



Sierra County

Historical Society

Member of California Conference of Historical Societies

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Summer 1989

EARLY SIERRA COUNTY

Because the source of the south fork of the Middle Yuba River was uncertain, Nevada and Sierra Counties could not agree on their boundaries. So in 1868, a survey was made by each county. Since the surveys did not start at the same point, the counties still could not agree on the boundaries. The Eureka Company had paid taxes to Nevada County on some of this disputed land, so Sierra County brought a suit against them to try and enforce payment of taxes. The question was finally settled by the State Supreme Court in 1869 and Sierra County was given the contested land. The cost to each county was more than the land was worth to either of them.

In 1882 Sierra County had nine townships which were established by the Board of Supervisors. They were:

Sierra Township - -	Loyalton,
Sierraville	
Oneida - - - - -	Antelope,
Crystal Park	
Forest - - - - -	Alleghany,
Chips, Forest City, Pike City	
Lincoln - - - - -	Brandy City,
Indian Hill, Goodyear's Bar, Mountain House	
Butte - - - - -	Downieville,
Sierra City, Butte, Gold Lake, Loganville	
Eureka - - - - -	Eureka, Little
Grizzly, Monte Cristo	
Sears - - - - -	Port Wine,
Seal's, St. Louis	
Table Rock - - - -	Howland Flat,
Poker Flat	
Gibson - - - - -	Newark, Gibson-
ville	



Not many of these names are familiar now and only seven of the communities are still in existence.

In August of 1853, the court of sessions decided that the "erection of a convenient bastille" was not only necessary, but "an economical step" also. A bid of \$12,975.00 submitted by D. G. Webber was accepted. This was for the erection of a court house 35 X 51 feet in size, a jail 36 X 13 feet and a jail 36 X 20 feet. A tax of one-fourth of one percent was levied on all taxable property. The buildings were completed in the summer of 1854 but the court refused to accept them because they felt the specifications had not been followed closely enough. The buildings remained unoccupied until the following May. The site of the buildings was at Durgan's Flat and though they were not an "imposing or gorgeous" structure, they gave a "creditable appearance".

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

PHILO A. HAVEN is a native of Chatauqua county, New York, where he was born in the year 1818. In 1834 Mr. Haven moved to Joliet, Illinois, then in Cook county. Here he remained until he followed the eager life of gold-seekers westward, in 1849. He journeyed overland in a train of seventy-four men, but left them at Salt Lake, and with six others came on in advance. They came through the Henness Pass, and camped on Bear River on the tenth of August. On the sixteenth he was mining at Slate range, on the Yuba River, but a few days later came three miles farther up the stream, and bought a claim of Cut-Eye Foster, which he also worked a few days. With his cousin Carlos Haven, Warren Goodall, and Thomas Angus, he came up to Little Rich Bar, a half-mile below Downieville, which he and an indian had located on the twenty-fourth of August. They worked there that fall, and went out with one hundred and twenty pounds of gold, going down the Sacramento River to San Francisco. Mr. Haven carried his portion, thirty pounds, in a shot-bag that was tied up in a gunny sack. While there he bought at Geary's auction sale five lots in the hills, for \$2,900.00. He loaned three thousand dollars to the Bowers brothers, who were mining at Deer Creek, now the site of Nevada City. He soon went up to see them, and they offered him a claim that would pay fifty dollars a day, but he refused it, as he could make much more at the forks of the North Yuba, where he had been in the fall. Seven men started with him December 31, 1849, for his old diggings, but they all left him during a big snow-storm on the Middle Yuba. Three others, the Lewis brothers and Chamberlain, however, joined him and they proceeded onwards to Forest City, camping that night in a heavy snow-storm. They arrived at Goodyear's Bar January 10, 1850, where they obtained forty pounds of flour, paying four dollars a pound for it. The article was not very savory, as there were grubs in it an inch and a half long. They found the ground at Little Rich Bar all claimed by other parties. Mr. Haven's party then located two and one-half miles up the north fork, and camped where Thomas Steele's residence now stands. Our subject's bother, James M. Haven, came there in the spring, and

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.

Sierra County Historical Society
P. O. Box 260
Sierra City, CA 96125
(916) 862-1310

A Series of Summer Concerts

AT THE

Kentucky Mine Amphitheatre

1 Mile North of Sierra City on Highway 49

- July 6 & 7 The RENO LITTLE THEATRE - A Hilarious Play
This fine group returns with the outrageous comedy "The Foreigner"
- July 13 VAN VINKOW and the "STRING BEINGS"
String Ensemble is back with Bach and the Beatles
- July 20 McAVOY LANE as Mark Twain, AND
ALLEGRA BROUGHTON and SAM PAGE sing original tunes
- July 27 LAUREL RICE, Soprano and LAWRENCE VENZA, Baritone
Are back by popular demand with Operatic Arias and Stories
- Aug 3 JOYCE VETTER - Singer, Songwriter
Vivid and Lyrical Songs and Guitar Stylings
- Aug 10 HAWKS & EAGLES - Singing Duo, Stories, and Humor
Cowboy Songs, International Folk Songs, Gypsy Dance Tunes
- Aug 17 ANCIENT FUTURE - World Fusion Music
From Carnegie Hall to the Kentucky Mine; World Music in an incredible synthesis of music styles on exotic instruments
- Aug 25 The NEVADA COUNTY CONCERT BAND
A rousing performance by a 45 member orchestra

All performances begin at 8:00 p.m.

Complimentary reserved seating to 7:45 p.m.

Popcorn and softdrinks available.

OFFICERS

President Lincoln Madsen
Vice President. Rita Bradley
Secretary Georgene Copren
Treasurer Maren Scholberg
Membership Chairman . . . Milton Gottardi



KENTUCKY MINE MUSEUM NEWS

Great appreciation is extended to the following volunteers who, due to their dedicated efforts kept things going smoothly last summer when their was no assistant available for the curator.

Amy Bowman	Jean Harrington
Rita Bradley	Jack Hawkins
Frances Brett	Ruth Jones
Margaret Burelle	Billie Madsen
Charity Clover	Linc Madsen
Joyce Collins	Brad Mead
Betsy Cammack	Evelyn Miller
Georgene Copren	LaVerne Monico
	Maren Scholberg

The County has received a \$40,000.00 grant to be spent on improvements at the Kentucky Mine. Of priority are safety amendments at the amphitheater, restoration of the mill's exterior including windows and reconstruction of the mine's portal. This work is expected to begin this year.

The Kentucky Mine Summer Concert Series will be held again this year at the amphitheater with a wonderful program arranged. For more information or to purchase season tickets please contact the museum at 862-1310. The series is being conducted as a sublease arrangement with the Historical Society.

This past winter was extremely cold and the museum sustained some water damage due to broken water pipes. Fortunately no artifacts were involved and damage was limited to the new book inventory in

the gift shop. The caretaker was alerted immediately and shut off the water and power. Tim Beals was notified and should be acknowledged for his quick response and great help in the early morning hours. We will be having a book sale of slightly damaged new books at great savings.

We have received several donations from Mr. Martin Haley and we thank him for his generosity. Mr. Troy Sain of Grass Valley has donated a rosewood grand piano that traveled to California around the Horn in 1880. Margaret and Lyman Wiltshire have given funds to the museum to purchase fire prevention equipment. A work party/meeting was held on May 20th at 9:00 a.m. at the museum. It was a potluck. The next meeting will be held in September at the Kentucky Mine.

SIERRA VALLEY NEWS

A NEW MUSEUM FOR SIERRA VALLEY

The Sierra Valley Museum of Natural History has arrived on the scene and had a grand opening on Saturday, April 29th in Chilcoot, California.

There were museum exhibits and many activities lasting far into the night with a benefit dance at the Vinton Grange -- music by "Borderline", program by the "Cowboy Poets of Vinton, CA.", plus nature shows on local topics. During the day, there were a number of special events, e.g. bird tours of Sierra Valley, a nature cruise on Frenchman Lake, Washoe Indian demonstrations at the Indian Village, demonstrations on the preparation of edible wild foods. Lots of activities for the children!

We are an incorporated, nonprofit foundation with great future plans for a magnificent museum which will sponsor Science Education programs. With good community support and assistance, we hope to develop a major attraction and educational facility, supportive of all the other local museums in Sierra and Plumas Counties.

Jim Lonergan

Continued from page 2

the old company divided, Mr. Haven having the choice of claims, and the Lewis brothers taking the specimen purse of \$5,000.00. He then prospected at Howland Flat, and was exploring the head of Nelson Creek when the Stoddard party came along in search of the fabulous Gold Lake, and he went with them until they disbanded at Humbug Valley. He then found rich diggings on the north fork of the Feather River, and spent part of the winter of 1851 at Big Rich Bar. During a terrible snow storm, in which he and his companions nearly lost their lives, he went to Bidwell's bar, being en route to the states. In the summer of 1852 he returned to Downieville, and worked on Sailor Flat one hundred days, taking out \$4,000.00. In the fall Harrison Wheeler, Joseph Limperich, Frank Fellows, and Mr. Haven built the saw mill above Downieville. Mr. Haven cut the first tree himself, which furnished 10,000 feet of lumber, and brought \$500.00. It was built for the purpose of defraying the expenses of prospecting. He found the Excelsior diggings four miles north-west of Downieville, which he worked until 1858, and then commenced prospecting quartz at Gold Lake, and built the dam at the foot of the lake in 1859. At that time there was a hotel at the head of the lake, built by Mr. Church. Mr. Haven organized the Gold Lake mining district, and with his brother built a mill to prospect quartz, together with a saw mill and residence. In 1862 he discovered the placer claims, and has since been actively engaged in working them by hydraulic means.

Philo A. Haven's account of the finding of gold on Little Rich Bar is quite amusing. About the last of August, 1849, while working at Cut Eye Foster's Bar, just below and near Indian Valley in Yuba County, he with his three companions, saw an indian who had a larger nugget than any they had found. On being asked to tell where he found it, the native became exceedingly reticent on the subject; but after much parley, he agreed to point his finger in the direction of the place he had taken it from, in consideration of what he and his son, a half grown youth, could eat then and there. The bargain being made enough bread was brought out to supply two meals for the four white men, and as a sort of trimming to the repast, Mr. Haven began frying pancakes. The com-

pany soon saw visions of a famine. Even the great American pie-eater would have hung his head in shame had he beheld the delicate mouthfuls and the quantity of food devoured on this occasion but even an indian's capacity is limited, and the feast was finally finished, greatly to the relief of the gold-hunters. Then the company awaited with ill-suppressed impatience the performance of the indian's part of the contract. With great dignity poor Lo arose, and calling the attention of his son to the way he was about to indicate, faced to the bluff, and holding his finger straight out before him, turned completely around, the index digit taking in every point of the compass; after which he sat down with a loud laugh at having so easily sold them. Mr. Haven joined heartily in the laugh, and said it was a good joke, telling the jocose aborigine that he was "heap smart - much too smart for white man"; by which compliments he secured his assent to a bargain to allow his son to show the place; the conditions being that if nuggets the size of small walnuts were found, the indian was to have one gray blanket; and if only the size of corn or beans, a new blue shirt. The next morning they started up the river. About two o'clock of the second day they arrived opposite what was afterward known as Big Rich Bar. Here the indian pointed to gold lying around, and asked for his recompense. Perceiving Hedgeparth & Co.'s notices posted in various places, claiming seven claims of thirty feet each, they said it would not do, and that not a single piece should be touched. He then led the way to the place where he had found the nugget, which was near the edge of the river opposite the place now known as Coyoteville, and pointing to a crevice, said: "Dig, you ketchum here." Mr. Haven soon raked out a piece weighing an ounce and a half. On the same day he located Little Rich Bar a little way up the river. The next day he went upon the ridge and saw the forks, now the site of Downieville.

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

YOUNG HISTORIANS

In the spring of 1988, Mary Nourse's seventh grade English class at Downieville School conducted a research project on local historic sites. The students learned how to use both primary and secondary sources of information. They began their study with a trip to the Sierra County Assessor's Office, where Bill Copren showed them how to use plat maps in researching property. Next, they visited the Clerk-Recorder's Office where Olive McIntosh and Naomi Adams taught them how to use public records. The students also learned oral history interviewing techniques and gathered a wealth of information from interviews with James Sinnott, Margaret Gregory, Marcella Ponta, Mary Nourse and Tommy Vilas. Additional information was gained using books, periodicals, local museums, and personal observation. We've included several articles in this issue of the Sierran.

THE ST. CHARLES HOTEL, DOWNIEVILLE

by Allyson Phillippi

The St. Charles Hotel was the biggest hotel in Downieville. There were a few smaller hotels, such as the Quartz. The downstairs housed mainly businesses, such as the bar, the dining room and the stop for the Pony Express. The building stretched from the edge of the parking lot by the existing bell tower, nearly to the parking lot by the community hall. It was the first building in town to have electricity.

The hotel was not well built; it was actually a couple of buildings stuck together. They both had gable roofs, and in a photograph which was taken around 1940 there appeared to be a balcony on the two story building. At that time there were 15 bedrooms.

Many different people owned the hotel in the past. In the years from 1852 to sometime in the 1860's, H. McNulty owned the St. Charles. McNulty sold the property to F.A. Eschbacher and his son.

In 1878 they sold it to Robert Forbes and James Taylor. These two men owned it until sometime in the 1890's. Mr. Costa owned it until 1902, when he sold it to Antonio Lavezzola. He eventually

sold it to F.M. Lusk. Around 1940 Ora Huggins bought the hotel. He also owned the Quartz, another popular Downieville hotel.

During the time that the St. Charles was in business, there were many fires and much remodeling. The first major fire in Downieville, in February of 1852, destroyed much of the main business section. The people struggled and sweated, but eventually they got the town back together. The hotel was replaced with a canvas and wood structure.

The next fire, in 1858, again destroyed parts of town. This time it spared the new hotel, which had been totally remodeled in 1854 as a 3 story structure. In 1864, yet another fire hit the Downieville area. This destroyed the second St. Charles Hotel. Once again, the 3 story structure was rebuilt. After about 70 years, the third story was torn off. Seven years later, in 1947, the hotel burned for the last time. It was lost in the same tragic fire that destroyed the courthouse. The burning of these buildings resulted in a great loss to the community, for they were among the oldest in California.

YUBA RIVER LODGE, GOODYEARS BAR

by Sage Ortiz/Bolle

The Yuba River Lodge was built in the early 1800's and its name at the time was the St. Charles Hotel. It burned down in 1864. It was rebuilt in 1865 by Mr. Fluke, and the name changed to the Yuba River Lodge.

It was used as a hotel and a social gathering place. There was a dance hall on the second floor and a parlor and a bar on the first floor. There was a third floor added when the building was rebuilt in 1865. Now there is a balcony on the second floor and a large front porch on the first floor. There is a kitchen now that was built off to the right of the hotel. There are four bedrooms on the first floor, five on the second floor, and four on the third floor. There's a dining room and a large front room on the first floor. Where the five bedrooms are now, there used to be a dance floor. On the first floor, the front room was divided into

two sections. One was a bar which had a stove which the men kept going when they were in the bar. On the other side there was a parlor where the women would always go and there was a stove there too.

The hotel has seen a lot of changes through the years. To look at it now, it is hard to believe that it was built over mining tunnels and that it stood as an important part of a town of 5,000. Now Melvin and Marcella Ponta own the building and use it as a residence.

MINUTES OF THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society held its meeting at the Kentucky Mine on Sunday, March 12, 1989, with a potluck luncheon at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President Bill Copren at 2:00 p.m., with fourteen members present. Improvements and work for the Kentucky Mine Museum were planned. Jim Lonergan was present to tell about the new Natural History Museum that is in the making at Chilcoot. The State Highway Department asked the Society to check the accuracy of the information on the placards at Vista Point on Yuba Pass, Highway # 49.

Another meeting was held on May 20, 1989 at the Kentucky Mine in preparation for the opening on Memorial Day weekend. New officers were installed. The meeting was called to order by President Linc Madsen. The Fall meeting is to be announced.

HOLLY HOUSE

by Donna Mitchell

The Holly House was built in 1885 by Watt Hughes, a partner in the very successful Young America Mine. The bricks used to build the foundation were from what is now called the "The Flats" in Sierra City. The hardware and doorknobs came over Emigrant Gap by mule back.

The neighborhood around the Holly House is located at the southeast corner of Sierra City. During the California Gold Rush it was part of the Italian section of town. Before the neighborhood was a residential area it was a ranch called Boltero Ranch.

The current owners Kenneth (Richard) Nourse and Mary Nourse have done a lot of remodeling in the fourteen years that they have lived there. They have put in a new furnace, replaced the roof and lath and plaster walls, added on a new kitchen and fixed the decorative ceiling rosettes. When they are done remodeling the house will have five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a parlor, an office, a television room, a family room split into a kitchen/dining/living room, and a laundry room.

The Holly House has been passed from owner to owner over the past 103 years. Beginning with Watt Hughes, there were eight owners prior to the present ones.

One of these owners was Richard Castagna who had a general store in Sierra City and whose wife kept the house as a boarding house. Post cards (love letters) were found by the Nourses in the walls of the house. These letters were written to the Castagna's daughter from a man who lived in San Francisco.

Mary and Kenneth (Richard) Nourse are raising their three children in the large old house which was originally called the Hughes Mansion. When they moved into the house it was meant to be a "fixer upper". The Nourses found a quilt, some antique furniture, a sign that says "Sierra Buttes Inn", and various dishes in the house. They even inherited a pet deer named "Petunia", fed by previous owners Jean and Forest McMahon.

There is a story that a teenage girl named Olivia died in the Holly House. She is said to haunt the house, but the Nourses haven't met her yet.

The neighborhood around the Holly House is getting noticeably quieter and calmer. More people are retired that live there now.

The Holley House got its name from L.H. Holley, one of the owners. The name was later changed to "Holly" when the holly trees were planted in the front of the house. The house and its name have lasted for many years and probably will last many more.

THE BOSCH BREWERY

by Amber Withycombe

The Bosch Brewery is one of Downieville's oldest and most historically vivid buildings. 1989 marks the 135th year that Downieville's first brewery has been standing. Although it was not the actual brewery, it served as the business office and living quarters to the previous owners. The actual brewery burned down sometime between 1910 and 1942. Now all that remains is an empty lot.

The Bosch Brewery was very prosperous in its day. A bountiful supply of water was piped down the Pauley Creek, north-east of Downieville, to make the beer which sold for 25 cents a quart. Bacon rind rubbed on the inside of the rim of the metal pails kept the beer from flowing over the top. A damp cave behind the brewery served as a refrigerator. Beer wagons ran to Goodyears Bar, Forest City and Allerton. The shelves at the

man named Borge first built and operated the brewery in 1854. Business was slow and money scarce, so in 1856 he sold it to three men named Scamman, Schultz and Rapp. Then, in 1858, the three men sold it to Ferdinand Bosch, a thriving business man. The brewery prospered during Bosch's ownership, but age took its toll, and in 1898 Bosch sold the business to John Woessner. The reputation of the brewery was kept up during Woessner's ownership until his death, in 1910, it produced the highest grade beer in town. The building was then willed to Henry J. and Bessie Taylor Zwiefel, whose relation to Woessner is unknown. The Zwiefels ran a laundry from 1920 to 1942 and then sold the building to Norah Q. Cameron. In the long period in which Mr. Cameron owned it, the brewery was abandoned. During that time it endured harsh winters, natural disasters and repeated vandalism. Cameron sold the brewery in 1985 to Merle E. and Ann F. Carver of Rancho Cordova. Mr. and Mrs. Carver presently own it and are skillfully renovating the old brewery.