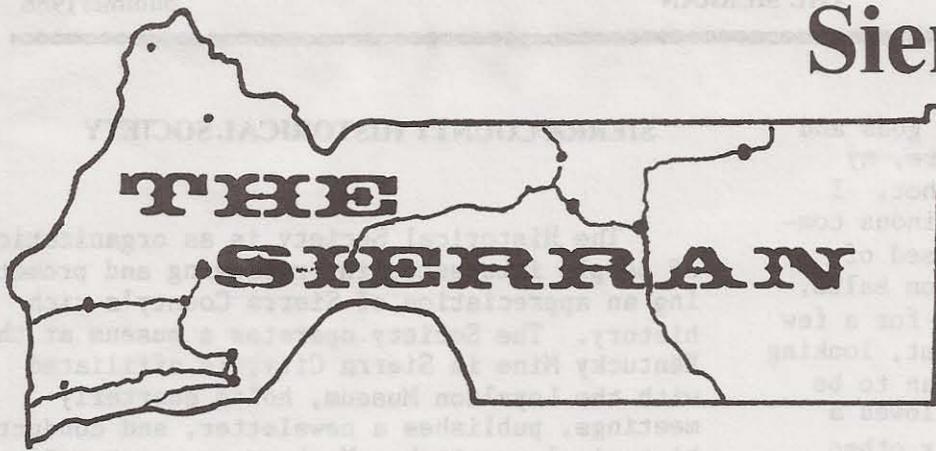


Sierra County

Historical

Society



Member of California Conference of Historical Societies

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HISTORY OF CAMPBELL'S HOT SPRINGS Sierra County, California

In June, 1850, three men--A. P. Chapman, George F. Kent, and William E. Jones--separated from a party of 500 miners searching for a legendary Gold Lake in the central mountainous country of Sierra County and climbed to the top of Saddleback Peak in search of game. From the spot where a United States Forest Service lookout now stands, these three became the first Europeans to see Sierra Valley. The following year, mountainman Jim Beckwourth discovered the Beckwourth Pass and entered the valley from the northeast. Four men, including Chapman, crossed the Yuba Gap in October, 1852 and located claims in the south of this valley. That same year Beckwourth established his trading post in the northwest. Sierra Valley was quickly recognized as a rich agricultural area. By 1865 six families lived in the mountainous plain, the highest valley in the Sierra Nevada range, and single men occupied fifteen or twenty ranchos there. The settlers began cultivation of buckwheat hay, and brutally drove two small Indian tribes from the area after the Indians had run off some of the settlers' stock. In September, 1854, a total of 15 votes was cast in the Congressional election at the Sierra Valley precinct.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The next historical society meeting will be held on June 26th at the Kentucky Mine Museum in Sierra City at 1:00 p.m. The meeting will take place at the amphitheatre. It's a potluck!

In the spring of 1853 Corel Howk and his wife, Mrs. Ordelle C. Howk, entered the valley and located a ranch on the southern fringe. Mrs. Howk was the second white woman ever to live in the valley. The ranch, soon called the Howk Ranch, included sulphur springs and was on the present site of Campbell's Hot Springs.

An apocryphal tale about the discovery of these hot sulphur springs was reported in the Mountain Messenger in 1863. According to Prospector: "A good story is told concerning them, which is vouched for by a gentleman of reliability (accent on the second syllable). He informed me that they were first discovered by a gentleman from Pike, who, while crossing the plains, chanced to find one of these springs boiling and smoking away like a steam engine. For a moment he gazed in blank horror, and then turning he ran back to his train, shouting as he ran, 'Turn back, for God's sake, boys, hell isn't a half mile from here!'"

The hot springs on the Howk Ranch became widely known for their therapeutic value during the 1850s. Corel Howk developed the springs, and persons came from throughout the Mother Lode country to ease their aches and pains as they allowed the hot waters to sooth away ague, rheumatism, bursitis and the weekly miner's hangover.

In 1863, Prospector, having heard the value of the heated water, decided to try them out and reported his bath in rather overheated terms: "The next day I paid a visit to the Warm Sulphur Springs, of which there are several, said to possess rare medicinal qualities. They are about ten feet in diameter, and walled up, thus furnishing an excellent place for bathing. Thought I would try them;

so stripped off and plunged in. Ye gods and little fishes! What a yell was there, my countrymen! It was nearly boiling hot. I swallowed about a pint of the villainous compound, which tasted as though composed of equal parts of tartaric emetic, epsom salts, and assafoetida. Floundered around for a few moments and succeeded in crawling out, looking like a huge parboiled lobster. Began to be sick, and felt as though I had swallowed a logging chain with a swivel in every other link. Laid down on a board to dry, and soon felt better. I then dressed and went home, feeling convinced that as I had been assured, 'no person ever tried the springs without feeling better afterwards,' especially if he drank about a pint of the water before going in."

Corel Howk developed the hot springs during the 1850s and sold the property to David Fenstermaker for \$2000 in 1861. Fenstermaker bought the property, which contained a little over 160 acres, 'together [as the deed explains] with Sulphur Springs and bedding of the house and furniture and kitchen furniture.' Fenstermaker was a hustler. He greatly improved the springs as a resort, added to the ranch by claiming another contiguous quarter-section with Louisiana Civil War script, and brought a road from the resort to the booming freighting and lumbering town of Randolph a mile to the east. All this time he was also mining salt in western Nevada and shipping the precious mineral to retail outlets in the roaring mining towns on the Comstock Lode.

On July 18, 1874, Jack Campbell, Sierra County's Republican Sheriff, bought the entire Fenstermaker Ranch from David and gave the ranch and the hot springs the name which has remained unchanged to the present day. The tough frontier sheriff realized the true money-making potential of the hot springs. He left his law enforcement position when his second term ended and began to develop the sulphur springs resort. During the seven years that Campbell owned the increasingly popular spa, it became a watering hole for the more affluent classes of northern California. The springs' hot waters improved many a morning after, which the resort's other (slightly stronger) medicinal fluids, downed in the saloon the night before, could have made throbbingly painful.(9)

During the late 1870s, a political machine gained control of Sierra County's government. The 'court house gang', similar to many closed political cliques in counties throughout the United States, manifested, on a

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SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, is affiliated with the Loyalton Museum, holds quarterly meetings, publishes a newsletter, and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of society activities, receive the newsletter and are admitted free of charge to the Kentucky Mine Museum and Stamp Mill tour.

As of March 18 of this year the Historical Society has 130 active members. Anyone interested may join at the following rates:

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| SENIOR..... | \$ 5.00 |
| INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP..... | 10.00 |
| FAMILY..... | 15.00 |
| BUSINESS..... | 25.00 |
| SUPPORTING..... | 25.00 |
| SUSTAINING..... | 50.00 |
| LIFE..... | 100.00 |

Memberships are payable for the calendar year. Our recent membership chairperson, Lou Cooper of Sierra City, will be leaving us as she and her husband will be moving to Southern California soon. They will be missed by the Society. Lou has done a wonderful job and we really appreciate her efforts.

OFFICERS

SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| President..... | William G. Copren |
| Vice President..... | Rita Bradley |
| Secretary..... | Kathleen Sprowl |
| Treasurer..... | Frances Brett |
| Corresponding Secretary & Membership Chairman..... | Lou Cooper |



A special event was held for the Memorial Day opening this year. An autograph party was given in conjunction with the publication of a new and expanded printing of Bacon and Beans from a Gold Pan. Some of you may recall this delightful story of a young couple who came to Sierra County during the depression. The event was a success despite the rain. A limited number of signed copies are available at the museum gift shop.

KENTUCKY MINE MUSEUM NEWS

In the fall of 1987 Cathy and David Otto, with their sons Nathan and Isaac, relocated to Corvallis, Oregon where David is attending graduate school. They are missed by the community after seven years of close involvement with the Historical Society. We wish them the best in their new endeavors.

Their dog, Courtney, will continue to greet visitors at the museum as she has been adopted by Karen Donaldson who is the new caretaker and continuing museum curator.

Special acknowledgement goes to Earl Withycombe and the other members of the Kentucky Mine Advisory Board for their help in giving the museum apartment a facelift.

The museum has received a number of donations over the winter which will be incorporated into the displays for the upcoming season.

Unfortunately, due to financial reasons, there will not be a Summer Concert Series at the Amphitheatre this year.

We are experiencing a mild spring; very warm and dry, with visitors already beginning to venture this way. Nonetheless, the museum will be opening as usual on Memorial Day Weekend and will be open Saturday through Monday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The regular hours will be Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hopefully, with adequate staffing, the museum will again be open seven days a week during the busiest part of the summer.

Repairs to the trestle should be completed before opening day, making for a more enjoyable and less strenuous tour of the stamp mill.

LOYALTON MUSEUM NEWS

The State of California has designated the Loyalton Museum as recipient of some historic logging and agricultural artifacts and as such will have some new displays this year. The museum is located at Loyalton City Park and will be opening May 21st. Business hours will be 1-5 p.m. Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday through October. Phone for more information 993-4622.



Copren family home built by Ed White in 1902. Constructed with lumber, sashes and doors from the White Sash and Door Mill. Windows from the glass factory.

HISTORY OF CAMPBELL'S HOT SPRINGS

(Cont'd. from pg. 2)

smaller scale, the same corruption and scandalous dealings that made the Grant Administration era one of America's bleakest. In 1881, a movement toward reform of county government and politics was begun in Sierra County. Campbell became a part of this reform movement, Sierra County's Mugwump Republican Party. He sold his prosperous business in August of that year for \$17,000 gold to W. E. Williams and his brother, D. C. Williams.

Campbell re-entered politics in 1882, running for Sheriff as a reform candidate against the regular Republican nominee of 'Boss' H. K. Turner's 'Downieville clique.' The campaign was one of the most vile and dirty in the county since the Civil War.

Political violence erupted in 1882 on a Friday evening in mid-September. Campbell was sitting on the porch of the Randolph hotel, relaxing. The day had seen gun play in the neighboring town of Sierraville but apparently nothing serious had resulted. A man named A. J. Stubbs approached the quiet hotel and called to Campbell. As Jack walked toward Stubbs, the latter drew his revolver and gunned the former sheriff down in the street. Campbell died almost instantly and Stubbs managed to escape temporarily in the excitement. The reform-minded Sierra County Tribune carried the headlines: 'ASSASSINATED! JOHN CAMPBELL, REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR SHERIFF, SHOT DEAD. A DASTARDLY DEED--GREAT EXCITEMENT CREATED--TWO HUNDRED ARMED MEN SCOUR THE COUNTRY!' Stubbs managed to elude the lynch mob and, in fear for his life, turned himself over to Sierraville's constable, who spirited him



A Sunday outing at Campbell's Hot Springs circa 1890. (Notice anything unusual about the photo?)

away to the county seat under cover of darkness. The murderer was eventually tried, found guilty of murder, and sentenced to eighteen years in San Quentin. No political conspiracy was ever proven.

The history of Campbell's Hot Springs has not, since 1882, been quite so emphatic or violent. In 1887 the Williams brothers sold the resort to James H. Pearce who resold it to W. O. Buckland a year later, even though Pearce remained on as proprietor of the Hot Springs into the twentieth century.

An 1888 rather medically unsound and slightly overstated advertisement for Campbell's Hot Springs is interesting and illustrates the continuity of the resort's appeal. It read: "Campbell's Hot Springs, H. Pearce, Prop. Increased Accommodations for Patrons, Improvements in every Department. Most Popular Resort in California for Persons suffering with Rheumatism and Neuralgia, in the treatment of which the waters are found to be successful in all cases. Hundreds of Wonderful Cures Have Been Effected. Location of Springs, Sierraville Cal. 24 miles from Truckee, with which it is connected by stage. A first-Class Hotel at the Springs. Open All the Year Around. Baths twenty-five cents. Good Hunting and Fishing. Vehicles for the use of Guests. For terms, etc. address H. Pearce Sierra Valley, Cal.

In 1892, H. Scamman bought the Hot Springs and following his demise three years later, Sierra County's Superintendent of Public Instruction, E. F. Case purchased the property from the Scammon estate. Case not only taught school, administered the large county school system, and wheeled and dealt in real estate, he now officially operated a saloon. The Victorians may not have been quite as puritan and stuffy as most believe. Would today's Californians allow their Superintendents of Schools the opportunity to widen their knowledge of parents by operating a bar? After Case had enlarged his Hot Springs holdings with the purchase of contiguous land formerly owned by E. A. Haun at a delinquent tax sale in 1903, the entire resort and Campbell's Hot Springs Ranch remained in his hands until his death. Herman L. Bonta acquired the property from the Case estate in 1926.

Eighteen months later Bonta felt the economic pinch and failed to make the payments on his mortgage. Edith A. Williams foreclosed the lien and then sold the repossessed property to Don Pasquetti in March, 1928. Pasquetti ran the spa for the remainder of his lifetime, selling the timber on the hillside behind the

resort to S. C. Linebaugh in 1929. When Don died, Campbell's went to his daughter, Marie Matterolo, in 1931. Marie and her husband, Basilio, operated the business for the next ten years, when Campbell's again changed hands; this time Lionel D. Hargis was the new owner. Hargis resold in 1945 to Wray L. Eggleston, Et Al. The succeeding year 'Campbell Hot Springs,' a corporation, purchased the resort and held it for nearly seventeen years.

In 1959, while 'Campbell Hot Springs' Corporation owned Campbell's, the Cold Creek fire swept through the area during the Fourth of July weekend. For about two days there was fear that the conflagration would consume the beautiful historical resort. Bulldozers and sweating fire fighters managed to push through a fire line behind Campbell's which luckily held. The spa was saved. This writer witnessed a funny episode concerning Campbell's during this generally tragic fire. When the hotel was threatened, the proprietors removed their liquor and beer inventory from the building and placed it in the adjacent six-foot deep swimming pool. The liquor was of relatively great value and the attempt was made to save at least something. Well, the fire line was then being held by a group of 'hot-shot' professional fire fighters flown in from Arizona. The thirsty men quickly discovered the liquor cache and the inevitable happened. Two fully clothed men dived into the pool and began handing out cases of warm beer and bottles of whiskey. A line formed having the appearance of an old-fashioned bucket brigade. The 'booze' was passed from man to man all the way up to the fire line. That night significantly more liquid was drunk than was put on the fire. The next morning, when the immediate threat of destruction had passed, the proprietors discovered a rather large portion of their submerged alcoholic inventory had disappeared.

The corporation disbanded in 1963 and Campbell's Hot Springs went to the new owners, Vivian Maata, John and Louise Filipelli. The resort continued, as it had for over one hundred years, to operate the mineral baths, a hotel, swimming pool, cabins and a saloon. Something, though, had changed that men like David Fenstermaker, Jack Campbell or Corel Howk probably could have hardly imagined. A new \$75,000 airstrip, Dearwater Field, lies less than a half-mile from the resort, and guests from San Francisco can leave their city and be in a hot sulphur bath within a matter of two hours. In 1853 the trip would have been over a precipitous mountain range and would have taken weeks.

In 1976 Leonard Orr bought the resort. He is one of the pioneers of the new-age movement. Mr. Orr made the resort the headquarters of his self-improvement organization. The resort is now run as a hot spring that is open to the public and also as a new-age educational institution.

William G. Copren

Editor's note: This article was submitted with numerous footnotes which are available upon request.

MINUTES OF THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY December 13, 1987

The meeting of the Sierra County Historical Society was held at the home of President Bill Copren on December 13, 1987.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and accepted. The treasurer reported the Society had \$553.20 in its savings account. The Museum had \$1000.00 in its savings account and \$245.00 in its checking account. The Membership Chairperson reported we have 100 active members.

The Kentucky Mine Curator reported a good year in 1987. New paint, linoleum, and carpet have been put in the apartment, paid for by the museum's profit.

The Kentucky Mine Advisory Committee submitted reports on curator's salary, use agreement between Sierra County and the Historical Society, and the grant money of \$6000, which will be used to refurbish the mill.

Georgene Copren was appointed recording secretary for 1988.

Milton Gottardi reported the state is giving the Loyalton Museum all logging equipment from nearby parks.

Georgene Copren, Recording Secretary

RANDOLPH IN THE 1880s

Randolph was for many years a separate town although today it is part of Sierra-ville--the south end. It is now an area of houses; however, it wasn't always that way.

Back in the 1880s it was a busy place of industry. All the farmers came here to have their grain ground into wheat at the grist mill. This three-storied mill was built in 1868-69. Sometimes the farmers would barter their grain for other supplies they needed. My grandfather, Ezra Church, who owned the Sattley Store, came here with his grain and then sold the flour in his store. My mother, Jennie Church Copren, made those trips with him and remembers this day as a great and special one. The grist mill was located on Lincoln Street (the present highway 89).

The house of I. J. Wright was a Chinese laundry. I never heard of any other Chinese here. I understand they had a thriving business.

The glass factory was next to the Chinese laundry going west on Willow Street. I believe all the windows in the Dave White residence were purchased there. I assume that many of the windows in the houses in the southern end of the valley were purchased there as well.

Across from the glass factory on Willow Street was the door mill owned by Dave White, father of Ed White. It was a thriving business.

The house on the corner of Lincoln and Willow (the present Burelle home) was the Dave White store with ranch supplies and a butcher shop. All the ranch supplies were stored in the large hall above the mercantile store. His home was in the same building adjoining the store. This building was built in 1902 and all the lumber, sash and door parts came from the White mill. There is hardly a knot in the whole building as the lumber then was cut from virgin timber which produced first class, clear lumber. This mill also manufactured furniture as well. There are a few pieces still in the area from this mill.

There was a bar on East Willow but I know nothing more than that about it.

On the northeast corner of Willow Street was a boarding house, run at one time by Maggie Kimball. There was a fight on West Lincoln at the hotel, and a man was killed. The murderer was hiding in the place for a number of days. I don't know if that was in Maggie Kimball's time or not.



JOIN THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY! SEND \$10. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES TO P.O. BOX 260, SIERRA CITY, CA 96125.



On Lincoln Street going north was the Etta post office, established in 1883. Randolph shared a post office with Sierraville until that time. The residents of Randolph decided to have a post office, since they felt Sierraville shouldn't have anything more than they. It was necessary to find a new name for the post office as there was already a Randolph post office elsewhere in the U.S. So they took the name Etta. This was the first name of Etta Small who lived on West Willow in the house now owned by Monicoes. When Etta lost the post office in 1895, the town reverted to the name of Randolph.

On Lincoln Street across from White's was a large hotel. This consisted of two large buildings connected by a large hall-like section. One part burned, and Columbine Dellera lives in the remaining part.

Both churches were in Randolph. The Methodist Church and parsonage were next to the school. The Congregational Church was the building now owned by Floyd May. It was across from the present church. The Congregational Church was built by subscriptions. A person either donated labor, lumber, shingles, etc., or money. The people banded together and did the whole thing. Nonie Dearwater worked long and hard to get these subscriptions. Later, when the roof needed repairs, James Berry, who was doing the repairs, fell from the roof and was killed.

The undertakers for the area were first Owen Webber and Joe Dearwater. Later, Owen Webber and Lafe Blatchley became partners. Oneta Roscoe is the daughter of Owen Webber.

Willow Street continued across the Johnson ranch meadow to the base of the hills, around the hill past the Hobo Springs and on to the Campbell Hot Springs. Today this road stops at the ranch across the creek.

Randolph had a water system from its early beginnings. The water came from Cold Creek, a diversion of the Little Truckee River, and ran through an open ditch. This was developed in 1878. Every home in Sierraville had to have a well. They didn't get a water system until 1954.

Because of the friction between Randolph and Sierraville, it was finally agreed to build the school on the line between the two towns. So it is that the school is one half mile from downtown Sierraville and one half mile from Willow Street in Randolph. This school was built in 1875.

NOTES FROM ANOTHER TEACHER

I have always considered myself to be a high school teacher at heart, a person very much interested in the schools of Sierra County, although my teaching career shows only two full years separated by a 28 year interval and much substituting, the first year as Elizabeth Carrington Keyes.

A commercial curriculum was to be offered for the first time at Downieville High in 1936. I was hired by Sierra County Superintendent of Schools Sauber in Berkeley to set it up because of my background of both employment and study in business subjects as well as my degree in mathematics, physics and education from U.C. Berkeley.

I had never been to Downieville but knew I loved the Sierra Nevada so very trustingly I arrived in Tunia Vanderbout's car, seeking a place to room and board. Tunie, already teaching here, took me to a home where she thought I would be taken in, but my heart sank as I was turned down. How awful! The next stop was the home of Dr. Carl Sutton and his wife, Marion, and there I stayed, soon coming to deeply appreciate his marvelous sense of humor and his dedication as a country doctor. I even accompanied him occasionally on "home" calls to remote mines or ranches as I loved to hike.

Alas for my teaching career, I soon met George Costa and married him before the school year ended. Since he was already 37, my priority was to start raising a family as soon as possible.

There followed many years of frequent substituting and continued interest in the schools. I even taught one day at Pike Elementary where I had to start the wood fire early in the morning in the stove in the middle of the room. Another time it was at Goodyear Bar where there were eight pupils but seven different grades represented. How teacher Sidney Strand managed that all year I'll never know.

Then in 1964, unable to find a suitable mathematics and science teacher, the District sent me an SOS just five days before school was to start. Although active in my insurance agency by then, I managed somehow to enjoy teaching, and would have liked to continue. But once more fate intervened for it became obvious that my husband needed me as he was into what proved to be his final illness, and I again was limited to substituting.

Elizabeth K. Costa
Downieville, CA