into a room full of sawmill workers, where I was the only female except a cook's assistant. A strange "dame" coming in on that train elicited a lot of stares and, no doubt, speculation. It didn't take long to look the town over and then back to the train to wait for its three o'clock departure time.

The train went back to Hawley for more switching of cars and then, finally, on to Loyalton!

It was August 24th and I was in

Loyalton. Not knowing which way to go and with no one seeming to care, I approached a young boy and he pointed me in the general direction of the hospital. Now in 1934 there were no cement sidewalks in Loyalton, except for one little patch in front of the post office (what is now Bowling's Furniture Dept.), and as I click-clacked down those board sidewalks in front of all those unpainted wooden buildings, I felt for all the world like I had wandered onto a movie set for some western picture. I wouldn't have been surprised to have had a door pop open and a burst of gunfire follow! The last of August is the end of haying time in Sierra Valley and in those days, most of the labor was performed by older transient workers who carried their bedrolls with them. All the benches in front of the saloons were lined with these idled old men. Did I ever get the once over!

After several more stops for directions, I reached the far edge of town and stood on the corner wondering—"Where now?" There was no sign on the hospital, but I knew I had to be in the vicinity as there was a road sign saying "Quiet zone—Hospital." While I was pondering, a lady came to her gate and asked me if I was the new nurse. She took me in and introduced me. A few minutes later, the Doctor (the well-known and much-loved Dr. Wm. A. Lavery) came in. Upon being introduced to him, he exclaimed, "HOW did you get here?" I answered, "Why, the train. How else?" Then he explained that no one ever came in on the train and I should have called him when I got to Portola! Well, live and learn. But, I never did ride that train again.

Later I asked the Doctor how come he sent to Denver for his nurses when San Francisco was so much closer. He explained that if he got them from San Francisco, they took one look at the place and went back home while if he got them from far enough away, they had to stay awhile before they could afford to leave and by that time, they liked it. And it wasn't hard to do. These were the friendliest people I had met for years and after the impersonality of

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HOW THE McCAFFREY'S CAME TO SIERRAVILLE

By LOLA McCAFFREY

In 1935 the family of Jerome and Lola McCaffrey consisted of Jerome, Lola and two small boys, Jerry and Larry. The southern part of California around Orange County in those years was peaceful, pleasant and beginning to struggle slowly upward out of the Great Depression. The young McCaffrey's, with two small boys and another on the way, had just moved into their first home in Orange, California from a one bedroom rented house in Santa Ana California.

By 1938 the family had grown by three more sons, Tom, John and Ronald. Southern California was moving rapidly out of its peaceful stage and into the war years of the '40s. In 1940 and 1941 shipyards and airplane factories were gearing up for all out production and people were coming by the thousands from Oklahoma, Arkansas and the other economically depressed states of the South and Middle West. Gasoline, meat and sugar were rationed and people stood in lines every day in grocery stores to buy 1/4 lb. of bacon, six eggs, one cube of margarine or whatever happened to be on hand that day. To obtain enough of these scarce foods for a family of seven became a daily chore of several hours.

Men who were not eligible for the armed forces went to work in shipyards and airplane factories. They formed car pools and worked in twelve hour shifts with no days off. It required two hours to drive to work from Orange so it made a 14 hour work day every day.

Living on a corner lot in the city with five active boys was becoming pretty hectic even without the extra hassles brought on by the war so it was no wonder that Jerome Sr. brought home a picture one day of a five bedroom house for sale located in a small town on the edge of a national forest; the whole family was enthusiastically in favor of buying it and moving North where there was room to spread out.

The location, size of the house and certain modern features such as electricity, running water, laundry room and the fact that there were seven apple trees in the front yard sounded so attractive that it was agreed to put a down payment on it without even seeing it. As soon as enough gas coupons could be accumulated the whole family and Jerome's brother, Bernard, drove to Sierraville for an inspection.

It was in June and the smell of apple blossoms was in the air when they drove into the yard late at night. The boys were mostly asleep but soon woke up when they

started exploring the big two story house. Everyone was surprised to find how comfortable and convenient it really was or at least what we could see by the light of flashlights and matches. Finally someone flicked a light switch and lo, electric lights! There were several beds and in the kitchen there was a wood burning range and a wood heater in the dining room. Soon a cheerful fire was crackling in the heater and blankets brought in from the car and finally everyone was persuaded to go to bed for what remained of the night.

The first inspection being satisfactory, the family returned to Orange and prepared to sell the house there. This was accomplished in an amazingly short time. Houses, appliances and furniture were at a premium because of the war. An ad was placed in the paper to dispose of all the unwanted household items and the McCaffreys were practically mobbed by buyers almost fighting over the furniture and even the appliances that didn't work.

Of course there were very few trucks around so Jerome and Bernard canvassed the junk yards and found an ancient Moreland truck which was somewhat like a Model T Ford and towed it home. They paid \$75.00 for it. The motor had rusted so badly that the pistons were stuck tight. In two or three days they had dismantled it and sanded the rust off the engine and transmission parts. They reassembled it and started it up for a trial run, put it in reverse and ran right through the wall of the garage in front of it. They had put the transmission together backwards so they had to do it over.

Finally the sale of the house was completed, all unwanted junk sold or given away and the truck was loaded, and that means loaded! If some of the stuff had not been unloaded in Bishop and shipped on by freight, it would never have cleared the underpass at Vinton.

After a long, slow trip through the hot dry Owens Valley, with the radiator boiling all the way, they arrived in Bishop on Sunday of the Labor Day weekend so that meant a two day lay over to wait for the freight office to open so that some of the heavier things could be shipped on to Portola. The men were afraid the ancient truck would never be able to climb the mountains at Leevining and Chilcote. As it turned out even with the lighter load they barely made it up the Leevining grade with all five boys in back on top of the load singing "Praise the Lord and Push Us Up The Mountain". It was about 1 a.m. when they reached Bridgeport and they decided to stop for a few hours sleep. There were no motels or rooms anywhere and no gas stations open so they made a bed on a mattress on

top of the load and Jerome and Lola and the boys crawled under blankets and a tarp while Bernard tried to sleep in the cab of the truck. No one slept much because it was so cold. There was ice frozen all over the meadows and by the road. After two or three hours they gave it up and decided to build a fire and warm up to keep from freezing. They made coffee and drove on until they found a place where they could get breakfast. After eating and thawing out it was a fairly easy trip on to Reno, Nevada.

The Chilcote grade at that time was narrow, winding and very steep in some places. Just before they reached the top the tired old truck stalled and refused to go any further; however after letting it cool off, it started again and slowly crawled to the top. From there on it was no problem and the McCaffrey family finally arrived "bags and baggage" about 11 p.m. at what was to be their home for the next 32 years.

To add a note, it was a week or two later that Jerome discovered the old Moreland had an additional lower gear which he hadn't even known about! He never claimed to be a truck driver.

FROM ROSEVILLE TO LOYALTON (cont'd)

then went out on the front porch and stopped the first person going into the Mercantile which happened to be Kay Wing. Kay and I had both gone to high school in Marin County.

Well, my ankle healed in a hurry and I went to work at the store where I worked from then on with the exception of the year Myra was born.

I have very fond memories of the three generations of friends and customers that we served in the thirty years that we had the Fountain and Drug Store. Through the war and through the many years the town was without a doctor—I wouldn't trade any of it. Bob was 30 years old when we bought the store and 60 when he died. Just half of his life was spent in the most wonderful place in the world. He always used to say that some time during the day, winter or summer, the sun shines in Loyalton—and it did shine every day but one—on Dec. 2, 1970—the day he passed away.



COUNTRY NURSE WANTED (cont'd)

blow really fell! The ticket agent informed me that there was no train going to Loyalton that day. I would have to stay in Portola overnight and go to Loyalton the next day. I'm sure I turned pale at this shocking news because he explained, very kindly, that I could stay at the hotel just across the street.

There seemed to be no alternative, so I went across to the hotel, got a room and carefully locked the door while I considered my next move. By now I was starving. Should I continue to starve—or dare I venture out? Before long, the pangs of hunger decided this question for me and I sallied forth.

I had spotted a small grocery store quite close, so I quickly made my way to it. The extent of my purchases was a box of soda crackers and half a dozen apples. Clutching these tightly, I scurried back to my room, having neither seen nor heard anything alarming!

With the means to ward off starvation at hand, I spent the rest of the day locked in my hotel room. From the ticket agent's warnings, I had conjured up in my mind, a town right out of a Wild West movie, with desperadoes holding up trains and banks, and tearing up and down the streets, shooting innocent bystanders. Far be it from me to leave the dubious security of my hotel room.

When darkness fell, the hotel seemed to get very noisy and, uneasy as I was, I couldn't go to sleep—in fact, I didn't want to. After another endless night, daylight came again, and worn out by my vigil, I did go to sleep then.

Waking up with a start, I found it was within a few minutes of the time the train left to go from Portola to Hawley, where I would get the train to Loyalton. Of course, I hadn't undressed, so by rushing madly, I made it to the station in the nick of time.

At Hawley, there was another wait. Here at last the first nice thing of the trip happened. A friendly young man from Loyalton relieved me of my suitcase and carried it on to the train for me. As we rode across the valley, he tried to convince me that Loyalton was really not a bad place at

all.

Sometime during the afternoon, we arrived at the station in Loyalton. There I was, safe and sound, and only a little the worse for the wear, after a trip which had taken me two long days and nights (and that we now can make in about two hours by car).

Little did I dream as I climbed off the train on that warm August afternoon, that this was the place where I would be spending most of the rest of my life!

MY STORY (cont'd)

Omaha, I didn't find it hard to fall in love with the place. The nurse I relieved came from Michigan and the one who relieved me came from Kansas. The Doctor claimed he just ran a matrimonial bureau and he maintained that had it not been for nurses and school teachers, there

never would have been any new blood in the valley.

I was surprised as I met people to invariably have their first question be, "Where are you from?" Didn't anyone ever originate from here? But woodsmen are a transient lot and I found them from the four corners of the world. Mostly they came intending to stay for a season thinking it would be nice to work in the hills and woods for a summer. Many had stayed on for from 2 to 20 years. This area was as different from my native prairies as the come-and-go population of the lumberjacks was from the settled 3rd and 4th generation farm families that I grew up with. Dr. Lavery was right—if you stay awhile you like it here—in this little bowl set down in the hills, where there is only one way out and that is up.

I'm still here and I don't intend to leave now.



The Sierraville Hotel was one of the main attractions of Sierra Valley around 1906. It was operated by the Strang Brothers for many years and boasted good food, spirits and beds.

Courtesy of Arthur & Erma Strang

The Sierran, official bulletin of the Sierra County Historical Society, is published three times per year. Photographic and literary contributions are welcome and should be sent to The Sierran, c/o Sierra County Historical Society, Box 98, Sierraville, Calif. 96126. Enclose SASE if return is desired. Winter edition staff Georgene Copren and Maren Scholberg, Editors. Jim Fajardo, Coeditor and layout. Photographic reproduction by Mountain House, Sierra City, Calif. 96125. Printed by The Mountain House Press, Goodyears Bar, Calif. 95944.

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To All Our Members:

We apologize for no Bulletins for the past two years, and assure you that they will be coming regularly once more.

As you can see the Sierra County Historical Society's Quarterly has a new format and a new name. We hope you like it as much as the material it contains. This new streamlined format conserves paper and is much easier to distribute.

As for the new name, THE SIERRAN refers to a person who lives in Sierra County. Basically this is what the society and this publication are about—the people who made Sierra County what it is today.

The articles in this issue are how several different residents of Sierra

Valley arrived in this area. We think you will find them interesting and, if you are acquainted with the Valley, amusing. We would be happy to have some accounts from residents on the west side of the County. We know there are many more of equal interest. If you would care to have them published, send them to Bill Copren, Sierraville, Ca.

Photographic and literary contributions are very welcome. Old photos can be easily copied without damage to the original. If you wish your contributions to be returned, please send along a self-addressed stamped envelope of appropriate size.

If you send material for *The Sierran* and do not see it in the next issue, it may have come too late or perhaps there was not enough space in the issue. There is always the next one. We will try to use everything sent.

The Editors

For Membership send \$5.00 to Darlene Messner, Membership Chairman, Sierra County Historical Society.

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