

THE SIERRAN

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Martin Luther Morrison and Clara; their surviving children (left to right): Walter, Leslie and Mabel.

Morrison Family History

by Lydia Cartwright Rosen

When California's gold rush in 1849 struck a resonant chord throughout the world, a great diversity of nationalities responded to the lure of opportunity. But those who answered the siren call shared one vital motivating force -- the spirit of adventure. One branch of my family sprang up when the paths of two such adventurous families converged in Sierra City. The Fischers came directly from Germany in the early 1860's; the Morrisons, originally from Scotland, had already been on the North American continent almost a

century before leaving Maine for California at the beginning of the Civil War.

The Morrison link in the family chain forged in Sierra City was my great-grandfather, George Henry Morrison. Born in Clinton, Kennebec County, Maine, in 1843, George was one of a family of five born to Alvah and Hannah Morrison. Alvah was a millwright (a skill that has endured in the family) whose antecedents from the Morrison clan in Scotland had first emigrated to Canada, then settled in Maine sometime between 1810 and 1815. An unsubstantiated family legend relates that our branch of the Morrison family is connected to an illegitimate son of a Scottish king who fled

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ACTING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Speranza Avram

The Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a Museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds quarterly meetings, publishes a semi-annual newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive *The Sierran* and are admitted free of charge to the museum and stamp mill tour.

If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join!

OFFICERS and STAFF

Acting President.....	Speranza Avram
Vice President.....	Rita Bradley
Recording Secretary.....	Lila Heuer
Treasurer/Membership Chair.....	Maren Scholberg
Museum Curator.....	Karen Donaldson
<i>Sierran</i> Production Staff.....	Dave Bloch
	Karen Donaldson

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

SENIOR	\$5.00
INDIVIDUAL	\$10.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$15.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$25.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$100.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair:

Mrs. Maren Scholberg
P.O. Box 141
Sierraville, CA 96126

Due to the resignation of Betsy Cammack as President, I was recently appointed Acting President of the Sierra County Historical Society by Vice President Rita Bradley, to serve until the next membership meeting.

By way of introduction, I moved to Sierra City in 1991, after owning a home here since 1986. I am the Clinic Manager at the Western Sierra Medical Clinic in Downieville. My background is in public administration, having held various positions with government agencies in Sacramento. I have been involved with numerous nonprofit agencies over the past fifteen years. My husband, Dave Bloch and I also operate International Mobile Video, an independent video production and consulting business. We have both been active members of the Historical Society since 1987.

A big "Thank You" to Betsy for her energy and great ideas for the Historical Society. She volunteered many hours for the Society and the Museum. We look forward to her continued involvement with the organization.

Please come to our next membership meeting on **October 25** in Calpine. We will be discussing some exciting projects and programs for the upcoming year. An election for President and other officers will be held. We need your energy and ideas to make the Historical Society grow and prosper. If you can't make the meeting, but have some comments or suggestions for the Society, please call me at home, 862-1390. I look forward to meeting all of you on October 25!

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOTICE!

Sunday, October 25, 1992 -- 1:00 PM
Calpine Improvement Association Building
Potluck luncheon -- meeting following
Guest Speaker: **LEN KINZLER** will bring
and talk about some of his models of historic
Downieville buildings, as seen at the Sierra
County State Fair exhibit.



KENTUCKY MINE MUSEUM NEWS

Karen Donaldson, Curator

Once again, we are nearing the end of a busy summer season at the museum. This marks the tenth year of my employment here and with it a time of reflection and evaluation. Even though at times it has seemed that progress was slow, I can also say that "We've come a long way!" and achieved a great deal. It has been an exciting challenge.

On May 10 the Governor's Historic Preservation Award was presented to the Kentucky Mine Park and Museum by Gail Wilson. We were second of eight recipients. Brenda Mitchell of Downieville was instrumental in writing the proposal and represented Sierra County. Betsy Cammack attended on behalf of the Historical Society and we all attended a luncheon after the ceremony. It was a real honor to accept the award.

The museum building received a new coat of paint before opening day. It had been many years since the last time and it really looks great. Malcolm R. Cooper, painting contractor from Sierra City, and Leon Kalmbach spent several days here with their professional equipment and donated their labor. As a result, the cost was very low for just the paint and the many tubes of caulking needed to patch the wood.

The following volunteers worked hard on the project and are greatly appreciated: Phil and Betsy Cammack, Arnie and Kevel Gutman, Lowell Banks, Chuck Hardesty and

Maren Scholberg.

The Museum Advisory Board met with representatives from the County at a luncheon meeting held at the Downieville Diner in July and agreed on a list of priorities for the expenditure of the \$20,000 grant from the State Parks and Recreation Department. First on the list is the retimbering and lighting of the mine portal! Also on the list is repair to the water system and additional lighting of the pathways to the amphitheatre. Budget permitting, we hope to enhance our highway visibility and repair the valve to the Pelton wheel in the blacksmith shop and the redwood water tank by the trestle. We are expecting approval from the State at any time and hope to complete work during the winter months and have everything ready by Memorial Day weekend 1993 for a really Grand Opening!

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

The Summer Concert Series was a great success this year and seems to be gaining in popularity. Dennis Messa, Liz Fisher, Carroll and Renetta Hayes, JoAn Cochran, Cheryl Durrett and myself were the main team players. We appreciate those members of the Historical Society who helped with publicity and, as in the past, Linc Madsen was our super salesman getting ads sold for our poster. Carlo Giuffre and George Alcock put up the banner in town and also took it down. Dave Bloch and the Sierra County Arts Council provided the weekly flyers from design and typesetting to copies. Speranza Avram and Dave, as International Mobile Video, put together a really nice thirty-minute promotional video of our series last year which was aired on numerous cable television stations in the state. The Concert Series was featured in a full-page article with photograph in the July/August issue of *Sierra Heritage* magazine, along with an ad which acknowledged our local business support. Thanks everyone!

MEMORIAL FUND

The Tschopp family of Sierra City and San Francisco has made a generous donation to the Memorial Fund in memory of Henry Tschopp who passed away last fall. We hope to be receiving additional donations in the near future.

MUSEUM DONATIONS

The Museum received the following donations during the summer season, and we are grateful to the donors. Thank you!

The Margie Merison Hutchison estate has donated a 14-foot-long **hydraulic monitor** with patent dates of 1863 and 1870, as well as an **air compressor, parts from a mill**

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and a pair of flywheels. Rick and Michael Hertzberger delivered some of the heavy pieces in their truck and also donated some pieces of **old mill belting**. Charles K. Smith brought the monitor up in the bucket of his backhoe!

Keith Wayt and Joe Kelly donated a **pair of soles from hob-nailed boots** found near Howard Creek dating to circa 1900. One would be interesting, but a pair...!

Joe Smith donated **photographs of the 1936 crew at the Original Sixteen-to-One Mine in Alleghany**. Joe worked there for a number of years and has been writing articles of his remembrances for the *Mountain Messenger*--we hope to publish some of these in upcoming issues of *The Sierran*. He also brought F.D. Calhoun up from Sacramento to speak to our summer Historical Society meeting in the amphitheatre.

Andra Berger Carter has donated numerous mementos from several branches of her family: a **red velvet collar box with eight men's collars** which belonged to Theo Berger, a **baby coat** worn by seven Berger children, a **burgundy velvet purse** circa 1910, **two embroidered European pillow shams** complete with Chinese laundry stamp, **three silk handkerchiefs** belonging to Francis Seitz, **his photo** and an **apron** used by his wife Molly, a **photo of Seitz' butcher shop** in Sierra City later operated by Emil and Anna (Seitz) Loeffler, a **wedding photo of Emil and Anna**, an **unrelated mourning cape**, a **photo album** from Tillie Berger Wright, and an early **photo of Downieville**.

Billie Madsen donated an **embroidered silk chemise**, a **powder puff shaped like a flower with a stem** and a **plaque from a baggage stand** patented in 1897.

To the anonymous donor of the **promotional ink blotter** from the Sierra City Pharmacy--it is on display.

Paul and Mary Bettencourt donated a pair of genuine **Levi's blue jeans** with a lot of character. They were found in the walls of their home serving as insulation with a telegram in the pocket dated 1908.

LaVerne Monico donated a **Lumberman's Actuary**, used to determine the value of saleable lumber, which will enhance the logging display.

Betsy Cammack has donated a **computer**, complete with monitor and printer. Dave Bloch will begin a training program with me over the winter.

VOLUNTEERS

The following volunteers were diligent and wonderful about keeping the museum staffed during the summer: Mary Bettencourt, Rita Bradley, Francie Brett, Margaret Burelle, Phil and Betsy Cammack, Don Castleberry, Charity

Clover, Jennifer Harnach, Jack Hawkins, Lois Keeler, Linc and Billie Madsen, Barbara Martinetti, Brad Mead, LaVerne Monico, and Maren Scholberg.

To thank this special group of people for their time and energy, the Museum and the Concert Series will host a dinner party at Carlo's Ristorante in Sierra City. It is high time to get our volunteers together to acknowledge and celebrate another successful year. This diverse and interesting group really keeps us going!

I attended an Events Production Workshop in Nevada City this month and learned some new tricks there. Also, I spoke to the Native Daughters of the Golden West on October 14, and presented our slide show of the museum and stamp mill tour.

By next year, I hope to have located a volunteer coordinator to schedule days at the museum. This person would like talking with people primarily on the phone and have some time at home to devote to this important role. Also needed: someone willing to keep a publicity scrapbook for the museum, Society and concert media mentions. Other projects need attention, too, so if you would like to help we would love to have you. Have a great winter!

A NEW LOOK FOR THE SIERRAN

With this issue, *The Sierran* enters the world of computerized publishing. You can look forward to new graphics, better legibility and a more interesting layout as we continue the transition to a totally computer-produced publication.

The best part of this new technology is that *The Sierran* will now be typeset and laid out entirely in Sierra County. This will make the production more convenient and expedient, and keep our money working in Sierra County.

If you have comments or questions, we'd like to hear them! Send a card or letter to the Sierra County Historical Society, P.O. Box 260, Sierra City CA, 96125.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Society has begun to realize its goals of videotaping oral history interviews with Sierra County residents. The first one was conducted recently by U.S. Forest Service archaeologist Hank Meals. Gus Poggi told stories of his experiences on the historic pack trails of the area. The Forest Service is interested in working on several other interviews with us. Mary Chakarun is planning to record an interview with Elizabeth Costa of Downieville in the near future. Video recording services are being donated by International Mobile Video of Sierra City. Interviewers are needed! Interested parties should contact Karen Donaldson at (916) 862-1310.



Lydia Lord Sanborn

to Canada -- to escape death by jealous half-siblings possibly? The story is intriguing enough to warrant a thorough search for authenticity someday.

In the early 1860's, George married Lydia Lord Sanborn of Bangor, Maine. Choosing life over the distinct possibility of early death, George took advantage of an accepted practice of the time. Sponsored by

his parents, George paid the government (Abe Lincoln was President then) one hundred dollars to be relieved from duty in the Civil War. With his young bride, Lydia, George set out for California by steamer. Two of George's brothers, Joseph and Sanford, also came to Sierra County but we aren't certain if they traveled with George and Lydia. The ship sailed from Maine, following the Atlantic seaboard down through the Caribbean to the isthmus of Panama (the canal did not exist yet), where passengers disembarked for the thirty-one mile trip by carriage to the Pacific Ocean. For the last leg of the journey to California, George and Lydia sailed from Panama up the Pacific coast to San Francisco. Also making that three-part journey was my great-grandmother Lydia's marble-topped walnut dresser. Still solid and beautiful in the 1990's, it is at least one hundred and thirty years old. I often look at it and marvel at its endurance.

The young couple first settled in Hammonton, a small town or settlement near Marysville, where George, following his father's craft, worked as a millwright. The couple must have moved into the foothills sometime in the middle 1860's. Their first two children to arrive, George G. in 1868 and Martin Luther in 1870, were born in Indian Hill in Sierra County. Indian Hill, now only a few old foundations at the end of a dirt road near one of Depot Hill's hairpin turns, was a small but thriving settlement in the 1860's.

George, Lydia, and their two young sons then ventured into higher, rougher country, settling finally in our county's northernmost mining town, Sierra City. Even though life was harsher in Sierra City, it offered more opportunities for a millwright than the valley. With the ongoing discovery of new veins, mining construction was booming and carpenters were in continuous demand. The family settled in a house (it caved in during the 1950's) just east of the cemetery and behind Randall and Wanda Wilson's summer home. For the birth of their third child, Lydia Morrison went home to Maine where a daughter, Bertha, was born in 1877. Lydia returned to Sierra City with her young

daughter, and the three children grew up in the house near the cemetery. Lydia confided to her granddaughter Mabel (my mother), that her early years in Sierra City, with its isolated and rugged life geared toward mining, presented a harsh contrast to the refined life in Maine, where she had taught young women elocution and handwriting in a finishing school. Refusing to give up her earlier training, Lydia, my mother remembered, wore gray kid gloves whenever she came into the dusty, boisterous town. In Sierra City, George was involved with mining operations and also had a thriving potato field across the river from the Yuba River Inn property. To get to the field, he built the wagon road which is the (closed off) eastern extension of Lake Street, and crossed the river with his team and wagon at a shallow place always known as "The Ford."



George Henry Morrison

George's two brothers, Joseph and Sanford, seem to have been associated with Sierra Valley, where they helped with haying on the ranches. My brother, Cal Cartwright, from some pages of notes left by our great grandfather, George, wrote an account of a grisly incident in which Sanford Morrison had taken a courageous part. The account, which Cal called "The Tragedy of Hamlin's Canyon," relates that during the winter of 1874-75, George's brother Sanford shared Sam Berry's cabin in Hamlin's canyon, where the two men had recently seen fresh tracks large enough to belong to a grizzly. On the morning of November 29, 1874, Sam Berry set off into the canyon to check on a number of traps he had there. When Berry had not returned by late afternoon, Sanford Morrison became alarmed, but early darkness hindered him from searching for his friend. The following morning he came in to Sattley to raise the alarm, and about 200 men set out to search Hamlin's canyon for Berry. Finally, the group heard the signal shot. One of the searchers had found Sam Berry's mangled and bloody body; his head lay about three feet away. A trail of the same large bear prints they had seen earlier led off toward the south range.

Sam Berry's cabin is very likely the spot where the two Morrison brothers themselves met their end. We know that during a particularly harsh winter in the 1880's they did not come down from their cabin, which was in a canyon on the south wall of the Sierra Valley, near the Turner ranch. When searchers broke through the massive drifts, they discovered the long-dead bodies of the Morrison brothers. They

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buried Joseph and Sanford, who had starved or frozen to death in a prolonged blizzard, in the canyon near their cabin.

The three children of George and Lydia took divergent paths as adults. Young George had an avid, intellectually curious mind. Mining fascinated him together with our native mountain plants. During his life he obtained a number of claims, among them a property that came to be known as the American Exchange in Hog Canyon above the Primrose Mine, the George G. and George H. Morrison claims, the Realty (known as the Buffalo), the Realty Extension, and the Middle Placer. When he was about eighteen, George G. hit a rich vein and took out a considerable amount of gold. With some of the money from this strike, George decided to pursue his early interests more seriously and went down the mountain to U.C. Berkeley to study mining engineering and botany.

Young George married Laura Kennedy, who was born on the Kennedy ranch at Goodyear's Bar. George and Laura had four children: George Raymond, born in 1895, who was always known as "Ray;" Arthur, born in 1897; Alice Laurel, born in 1902; and Clarence, who died in 1914 when he was only five years old. Alice Laurel also died tragically after playing tennis and becoming chilled. In her short lifetime, Alice showed an exceptional artistic talent that has continued to surface in succeeding generations of our family.



World War II pilot Arthur Morrison



The cabin at the American Exchange Mine in Hog Canyon

"Uncle George," as my part of the family remembers him, was an extraordinary character. He was a voracious reader and inveterate story-teller (another Morrison trait seems to be an encyclopedic memory for names, dates and incidents. My mother, Mabel, was well-known for hers). Stacks of at least fifty years of issues of the National Geographic climbed the walls of both his Sierra City house (which was directly above the cemetery) and his large drafty cabin at the American Exchange mine. Always delighted to share his experience, he was an endless fund of knowledge on our mountain wildflowers and on the local mining lore. Even into his late seventies, Uncle George walked the ten steep miles of the Sierra Buttes Road back and forth from his house in town to his cabin in Hog Canyon. And until his death in 1946, he was still prospecting. His two remaining children, Ray and Arthur, who were both flyers during the World War II era, kept up an interest in Uncle George's claims during their lifetimes.

That dusty, drafty old cabin at the mine is embedded fondly in my childhood memories of mountain summers. When Arthur brought my mother and me up from Sierra City in the fifties for a few days' stay with his family, we lived as though time had been turned back a century. The cabin had no electricity, only candles and a kerosene lamp; we cooked on the old wood range, the water gurgled continuously out of a pipe in the wall from an icy spring a hundred feet away, flowed through the sink, down a short drain and out again by the back door; the privy was up a trail in a stand of ancient white fir. We picked bounteous bouquets of azaleas and tiger

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lilies in the meadow near the house where the four-stamp mining mill rotted gracefully away; we fished for our dinner among the willows along Butcher Ranch Creek. These days, Arthur's son Bruce and his nephews keep up their family interest in the mine.

George and Lydia's second son, Martin Luther (my grandfather), married Clara Dietel, who came to Sierra City from Dresden, Germany, when she was ten years old. Clara's mother was a part of the Fischer family, which still has several branches in the Gold Country. Martin and Clara had five children, but the unchecked childhood diseases of the time took the oldest, Clara, when she was about three, and the youngest, Harold, when he was only an infant. The three children who survived into old age were Leslie, born in 1900, Mabel, born in 1901, and Walter, born in 1904. When Martin and Clara married in 1897 in Sierra City, Martin moved his bride immediately into a small house on Church Street. Built the previous year, the house had only a small bedroom downstairs, a small "front parlor" (reserved for special occasions, like a parson's visit), and a larger room the width of the house that served as kitchen, main living room and bathing room. Upstairs were two large bedrooms. The privy was stationed in the back yard. All five of Martin and Clara's children were born in that house and the surviving three grew up there; they went through high school in Sierra City until graduation, except for my mother, Mabel, who finished at Polytechnic High in San Francisco. Martin, like his Morrison forebears, became a highly skilled carpenter. He served as foreman for the construction of a number of mining stamp mills in the area, including those at the Sacred Mound and Primrose mines. From family accounts, Martin seems to have been strict and gruff, and unlike his garrulous brother, George, was a man of few words. Yet he was a painstaking woodcrafter and a poet. Clara was a much loved part of the community throughout her life. As a young wife and mother, she was constantly in demand as a midwife. Her cooking and baking and her gardens were legendary. A cousin, Virginia Maxwell, fondly remembers the annual mass of purple iris in the picket-

fenced yard on Church Street and the large raspberry patch that yielded daily platters of fruit in the summer. Martin later added on a section to the back of the house that became a kitchen, a bathroom without a toilet, and a workroom. In the 1920's he hooked up a generator with our own water source and the house had its first, rather dim, electricity. In 1937, a little enclosure for a toilet was finally built in the back workroom and the privy came down. My fun-loving Uncle Walter honored its demise with a 21-gun salute.



Martin L. Morrison, assisted at his lathe by granddaughter Marjorie

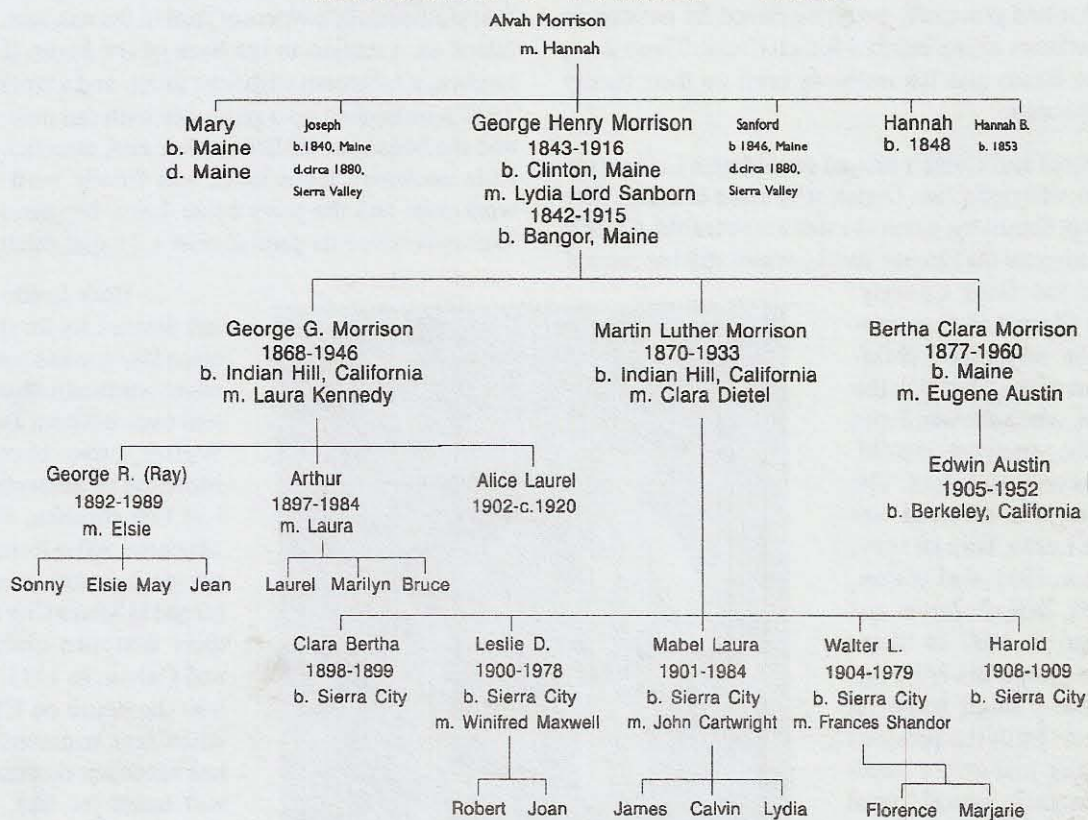
Both Leslie and Walter left Sierra City for the San Francisco Bay Area as young men and never returned to live there. Leslie had two children, Bob and Joan; Walter, who carried on the Morrison carpentry tradition, also had two children, Florence and Marjorie. After living in various places, my mother and father returned to Sierra City in 1936 with their first two children, James and Calvin. In 1941, they moved into the house on Church Street with Clara, widowed by then. The last Morrison descendent born in that house (so far), I arrived in 1942.

Bertha left Sierra City, married Eugene Austin and lived most of her life in Berkeley. She had one son, Edwin, who died without leaving children.

Sierra City has continued to bind Morrison descendants to our mountain roots. George G.'s grandchildren, Bruce Morrison and his sister Marilyn, maintain an interest in their mining claims; my brother Cal Cartwright returned to Sierra City in 1988 and, together with his wife, Marlene, runs the popular High Country Inn at Bassett's; I have inherited my birthplace, the Morrison family home on Church Street.

I am grateful to the following family members who helped me with this account: my niece, Lisa Busath, who is painstakingly tracking down our family's genealogy; my brother, Cal Cartwright; my cousins, Bruce Morrison, Bob Morrison, and Bob's half-sister and brother, Virginia Grillo and George Maxwell.

MORRISON FAMILY TREE



Wedding photo of Eugene Austin and Bertha Morrison Austin, circa 1900