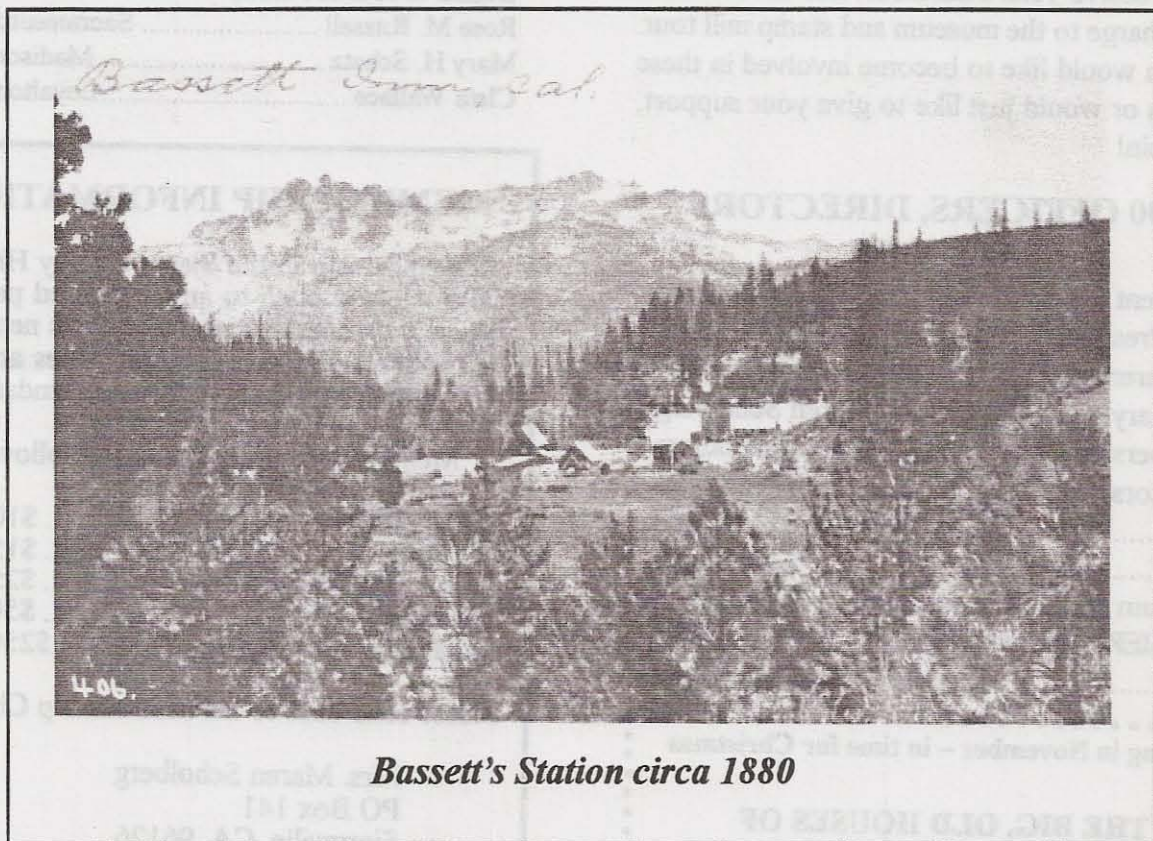


THE SIERRAN

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

Volume 28, Number 2

Fall/Winter 2000



Bassett's Station circa 1880

A History of Bassett House

By Barney Lusk as told to Candace Lusk Smallwood

Where Howard Creek runs through the Sierra Mountain range, settlers worked the land surrounding it called Howard Ranch. In 1871, Jacob and Mary Helen Hagerty Bassett bought Howard Ranch and built what was then known as Bassett House. Bassett House was a teamster stop for freight wagons so they could feed and water the horses on their way between Loyalton, Sierraville, Sattley, Sierra City, and Downieville. On the same land was a sawmill operated by the Phillip Hayes family. The logs were hauled to

please turn to page 3

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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SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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

George Braue	Orinda, CA
Emory & Joan Drury	Big Bear Lake, CA
Bob & Jean Miles	Reno, NV
Joan Odum	Bellevue, WA
Louis A. & Pamela Payen	Loyalton, CA
Dennis & Joanne Patheal	Oakland, CA
Rose M. Russell	Sacramento, CA
Mary H. Schatz	Madison, WI
Cleta Wallace	Loyalton, CA

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

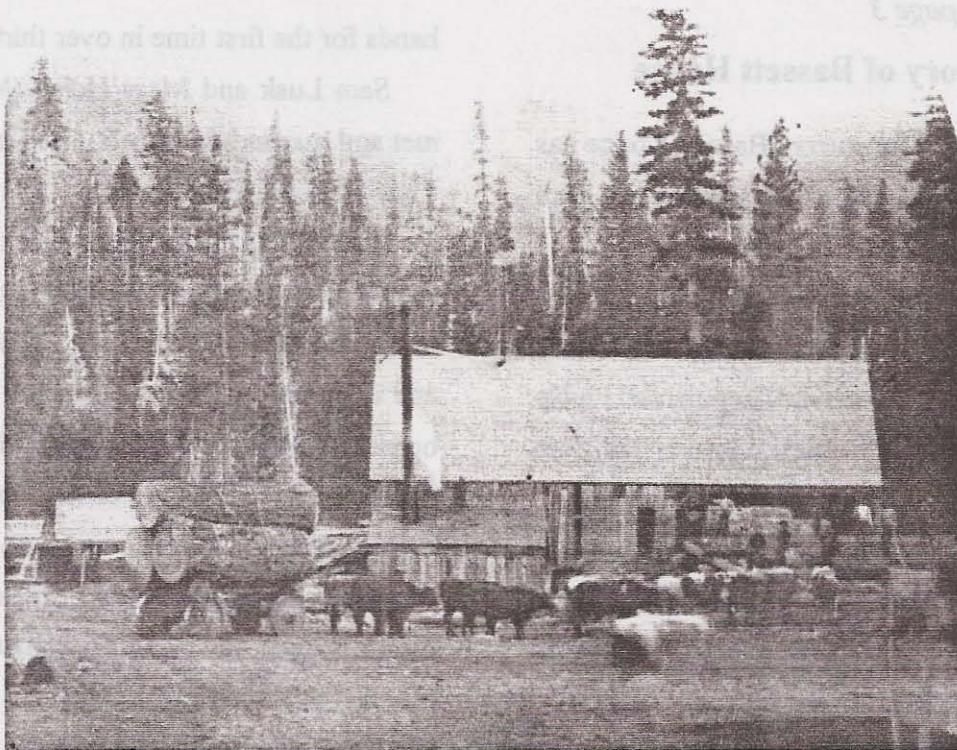
Please send dues to the Membership Chair:

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

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Oxen pulling wagon at Bassett's Sawmill circa 1880

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A History of Bassett House

the mill by a team of oxen generally numbered to be ten in the team.

Jacob and Mary came to California from Pennsylvania looking for gold and ended up in Sierra County in the early 1860's and remained there until their deaths. Jacob worked for the Sierra Buttes Mine as a ditch/water tender. Mary operated Bassett House with the help of a Chinese cook once the house was built.

Bassett House was a two story wood structure with a lobby, dining room, and kitchen downstairs. The remaining living quarters were upstairs. The house catered to full time sawmill workers as well as overnight miners passing through the area in their search for gold or better times.

In the lobby of the original house stood a barrel in the corner full of whiskey. When someone was "just a little thirsty" they would saunter over, fill their cup to the brim and then pay for the privilege of drinking the whiskey. If you didn't have your own cup, you didn't get the whiskey. The price of a cup of whiskey was about twenty cents.

Bassett House was built and moved four times. The original house stood on the Howard Ranch on the north side of the road. It was then torn down and moved across the street in the 1930's. Then it was again torn down, and moved back to it's original spot. The final move came in 1962 where Bassett Station now stands with the motel built

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A History of Bassett House

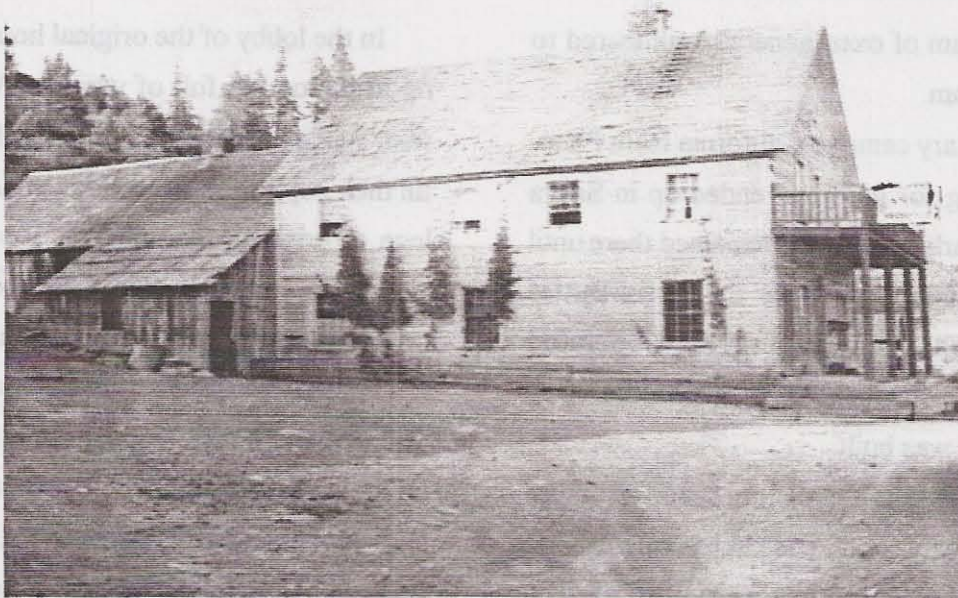
prior to the store. The current Bassett Lodge has a complete listing of all owners beginning with Jacob and Mary Bassett.

The Bassett children were raised at Bassett House. There were four daughters and one son. The daughters were Alice, who later married Phillip Hayes, Mary Helen (Mollie) who married Sam Lusk, and Hattie who married Herbert Hinkley. Their only son, John Bassett, who went deaf at the age of seven, never married and was a game warden and mail carrier in the area until his death by train while walking on the railroad tracks.

The Bassett family sold Bassett House in the early 1900's taking it out of the original family's

hands for the first time in over thirty years.

Sam Lusk and Mary Helen (Mollie) Bassett met and married on May 5, 1887 in Nevada City. They acquired Bassett House in 1900 and operated it until 1901. During the time the Lusks operated Bassett House, Molly kept a daily log which is still in the family. On May 28, 1900, breakfast and dinner were 50 cents; supper was \$1.00, to board 2 horses for overnight and hay was \$1.00, dinner by itself was 23 cents. On June 6, 1900 Molly sold eggs for 25 cents a dozen and a long time customer, Pete Debernardi paid 75 cents for dinner, supper and bed. On August 22, 1900 they paid \$1.00 for a bottle of whiskey and November 29, 1900 a bottle of sherry was purchased for 25 cents.



Bassett House circa 1880

First Established in 1871 and still in operation today

The same year in November, Sam and Molly bought 500 pounds of flour for \$11.75, 500 pounds of potatoes for \$6.25, and two boxes of apples for \$2.50. On November 11 they paid \$6.60 for freight and November 12, 1900 the Lusks paid \$10.10 for taxes on Bassett House.

During the time Sam and Molly Lusk operated the Bassett House, Sam homesteaded 160 acres near Salmon Lakes, now known as Lusk Meadows. Sam ranched Lusk Meadows and used it as summer pasture for livestock. The cattle were housed on the American River near Folsom during the winter.

Sam subdivided the meadow in 1912. That section separated from Lusk Meadows became known as the Diamond "L" Resort. There were 17 lots for summer cabins, six of them had cabins which were sold to individuals, and a few others had cabins for rent. Some lots were never built on. The lots were 105' by 60'. The remainder of Lusk meadows, one hundred and forty acres was sold to the Farrell's after Sam Lusk died.

Around 1884, prior to Sam and Molly's marriage, Sam Lusk drove stage from Downieville to Nevada City. This was about a 12 hour trip to Nevada City. The teams consisted of four horses per team and during the snowy winter, changed to a sleigh. The horses had to wear snowshoes which were 12" x 12" metal plates, with the horses feet fitting into holes sculpted into the metal that fit the hoof. There was rubber belting between the metal and horses hoof to keep them from freezing to the metal.

During World War 1, Sam was a guard at the Penryn Tunnel. There were two guards, one on each end so it could not be sabotaged by the enemy. From there, Sam went on to work as a guard at Folsom Prison, and then worked as a camp guard while the prisoners were building Highway 49 in 1922 and 1923. Sam then moved to Goodyears Bar in 1923, operating a small store and gas station and renting out cabins to tourists and fishermen. The business sold in 1935 and Sam retired in Goodyears Bar until his death on Thanksgiving day in 1936.

Sam and Molly Lusk had four sons all raised in the Sierra Mountain range. The four boys were Marion Lusk, Howard Lusk (named after Howard Creek at Bassett House), Seton Lusk who died at the age of 11, and Barney Lusk who now resides in the North San Juan area where his father used to stop and change horses.

TAKEN FROM TODAY'S BASSETT STATION ADVERTISING

This is a traditional Way Station of the old West. It has been a stage stop, telegraph station, logging camp and sawmill. At 5400 feet elevation, it is ideally located at the gateway to the Lake Basin Region and is at the top of a 1,000 foot mountain grade. It has served as a rest stop and supply point for over 130 years and it has grubsteaked miners, fed wayfarers, and outfitted explorers.

The following are Business and Supporting members for 2000:

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Wayne & Renee Babros	Alleghany, CA
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Loren & Ann Cantrell	Gilroy, CA
Andra Carter	Reno, NV
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DR. LEE D. WALKER	Loyalton, CA
John & Donna Walton	Concord, CA
Michael & Betsy Webb	Pleasant Hill, CA
Beverly White	Walnut Creek, CA
Dr. Robert & Irene Winchell	Loyalton, CA

The Board appreciates the continued interest and support of ALL the members. Our thanks to each of you for keeping the Historical Society alive.

**'OVER NORTH' TRIP
WITH LEE ADAMS AS GUIDE**

August 5, 2000

The trip started in Downieville, population 5,000 county seat of Sierra County and principal town of the Northern Mines. They traveled up the old Eureka trail, passed the tailings of Monte Cristo, at one time a town of 200, and passed the Telegraph Mine. Goodyears Creek was in the canyon below and Goodyears Bar could be seen to the south. Farther south was the ridge of the Henness Pass Road and the site of the Mountain House stage stop.

Eureka City was the next stop. This was a hydraulic mining town of 400, founded in the early 1850's. News of the Comstock Lode in Nevada took the first toll on the town; the Sawyer decision of 1884 banning hydraulic mining discharge into the river system was the second. They continued on to Deadwood Diggins and down the old stage route to Poker Flat. To negotiate this grade, stages had to change from horses to oxen, and drag trees behind the wagons as a braking system. The vehicles forded Canyon Creek and arrived at Poker Flat. This was the only crossing for the entire length of Canyon Creek which helped Poker Flat be a thriving town of 500 with a school, a dozen stores, 3 hotels, 5 saloons, a blacksmith shop, 2 butcher shops, a Masonic Hall, and a jeweler shop. A 1859 murder here culminated in one of Sierra County's four legal executions.

They drove the grade out of Canyon Creek via another stage route. Today this is a Sierra County Road. The grade continued for two miles and went from 4,500' to 6,500'. Next they passed through the settlement of Potosi which at one time had a population 100, and arrived at Howland Flat whose population had been 1500, making it the largest of the Over North towns. Both a drift mine and hy-

draulic town, it boasted all services necessary including a Wells Fargo stage office, the remains of which were visible as they left town.

They traveled through the Howland Flat Diggins, Pine Grove and Diggins and arrived at the St. Louis townsite and diggings. It had been a town of 900 and was believed to be the earliest mining town of northern Sierra County, settled as early as 1850. They passed by Porte Wine and Queen City and arrived at Slate Creek at its confluence with Rabbit Creek. Today this is the Sierra/Plumas County line; prior to 1866 the county line had been 3 miles north on Lexington Ridge putting the town of LaPorte (formerly Rabbit Creek) in Sierra County. The residents of LaPorte requested removal from Sierra county due to the distance from the county seat, Downieville. They now are in Plumas County.

The trip ended in LaPorte with dinner and a sharing of the day's experiences

Order Now:

SIERRA COUNTY PIONEER CEMETERY HISTORIC SURVEY

Includes name, date of birth, date of death, age, nativity in 28 cemeteries. (In 9 cemeteries still in use, only pre-1925 graves were surveyed.)

Compiled by Lee Adams III in 1997

\$20.00

Call 530-994-3480

WANTED:

New editor for THE SIERRAN

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

This will be held Sunday, September 14, at 12:30 P.M. at the old Strang Ranch with Joleen Torri and Casey Killibrew as our hosts. The program will be tours of the Strang-Joleen Torri Home; the not-quite-finished new log house of Linda Sanford; and the Elver and Bobbie Martinetti Home. We feel privileged to be able to see the inside of these homes and we thank the owners.

Everyone bring their own lunch. Coffee will be available. For further information, call 994-3480 or 862-1310

A Brief History of The Sierra County Historical Society

An item in the Feb. 16, 1950 issue of The Mountain Messenger stated that the first meeting toward organization of a Sierra County Historical Society was held Tuesday afternoon at the home of Mrs. William T. Reed Jr. In attendance were Mrs. M.P. Fischer of Goodyears Bar, Mrs. Emmett M. Clark, rural school supervisor, and Miss Bell Alexander, former county school superintendent. Various tentative plans were discussed and another meeting was to be held at the home of Mrs. Fischer in Goodyears Bar. According to Marian Lavezzola Kinzler, who became the secretary, the organization continued for several years and then went slowly out of existence.

In October of 1968, a group of interested Sierra County residents met in Sierra City for the purpose of revitalizing the Historical Society. "Members of the new organization felt that there

was a need for both preservation of the county's history and the development of an awareness of Sierra County's heritage."

The first officers were: Milton Gottardi president; Moreland Stevens vice president; Arlene Amodei secretary; and Georgene Copren treasurer. In 1969, Moreland Stevens became president, Mrs. A. Nelson of Sierra City became vice president, Mrs. Jeanne McMahon took over secretary's job while Georgene Copren stayed as treasurer. She retained that position for many years and then became the secretary for equally long.

April 1969 was the first edition of their Quarterly with Milton Gottardi the editor. They had hoped to publish four editions a year, but in time, this dwindled to three and now the Sierran is published twice a year.

The Society has been in continuous operation for over 31 years now with dedicated officers and a growing list of members.

The membership list of 1970 contained the following names who are still members today: Rita Bradley, Winslow Christian, Donald R. Dickey, William P. Fuller, Jr., Jack Hawkins, Jean Herrington, Earl Little, Charles McDermid, Beverly Perry, Carl and Maren Scholberg. These people have been members for 30 years! That is quite a record---Congratulations!!

**LEE ADAMS SECOND TREK
SEPTEMBER 30TH
HENNESS PASS TOUR**

Another historic drive with
beautiful scenery

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for more information

From The Historical Society Board

We are coming to the end of another successful year. The Kentucky Mine tours have been very successful with visitors from near and far. Our thanks to Ruth Newberg and Rita Bradley for coordinating the volunteers and to **ALL** the volunteers—a big **THANK YOU!** The Concert Series had a variety of performers who were greatly enjoyed by their audience. (Thank you Lila and Mike Heuer and your committee.) The Living History Day was again a big hit with a number of new features that pleased and entertained the large crowd. We thank Lois Keeler and Laverne Monico for their dedication and hard work, and their committee members. The 'Over North' four wheel drive excursion to a number of ghost towns was a **HUGE** success. Fourteen vehicles made the trip and the 30 passengers had a great adventure, coming home tired but elated. Thank you Lee Adams—the planner and tour guide. Because of the popularity of this tour, another one has been planned for September 30th. See add in this paper.

Anne Eldred, Museum Director, has had a training class for tour guides. Three trainees are now ready to give tours: Suzi Schoensee, Laurie Unland and Denise Parodi. We congratulate them and thank them for assisting on tours.

We welcome Andy Ponta as an interim Board member. Andy has been a member of our Historical Society for many years, he has helped many times on our work days and he knows a great deal about Sierra County history. We look forward to his suggestions and help on the Board.

Have a good winter and you will hear from us next Spring!