

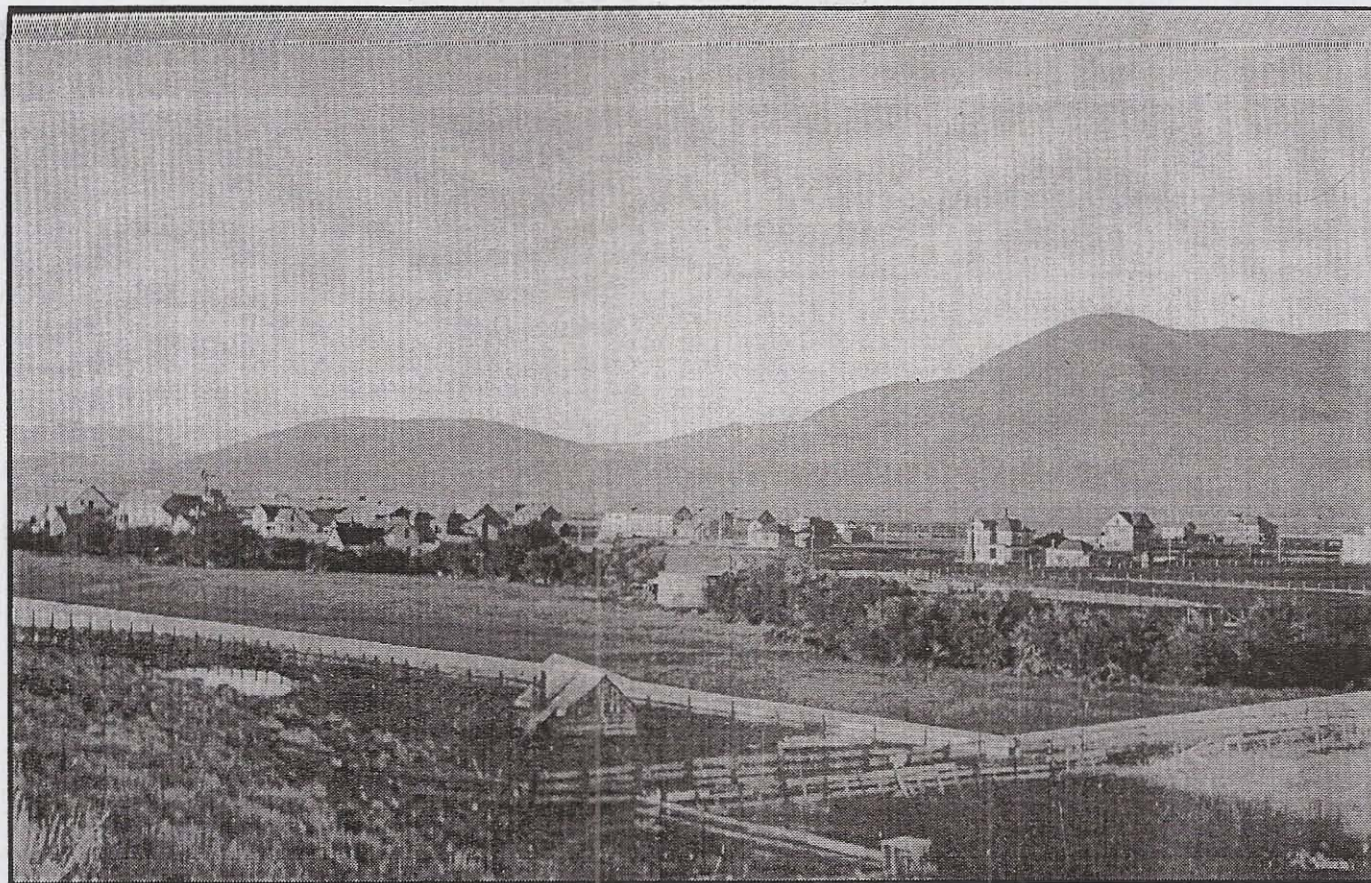
THE SIERRA

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Loyalton- Early 1900's



Courtesy of Loyalton Museum

LOYALTON CENTENNIAL--2001

When Loyalton became incorporated on September 9, 1901 by a vote of 79 to 30, it earned the distinction of being "the largest city west of the Mississippi". The town fathers, in their zealous desire to be a "dry" town and to have no liquor available even near the outskirts of town, the city limits were set at some 50 square miles! This statute remained until 1936. By that time, Los Angeles had become so large that Loyalton had become relegated to being the "second largest city west of the Mississippi". The boundaries were later changed to the present .35 of a square miles..

Due to the erection of new sawmills, a building boom started and many new houses were built and new businesses established. A water system was installed for both fire protection and domestic use; the Loyalton Electric Light Company installed a new generator to provide energy needed for the town's growth; a new schoolhouse was completed in 1902. A history of some of the early buildings follows.

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Index of *SIERRANS* (1969 – 1998) Includes
lists of names, towns, schools, churches, mines,
and some town histories.

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B & L Railroad



THE BOCA AND LOYALTON RAILROAD

In the summer of 1900, work was well under way on the construction of a narrow gauge railroad track from Boca to Loyalton.. On January 9, 1901 the first train made the trip over the tracks from Boca to Lewis Mill. By summer the track was completed to Loyalton and by the end of November trains were running to Beckwourth. Lumber, previously delivered to the railroad at Verdi or Truckee, was now shipped on the B&L which improved the prosperity of the valley.

In 1903 three new locomotives, a passenger coach and several flat cars were purchased for the B&L. In the summer of that year from seven to ten carloads a day of pulp wood were being shipped from Lewis Mill to the Floriston Paper Mills in Truckee. Also extensive shipments of beef cattle were made to San Francisco and Oakland from ranches of Loyalton and Beckwourth.

Before the B&L came to Loyalton, the main part of town ran north and south on present day West First Street. When the railroad was built, the business section shifted and grew up along the street running east and west as it is now.

THE DEPOT

A depot was erected in 1901 after the Boca and Loyalton railroad was completed. The original site was next to the railroad tracks and behind the present city buildings. The depot included living quarters on the south end for the stationmaster.

On July 4th of that year, the biggest event of the day was the arrival of the train "loaded with passengers and grandly decorated with national colors".

In 1916 service was discontinued as freight and passenger service fell into a decline. That year the Western Pacific purchased the railroad and property at a foreclosure sale. The depot continued to be used and the living quarters occupied.

Bob Lynch bought the building in 1952 and moved it across the road to its present location with the front

facing south. He used it as a warehouse until he rented it to the town in 1957. Two years later he sold it to them. Today it is the city's maintenance building.

THE BRICK BUILDING

James Enscoe built the brick building in 1903. The bricks were made in the local brickyard which was located just north of the present Steve Weaver's house on Cemetery Lane. The bottom floor of the building became a drug store and the top floor was rented out for offices. In 1912 a fire gutted the interior and the building was vacant for a few years. In 1915 the building was purchased by the I.O.O.F. Lodge and they rented out the bottom floor to Herbert Huntley and Paul Meroux who opened a general store. The top floor was converted to a lodge hall for meetings of the I.O.O.F. It was used for that purpose until 1980. The Native Daughters and Rebeccas also used the hall.

In 1920 Mr. Huntley bought out Mr. Meroux's half interest and the name "THE BRICK STORE" came into being with Mr. Huntley as owner until his death in 1930. His son, Ernest R. Huntley, then became proprietor until his retirement in 1943. The lower floor then was emptied and not in use.

In the late 1940's it was a law office for a few years and then for two years in the mid 1950's, classes of the elementary school were housed there due to a shortage of classroom space. The next occupants, Joe and Mabel Roberti, operated a successful short-order business in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The Robertis also held a dance for the teenagers every Friday night. The business changed hands several times from Nancy Gilmore to Ruby Ritter. Then it closed. In 1970 Lowell Wright opened a snowmobile sales and repair shop. He rented the space until 1990 and was the last occupant. The building had been condemned.

The membership of the I.O.O.F. had dwindled and they disbanded in 1980. At that time they deeded the

The above articles on Loyalton were taken from earlier issues of THE SIERRAN and from James J. Sinnott's book SIERRA COUNTY, Jewel of the Sierras, which also provided the Boca & Loyalton Railroad Photo.

JAMES DAVID MYERS (1840-1921)

(This manuscript was hand written by his daughter, Mittie Myers Chaplin, and came to us from his granddaughter, Bonnie Chaplin-Scism, in 2000. We are indebted to Bonnie for this material. It was transcribed and edited by Maren Scholberg.)

My father, James David Myers, was the oldest son of Henry and Judah (Shrader) Myers. Born March 22, 1840, he was their only child to reach maturity. On his father's death in the little log house he had built on the "forty" patented in 1839, this eleven-year old boy took on a man's work which increased as he grew older.

On Nov. 12, 1862 James enrolled at Huntsville, Missouri as a Private in Company G, 46th Regiment. On April 13, 1863 Tunsford Coates obtained a permit to take 50 men, including James, from this regiment as armed guards for a mule train he was taking to San Francisco. For the six months he had already served in the militia, James received \$45.00.

The entire overland trip to California was marked by pure dogged patience for every day of travel. Several minor skirmishes with Indians marked the trip. On July 26, 1863, the mule train entered Beckwourth Pass in Eastern California. From there the train followed the emigrant trail down the Feather River Canyon to the Sacramento Valley and on to San Francisco. Once there, Tunsford Coates released his men and he seemed to have made no commitment to return them to Missouri.

The gold mining town of Downieville in Sierra County had recently been destroyed by fire. My father, stranded in a strange place, answered a newspaper ad for carpenters to aid in rebuilding it. He went up the American and Yuba rivers from Sacramento to Marysville, then overland up the mountains by the Henness Pass road. At a point on the ridge above Downieville, they left the road and descended the very steep ridge side by the Galloway Road into the town which was nestled on both sides of the Middle Fork of the Yuba River. When the rebuilding work was done, my father, instead of returning to San Francisco, went back to the Henness Pass Road and eastward a few miles to Webber Lake, thence down the trail to Sierra Valley where he lived for the larger part of his life.

Father located at the southern end of the valley in a town called Randolph. In 1867 he entered into partnership with W.L. Rawdon in a water-powered planing mill venture. In December 1869, when the Golden Spike was driven at Salt Lake, uniting two railroads to span the continent, my father was one of

the very early passengers to board the train at Truckee for a trial run on this wonderfully new and easy way to cross the continent. Enriched by \$750.00 he had received from his father's estate, James had decided to go back to Moberly, Missouri to see his "folks" having been gone for seven years.

After a two-month courtship, he eloped with 20-year old Molly Duvall on March 10, 1870. They took the train to Truckee but just outside Kansas City, James lost all his money and his tickets to thieves. Somehow he got back to Moberly and borrowed enough money to make a fresh start.

The young couple landed in Truckee, CA in a very severe late winter storm. All roads out of Truckee were blocked and it was twenty-six miles to Sierraville. The driver of the stage reluctantly decided to try to go through. They made thirteen miles the first day, over a trail hidden under the new fallen snow, and arrived after dark at Cory's Station for food and shelter.

Another young couple, Henry Turner and his wife and small baby, were on the stage returning to their home in Sattley from a session of the legislature in Sacramento where Mr. Turner had represented Sierra County. As there were no rooms available, horse blankets were spread on the big living room floor in front of the fire to make a bed. Little Frank slept in the middle between his mother and the bride and the men took the outside. They rested and were warm that night. The next day, the stage made the remaining thirteen miles to the stage stop at Buxton's Hotel at Randolph.

Whether father built or bought the house on Randolph Creek just north of the hotel, livery stable and planing mill to which he took his bride, I never knew. Here I was born January 13, 1871 and my brother May 24, 1875. The house is still (1957) standing and in good repair with only a modicum of changes—such as the porch with white pillars along the south side and the asbestos shingles over the clapboard siding.*

My father began to build the valley's only gristmill. It was across the creek, south of Buxton's Hotel and just around a bend in the creek from his planing mill.**One mill was powered by a tremendous "overshot" wooden waterwheel and the other by an equally large "undershot" wheel.

* This is the present LaVerne and Timmy Diltz house.

** The gristmill was a part of the present Frances Wright's house that was on the "Old China wash lot". J.D. Myers sold the building to Al Joy about 1876 and it became known as the Joy House after that.)

I remember one Christmas when we were so completely snowed in that Santa Claus could not reach the store. He left a letter saying that he was unable to make it on time that year with presents. But, he added, he would be sure to be along by New Years if I would be a good girl and eat my oatmeal "mush". Despite the snowfall, Santa had been able to leave me a dish of this terrible mush, heavily laden with cream and sugar!! Naively I accepted it and tried and tried amid tears and protests to eat it, but to no avail! It soured and had to be thrown out. However, an orange (a rare treat) and some peanuts and candy were left on New Years!

In 1878 our father sold his interest in the planing mill to his partner, bought 640 acres of lush timberland three and a half miles to the southwest of Randolph, near the old Webber Lake Trail, and built, for that day, a very large water-powered saw mill. It was powered by a turbine waterwheel, a great improvement over the old cumbersome overshot and undershot wheels. Water for power was taken from the creek higher up the ravine, then conducted by gravity flow to a point some 50 feet above the mill and hence by open flume out into the ravine where it could be discharged by closed chute to run the mill or with an open flood gate, it fell the 50 feet to freedom and to the creek below. The music of that man-made waterfall lulled us to sleep at night. The power was conveyed from the wheel to the machinery on the floor above by at least a fourteen-inch wide rubber belt swaying by its own weight between the floors.

When our family first moved to the mill, we lived in a one-room cabin with one panel window built on father's preemption claim across the ravine and up the creek from the mill. We had water from the creek, a stove for cooking, and a bed. This was primitive living! Final title to a claim filed under the preemption land law was secured by proof that the family had lived on the claim for a prescribed time in a house with at least one window. These requirements were met and when final proof was made, we moved to the mill house. This was a larger, but no less rough, battered story-and-a-half house. It not only housed our family for the next six or eight years but it was the cookhouse and dining room the mill crew! If the sales season for lumber was good and the crew was large, we had a Chinese cook complete with queue. My little brother thought it the best of jokes to pull his queue and run. The prank was ceased abruptly when one outraged Chinese cook took after him with an enormously huge butcher knife! When only a small crew was needed, mother was cook and I was dishwasher

Summers at the mill were wonderful for us children. There were towering pines, firs and cedars all around, and creek banks covered with wildflowers. The freedom of the woods, hills and streams was ours. Winters were spent in town so we could attend the one-teacher country school. There were perhaps a hundred pupils of all grades in the one big room.

At the first signs of spring, we returned to the mill to begin summer operations. I wish I might picture for you those huge, high, four-wheeled logging trucks loaded with from three to seven big heavy logs. It took between three and five pairs of oxen to pull them. They were driven and kept in line with a goad stick in the hands of the driver. The best picture could not record the profuse and flowing language, coarse and profane, which was the driver's last resource as he goaded and prodded the animals.

Each autumn one or two large freight wagons, drawn by four to six horses, came to the mill from Honey Lake valley to the north, loaded with boxes of fresh apples, hundred pound bags of potatoes and white and brown beans, twenty-five pound boxes of dried fruits (apples, peaches, pears and apricots—I've had an aversion to dried fruit ever since). There was enough to last the crew and family through the winter. My father traded lumber for this supply.

James David Myers was a life-long member of the order of Odd Fellows, Mountain Vale Lodge I.O.O.F. #140 at Sierraville. He was so devoted to its principles that he named his son Henry for his own father, and Wildey for the founder of Odd Fellows, Thomas Wildey. My brother was born in 1876 in Randolph. He died in Sacramento, CA in 1942.

In the fall of 1883, my father sold the mill to Thomas Lebroke and moved the family to Stockton, CA. After a year and a half there, they returned and bought a general merchandise store in Loyalton. Their second son, Clifton Duvall Myers, was born there in 1886 (died in 1941). In 1888 father sold the store and bought the Slipner (later Herb Nichols) place in Sierraville. He opened a small country store on the edge of town. Their daughter Elise was born there in 1889 (died in 1921).

Soon after that my parents were divorced and my mother and the small children moved to Reno, NV. My father married the widow McMurray who, with three or four daughters, lived on the adjoining farm in Sierraville. They were soon divorced and in later years, my mother and father re-married. Father died in 1921; mother in 1922. They are buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, CA.

MITTIE URSULA MYERS CHAPLIN

(The following is part of a longer biography written about 1964. It has been condensed and edited. MCS)

I was born in Randolph, a small town which today is part of Sierraville. I attended school and was somewhat of a child prodigy. I still have a copy of Scott's Poems presented to me as a prize when I "spelled" down the school. That book bears this inscription: Presented to Mittie U. Myers by E.D. Case, August 14, 1881.

(The family moved to Stockton for two years where Mittie graduated from the 8th grade. They moved to Loyalton in 1885 where her father opened a general store.)

Schooling for me there was but a farce. There was no high school. I went to the only school which was managed by two gentle women with not so wide a range of subjects as had been at Sierraville two years earlier. At 14, I could scarcely "hire out" for housework, we were not of the "genteel" class who sent its daughters off to "boarding school" and I was too young to "quit school".

Then came another move to Sierraville. My father bought the Slipner ranch and erected and stocked a general store on the east edge of town. In June 1888, guided and inspired by E.L. Case, the loved teacher, I took the Board of Education examination for a teacher's certificate at Downieville and received a credit sufficient for their 1st grade certificate had I been 18 years old. It was to be the proof that I was eligible to enter without further examinations the SNS (Normal School) at San Jose, CA. I had wanted from a little child to be a teacher, but September passed and my father decided not to send me then. Again idle hands and worse still, an idle mind and a frustrated hope, I flirted so dangerously with the town's dandy that my father decided by Christmas that I should go to San Jose in January! I was happy! Entering in the middle of the term, examinations had to be taken to get credit for the past ½ year of work. It was easy.

I graduated in June 1891 and secured the principalship of the Sierraville School—now a two-teacher school—at the magnificent salary of \$80.00 a month for a 7-month school term. Teaching pupils, some as old as I and with whom I had been brought up and who called me "Mittie", was not easy.

Two years of this and free board and room at home gave me a bank account which I deemed enough to start college. Ann Arbor, Michigan was my aim. My mother and little sister, Elise, aged 4, and I went east

to visit her people in Missouri and to attend the Chicago World's Fair. It was while we were in Chicago that word came that the Pacific Bank in San Francisco had closed its doors. There went my college money. There was nothing else to do but to return home and get another teaching position. Mr. Case, now Principal at Downieville, needed a teacher for his four elementary grades. He was happy to recommend me and I began two years of a saving campaign for college. It wasn't so easy here for board and room were not free as it had been at home.

I entered the University of California at Berkeley, graduated in June 1899, the largest class in Berkeley's history, and went on to be a teacher.

(Mittie taught at the Teacher's College in Bellingham, WA for 2 ½ years. She then married Frank Chaplin in Reno and her good friend, Helen Wright, married Frank Turner in the double-ring ceremony. Frank and Mittie lived in Imperial Valley in Southern CA, then San Francisco before settling in Miami, Florida in 1922. Their son, Jimmie, attended the U. of Florida. Her granddaughter, Bonnie Chaplin-Scism, a realtor in Pompono Beach, Fl., now spends a portion of the summer in Plumas County. Again we thank her for the use of this material.)



MITTIE MYERS CHAPLIN

1871 - 1961
