

THE SIERRA

A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society
*a member of the Conference of California Historical Societies
and the California Association of Museums*

Volume XXVIII, Number 1

Spring/Summer 2000

Sierraville Graveyard



*Amila Hudson Lemmon
Died 1885 - 83 Yrs*

*Rebecca Lemmon Oleso
1824 - 1916e
Army Nurse 1861 - 1865*

The Incomplete History of the Lemmon's

By William (Bill) H. Harnach

The year 1850 brought some of the greatest gold finds ever encountered in California and many of the richest were in the Yuba River drainage, most notably at Goodyears Bar and "The Forks" (Downieville) areas. From there men scrambled over river bottoms and poked holes into the mountains in search of more. Rumors from the year before spoke of a lake, The Lost Lake of Gold, whose shores were splattered with an abundance of the precious metal free for the taking. A party was formed to search for the fabled lake. In that group were three who caught a glimpse of a distant valley from one of the mountain peaks and who perhaps thought that maybe the future lay there.

In 1851, three men, A. P. Chapman, Wm. Jones, and George F. Kent ventured forth from Downieville with the idea of staking a claim on some of the land that they had seen. Traveling over the mountains they probably crested on the mountain in the vicinity of Gold Lake and traveled down to what is now Mohawk Valley.

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SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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, has special programs and an annual membership meeting, 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!

2000 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS and STAFF

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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:

INDIVIDUAL	\$10.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$15.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$25.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$250.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair:

Mrs. Maren Scholberg
PO Box 141
Sierraville, CA 96126

SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Office Address: Kentucky Mine Museum
PO Box 260, Sierra City, CA 96125
(530) 862-1310 FAX: (530) 862-1312

SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We welcome these new members since our fall edition of the *SIERRAN*. We thank you for your support.

Dean Abramson	Santa Rosa, CA
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Wanted, needed and much appreciated:

Volunteers for Kentucky Mine Museum

June, July, August and September

Choose a day – Wednesday through Sunday
10 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Or a shorter day – 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Or a half day – 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. or 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.

Call Ruth Neubert 832-1525 or Rita Bradley 994-3306

Thank You!

Coming in November – in time for Christmas

THE BIG, OLD HOUSES OF SIERRA VALLEY/SIERRA COUNTY

Featuring pictures, history, short biographies, notes
of human interest and intrigue.

Available by November 2000. Call 994-3480

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FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD

We look forward to another successful year at Kentucky Mine Museum with Anne Eldred as Museum Director. Opening day is May 27th and we will be open the 28th and 29th, closed the 30th and then our regular season begins on May 31st.

Once again, we express our appreciation and thanks to Lila Heuer and her committee for arranging all the summer concerts and the publicity for each program. Lila has worked hard and put in long hours. Doug Burr arranged for all the concert performers. Thank you, Doug! (Note the Concert Schedule on Page 8.)

We wish to thank Laurie Unland, Administrative Assistant, for her invaluable help; LaVerne Monico for her help with the flower display, planters and hours of cleaning at the Museum. Thank you!! Both people are much appreciated by the Board members.

We hope to see you this summer!

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History of the Lemmon's

There they found the good lands taken. From there they traveled up the valley, toward the east, and over a low ridge into what is now Sierra Valley. Here the party posted four claims and returned to Downieville to register them. In late October or early November Chapman returned and posted two more claims in the name of B. F. and W. C. Lemmon.

In the summer of 1852 Chapman returned to the valley to build a log cabin on his claim. During the spring of the same year James Beckwourth built his cabin on the north end of Sierra Valley and the Lemmon brothers in the company of Ezra Culver built their cabin at the present site of Randolph.

Who were the Lemmon's and where did this hardy pioneer stock come from? The matriarch of the clan, Amila Hudson Lemmon, was born on August 27, 1802 near Geneva, Seneca County, New York. She was a direct descendent of the explorer Henry Hudson, for whom the Hudson Bay and Hudson River are named. She had two brothers, William and Henry, and one sister, Jane. At age nineteen, Amila married William Lemmon also of Seneca County, New York. In 1830 she and her husband, along with seven children moved to Michigan. There they built a cabin and improved land near the present town of Lima. Two more children were born in Michigan. At the age of 34 she was left a widow. Prior to the death of her husband two of her children, Mary and

Jane, had died. So at the age of 34, Amila was left with a working farm and seven children to support and educate.

The headstone of Amila Lemmon in the Sierraville cemetery lists the names of all the children in the apparent birth order. They are Mary Ann, William Cromwell, Cynthia Rebecca, Benjamin Franklin, Alexis Barney, Charles Henry, John Gill, Jane Isyphine and Amila.

In 1860, at the age of 58, Amila Lemmon accompanied by her youngest daughter, Mrs. Amila Peters, moved to California where she settled in with her eldest son William in the Marysville area. During the flood of 1861-62 she lost virtually everything she owned. After her rescue by son William she then moved to Carson City, Nevada to live with her daughter Amila. In 1872 or 1873 she came to Sierra Valley, living with her second son, B. F. Lemmon and his family.

She moved again in 1879, this time to Oakland, California to live with her youngest son John Gill and his wife Sara. Amila Lemmon resided there until her death on October 7, 1885 at the age of 83. While in Oakland she was active in the Eastern Star and was also a member of several intellectual groups. Amila Lemmon's esteem is best shown in a poem written by California's first poet laureate, Ina Coolbrith.

William Cromwell Lemmon, better known as W. C., was born in Seneca County, New York on March 3, 1822. He was Amila's second child and eldest son.

In 1830 the entire family moved to Washtenaw County, Michigan to a farm that had been homesteaded in William's name. With the death of his father, the job of running the family farm fell on W.C.'s shoulders. He attended school in Albion, Michigan, a distance of about forty miles from his home, and later went to Ann Arbor. Here W.C. studied law in the offices of Wilson & Hubbard, and was admitted to the Michigan Supreme Court in December of 1849.

The spring of 1850 found W. C. en route to California, by way of Panama. He arrived in San Francisco in June of that year, and immediately set off for Nevada City. W.C. was soon mining on the Yuba River below Goodyear's Bar. That fall he moved on to Downieville and settled for the winter, doing business in the area of general merchandising.

In 1851, Downieville was a rough and tumble mining town. Due to his background in law, W. C. was elected as the second justice of the peace and served for two years.

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History of the Lemmon's

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An excerpt from the December 13, 1862 edition of the Sierra Democrat reads "...Judge Lemmon, -- the same who sat in judgment and imposed fines upon the unruly in the early history of Downieville..." In 1853 he was elected justice of Sierra Township, and served a two year term.

In 1852 W.C., his brother B. F. Lemmon and Ezra Culver built the first cabin in what was to become known as Randolph. A report from the "Mountain Echo" dated July 3, 1852 States: "Judge Lemmon has commenced cutting a large plot of clover, which he estimates will average some 4 tons to the acre..." This report suggests that the Lemmon brothers and Culver had already built the cabin and were in the process of establishing their claims to land they planned to preempt.

During the years 1852 through 1856 W. C. dealt in livestock. He spent his summers in the Sierra Valley and winters in the Marysville area. In 1856, W.C. made the Marysville area his home until the flood of 1861-62 destroyed all of his holdings. After the flood, he established a permanent residence in Sierra Valley. In 1870, W. C. was the only area rancher engaged in the production of sheep. By 1873, W. C. had a total of 160 acres. 1878 found W. C. still ranching and selling horses. A Mountain Messenger report dated August 31, 1878 reads, "Last week Judge Lemmon passed through town with two fine horses of his own raising, one of which weighed 1,480 lbs., and was 17 hands high; the other weighed about a hundred pounds less. We are informed that the pair had been sold to Prof. Andress. The complaint of long standing that Sierra Valley farmers raised no good horses is getting to be without foundation, as D. Newman, D. Patterson, Judge Lemmon, and a number of others have raised some very fine stock." By 1896 W.C. had sold all of his land holdings with the exception of two parcels totaling 7 acres in Sierraville.

W. C. maintained a constant interest in mining from the time he arrived in California. In 1863, W. C. & B. F. Lemmon, T. S. & T. F. Battelle and Wm. Arms formed the Mastodon Mining Company in order to secure the funding needed to work on claims in the Antelope Mining District. One of the Lemmon brothers, probably W. C., was involved in the mines of Poe City on Peavine Mountain, Nevada. There is a record of ore samples from Peavine being shown by one of the Lemmon brothers in Sierraville that came from Peavine.

W. C. was a charter member of the Masonic Lodge in Sierraville, Sierra Valley Lodge F. and A.M., No. 184,

established in 1865. He was a three time Grand Master, serving his last term in 1896. In 1898, W.C. was one of two of the original charter members still active in the lodge.

W. C. Lemmon and Julia C. Bellmer were united in marriage on October 26, 1871. At the present time there is no record of children resulting from this union.

As best as can be determined at the present time W. C. Lemmon died sometime between 1898 and 1908. There is no death certificate on file in the Sierra county recorders office.

Benjamin Franklin Lemmon, better known as B. F. or Frank, was born on May 13, 1826 in Seneca County, New York. When he was four years old the family moved to Lima, Mich. There at the age of 12 he went out on his own and was principally involved in farming.

According to Fariss & Smith, B. F. traveled to California by way of Panama in 1851. The Lemmon brothers are also credited with leading a party of travelers from the Humbolt Desert of Nevada to Downieville, over the Henness Pass, that year. But records from the passenger list of the ship SS Isthmus, which arrived in San Francisco on January 14, 1852, list B. F. & A. B. Lemmon. The A. B. Lemmon listed is probably Alexis Barney Lemmon and the B. F. Lemmon should be Benjamin Franklin. This would suggest that part of the Fariss & Smith biography may be in error and the subject of greater in-depth research.

During the time that the Lemmon brothers and Ezra Culver built the cabin at Randolph, B. F. preempted 160 acres of land in the section of the Sierra Valley that leads into Lemmon Canyon. The original claim is dated July 5, 1852 with a secondary claim dated July 15, 1852 also recorded. By 1882 B. F. had added another 480 acres to his holdings making a total acreage of 640. By the standards of the day this was a very large land holding.

B. F. married Nancy Jane Herring on November 4, 1858. Their only child, Ada, was born on December 22, 1861 and died on February 2, 1864. Once again the biography of Fariss & Smith is at odds with what is etched in stone, this time on a tombstone in the Sierraville cemetery. The biography states that "Mrs. Lemmon died in September, 1862", while the headstone reads "Nancy J. Lemmon, B. August 9, 1834, D. November 27, 1862, Wife of B. F." An interesting side note to this marriage is to be found in a report from Sierra Valley in the Mountain Messenger,

dated March 25, 1871 which read, "Fruit Tree Planting: This spring an unusual interest is awakened in fruit trees and shrubs. There is no question that goose-berries, currants, strawberries, etc., can be grown on the dry sage lands. F. A. Herring from the Mountain Nursery near Forbestown, has a large number of trees acclimating on the ranch of B. F. Lemmon near Sierraville." Is there a relationship between F. A. Herring and B. F.s' first wife?

B. F. remarried on June 29, 1870 to Mary Louise Battelle of Sierraville. Two children were born from this union. Henry A. was born September 26, 1871 and died September 30, 1872. A second child, Henry Albert was born on December 28, 1872 and according to World War I draft records was living in Reno, Nevada in 1916. As early as 1896 the records show that Mary Lemmon owned property in Sierraville while residing in Carson City, Nevada. There is no 1896 record of B. F. as a landowner and this would imply that she was widowed prior to 1896.

The last enterprise that is well documented was B. F.s' involvement with the founding of the short-lived Sierraville newspaper "The Mountain Mirror". He and Roland Layton published the first edition on September 10, 1890 and by November of that year had dissolved their partnership. Hal (Henry Albert?) Lemmon continued to publish it for a short time.

Like his brother W. C., the date and place of B.F.'s death is unknown. Once again there is no record in the recorders office.

John Gill Lemmon was born on January 2, 1832 in Lima, Michigan. His early days were spent on the family farm where he developed an early interest in plants. John was educated at the University of Michigan and later taught school. He used his free time to explore the plant communities of southern Michigan.

During the Civil War J. G. was a member of the 4th Michigan Cavalry. He fought for three years before being captured by Confederate forces. When he was released from the notorious Andersonville prison, John came to California to live with his brother B. F. Lemmon.

In order to make a living after his trials of Andersonville, J. G. fell back on his old craft of teaching by starting a small private school. It was during this time that he assumed the title "Professor" in order to enhance his prestige and bolster enrollment. This provided some income, but his true love was still plants.

In the early 1870's, he made many collections of unknown plants in the Sierra Valley area, and thus began to gain a reputation as a botanist. Throughout the 1870's

J. G. traveled over large areas of California and western Nevada collecting plants. During that time, he came to know almost everyone working in any way with the plants of the southwestern United States. It was during this time that J. G. met his future wife, Sara Allen Plummer.

In 1880 J.G. moved to Oakland, California and married Sara. From 1882 to 1892 he served as botanist to the California State Board of Forestry. Previously he had made his living selling plant specimens to scientific institutions, so this position added some financial security.

John Gill Lemmon died on November 24, 1908 in Oakland, California. The obituary from the Oakland Tribune, November 25, 1908 reads: "Lemmon-In Oakland, Cal., November 24, 1908, John Gill Lemmon, comrade and beloved husband of Sarah A. Plummer Lemmon, and brother Charles H Lemmon of Kalamazoo, Mich., and Mrs. Rebecca C. Oleson of Sierra Valley, Cal., a native of Michigan, aged 76 years 10 months and 22 days."

Alexis Barney Lemmon; there are only three references found with his name. The first is on the headstone of his mother in the Sierraville cemetery. The second is possibly on the passenger list of the SS Isthmus and the last is a notation in the "memoriam" to the mother written by John Gill which says "During the gold excitement of California, her three eldest sons, William C., B. Frank. and Alexis B. (the latter deceased, near Downieville), left her maternal care to seek fortunes in the Far West, where they remained..."

Also in the 'memoriam' is "...in 1874, her only surviving daughter, now Mrs. Rebecca L. Oleson, swelled the home circle.", a reference to her moving to Sierra Valley. Her headstone in Sierraville reads, "Rebecca Lemmon Oleson, June 30, 1824, January 4, 1916. Army Nurse 1861-1865".

Thus ends the incomplete history of the Lemmon's of Sierra County.

Because of a lack of research time there are many unanswered questions about this family. If anyone has information, photographs, etc. that they would like to share to complete this history, I would appreciate the opportunity to look at and copy the material. Contact Bill Harnach, PO Box 28, Sattley, CA 96124.

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History of the Lemmon's

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Keller's Journey West

A Dream to Be a Cowboy

By Lee Adams

From "Keller's Journey West by Phyllis Hill, © 1994, Clear Spring District Historical Association, Used by Permission

In the summer of 1996, Paul Funkhouser came to the sheriff's office looking for information about an uncle that died in Sierra County in 1913. My research led to the newspaper, *The Mountain Messenger* where articles mentioned the boy fell from a horse at the Metz Ranch in Sattley. He was taken to a doctor in Sierraville, and ultimately died there. The following is from a book that Paul sent in response to receiving the articles.

A young girl opened a hidden drawer of an antique desk and found a bunch of old documents. There were letters, pictures, and postcards all sent from someone named Keller. Phyllis asked her mother, who said, "It was a long time ago. He was killed while working on a ranch in California. It was an accident. He was so young and so determined to go west. No one could change his mind." She could see the pain in her mother's eyes. The letters haunted Phyllis, so later, she read the letters and pieced together the story of Keller's journey.

In 1910, Keller, age 16, stowed away on a freight train leaving Clear Spring, Md. and made it as far as

Hagerstown. He was brought home by his father, and turned to the "wild-west" dime novels to feed his passion. For more than a year, Keller talked about becoming a cowboy out west. He finally convinced his parents to fund a train ticket to Texas. From here, his letters tell the story best.

Dear Mother, [April 29, 1912, Barry, TX]

I guess that you think that I am a dandy for not giving you my address, when I sent that postcard, but I have not gotten any work for sure. I have been staying with a man by the name of Reasonover. I worked Saturday and may have work for a couple of days yet, but I have not got any definite place.

When I get myself settled down, I will write to you and give you my address. We have a windstorm here that just shook things the worst they have had for 10 years, so the people say. I never heard it at all. I was asleep and never knew anything of it. The land here is a perfect sight to see. It is just as level as the floor as far as the eye can reach. It is a black soil and just as loose and fine as dust. And when it rains you cannot get out at all. The mud just keeps sticking to mud until you get a stick and punch it off, for you cannot stomp it off. There is a good cool breeze going all the time here. It does not get close at all.

Your loving son, Keller

A month later, he wrote to his father.

Dear Father, [May 1912, Barry, TX]

I am close to Barry now working on a farm. I am almost south into the sandy land. It is most sand here, although some black land mixed with it. Let me tell you that black sand is something fine to look at if you've never seen it. You would never go back to Maryland. It's just as level at a floor.

I don't know whether you've seen any cotton seed while you were in North Carolina or not. I am sending you a couple. If you plant them in the garden you will see cotton stocks anyway if not any balls open. The people here are nice sociable people. They will take you in a wagon, buggy, or auto just whichever they happen to have and are not loaded. I wanted to see you before I left that morning, but you had gone on before I got the team around to the house. So I will tell you now what I wanted to tell you before I left. Don't you worry about me because I am going to do what is right. I am not going to drink whisky or stay around anyone who does drink it, or anything that lowers a person in life. I will not smoke cigarettes or any imitation of them.

I will keep in the best company, and every deal I make is going to be an honest one, and if I can save money enough I am going to school some more. I am not just writing this to try to give you peace of mind, but I do mean and will do it.

Your wandering son, Keller

Dear Mother, [June 7, 1912, Wichita Falls, TX]

I received your card this week. Didn't Mamie get that letter I sent May 26th? I am working in the harvest fields now. The man I am working for has 300 acres to cut. 100 cut (200 left). We started May 31st, but we have been shocking it ourselves. I am driving the team (6 horses, 5 mules) 8 foot cut binder. Only one team!

The people I have been working for came from Alabama about 18 years ago. I don't believe there are any nicer people in the U.S. Three in the family. They make me feel as if I was at home. The place belongs to a banker in Wichita. This man is working for wages. It is a small ranch of about 400 head of cattle. There is nothing to do to them, only to drive them from one pasture to another. It seems funny to set in one of these big cowboy saddles.

Your loving son, Keller

From Texas, he wandered north to Minnesota, on to South Dakota, then Nebraska, then Montana, and then Utah. In each location he would find work on a cattle ranch. He finally arrived in Spring Garden, Plumas County.

Dear Mother, [May, 1913, Spring Garden, CA]

Am working here in a logging camp getting \$50 per month and board. Am working the hind end of the carriage in the sawmill. I haven't got anything to do, but handle tow levers. Haven't got any logs or lumber to touch. Everything is done by machinery. Am in what they call the Feather River Canyon. It is sure some scenery, large pines, cedar and spruce in all the timber. Some of those pine logs come to my shoulder. Spring Garden is a small town with one store and post office. The houses just have enough space to build on, and that is all. That is the only kind of a town for 25 miles east and about 75 miles west. Am about 5 miles out of Spring Garden.

Your son, K.H. Funkhouser

c/o Massack Timber & Lumber Company

By July 1913, Keller had moved once more to, Beckwith and was working on various ranches in the Sierra Valley. His last letter was to his sister written August 6 from Beckwith. Sadly, his life as a cowboy ended on August 22. A letter tells the story:



Keller Funkhouser, age unknown

[August 26, 1913, Beckwith, CA]

Mr. And Mrs. Funkhouser,

I feel as though I should write and let you know about your boy. Keller has stopped here with us at different times ever since he came to this valley. He worked at different places in haying, only a few miles from here. This is a little town at the end of a large valley. When he would go to work, he would leave his clothes here with us. Everyone he worked for spoke very well of him. He was always quiet and very steady. He said he wanted to save money to go to school next winter. He was at Mr. Metz only two days – 10 miles from here.

He got on a horse to drive in the workhorses at one o'clock, Friday. Mr. and Mrs. Metz saw him riding quite fast and the horse fell and threw him. They seemed to think he dropped the tie rope, which caused the horse to stumble. They rushed to him. He was unconscious and lived until Sunday morning at five o'clock. They sent for a Dr. Decker who is a fine doctor.

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He did everything for him that could be done. Stayed with him for hours on Friday. Early Saturday morning he and another doctor was there all day. His death was caused from concussion of the brain. There was no bruises on him only a little mark between his eyes where he struck something. He was not left alone a moment. Mr. and Mrs. Metz and other neighbors worked with him day and night. He could not have had more care as everyone liked him and knowing him to be away from home among strangers did everything for him that could be done. When he went to Mr. Metz he left his good suit of clothes here to be cleaned and pressed which was done and sent up for when he died. The reason they took him to Sierraville instead of Beckwith, he died in Sierra County and this is Plumas County. There was about two miles across the line so they had to get a coroner in that county. I have written everything I can think of regarding his death and should there be anything more I will gladly tell you. We all feel very sorry for you all, and fully realize how very bad you must all feel. None of us ever knows what is before us. Kindly accept our sympathy in your trouble.

I remain, Yours respectfully,

Mrs. A.P. Lafranchini [Proprietor, Beckwith Hotel]



Metz Family Residence, Sattley, CA
Old Humphrey Ranch, Now Sierra Valley Ranch

Keller ultimately returned home to Maryland. His body was shipped to Clear Springs, Maryland and today remains buried next to his parents.

WANTED – Editor for *THE SIERRAN*

Call 994-3480

THE SECOND ANNUAL LIVING HISTORY DAY July 22, Kentucky Mine Museum

Hello again from Lois Keeler, Chair. Last years event was an unqualified hit, so join us again this year. We are asking for your help in setting up, manning booths, greeting guests, clean up AND for your ideas for any new activities --- weaving, candle making, or any other skills. The Lions Club will again serve hot dogs and cold drinks. That evening they will serve an excellent dinner before the concert – see below.

Thank you!

Lois Keeler --- 994-3648

Mark your calendar
A BACK COUNTRY TRIP --- AUGUST 5
Led by Lee Adams
Call Museum in July for Details

The Kentucky Mine Museum Proudly Presents *Music Under the Stars*

By popular demand, we again bring you California's favorite concert series in the Sierra's Saturday evenings at 7:30 P.M.

The Outdoor Amphitheater is Wheelchair accessible. Advanced tickets (discounted) are available at Kentucky Mine Museum, Sierra Gold and Country Store.

Performance Calendar

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PERFORMERS</u>
July 1	VOCOLOT
July 8	ANCIENT FUTURE
July 15	JOHN TUCKER & THE BROADWAY
July 22	JIMMI ACCARDI
July 29	DOG WITH A BONE
August 5	PAST DUE & PAYABLE
August 12	POLKA POWER CALIFORNIA
August 19	GOLDEN BOUGH
August 26	KING COTTON JAZZ BAND
September 2	JULIETTE GOBERT