

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

MEMBER OF THE CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
AND THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

The PURDY Family — PURDY The Town — The N&O Railroad

by Maren Scholberg

You may wonder what the connection between these three items and Sierra County could be. Read on!

The Purdy Family

Solomon Purdy was born in 1801 in Poughkeepsie, NY. In 1828 he and his wife, Jane, were living in Buffalo, NY, where their first child, Henry Hadden, was born. The family then moved to Rome in Oneida County, NY, where Elizabeth, Sarah and Solomon Forman enlarged the family. The 1850 census of Rome listed Solomon age 38 as a blacksmith, Jane age 36, Henry 21, Elizabeth 18,

Sarah 16 and Solomon F. 13. Henry, known as H.H., learned the jeweler's trade in Utica before coming to California, via the Isthmus of Panama, with the family in 1852. H.H. purchased an interest in the jewelry store of Benjamin Green in Downieville, Sierra County in August of 1852. Their advertisement in 1853 in *The Mountain Echo* stated "Green and Purdy constantly keeps on hand a variety of Watches and Jewelry of the very best quality. Also manufactures Jewelry to order. Watches Repaired with Dispatch in the best possible style". After four years in this business the two men engaged in constructing a water ditch at the Eureka mine doing their banking with Langton & Co. This bank failed and Mr. Purdy lost heavily, also sustaining losses in the water ditch which proved unsuccessful.

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The town of Purdy consisted of a few houses and shacks, plus a building that served as a depot, telephone company office, lunchroom and post office. (Circa 1911)

— THE 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, holds an annual 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 us!

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

We welcome these new members who have joined since the Spring 2003 issue of THE SIERRAN. We appreciate the interest and support of all our members.

Tom and Marilyn Fitzmeyers, Sierraville –
Supporting

Terin Schmitz, Novato – Individual
Korkeila and Associates, Sierraville –
Business

Bruce and Carola Harding, Sierraville –
Family Membership

Frances Wright, Sparks, NV – Individual
Terry & Judy Heydon, Calpine – Family
Barbara Escallier, Sierraville – Individual
Sierraville Superstop, Sierraville – Business
Thomas Dolley, Crystal Bay, NV – Lifetime
Beverly McLaughlin, Loyalton – Individual
Law Offices of Laura A. Slocumb, Sierraville –
Business

Michael & Carol Lynch, Leavenworth, WA – Family
Linda Harrison, Reno, NV – Individual

And a huge thank you to our membership coordinator, Lynn McKechnie!

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	\$15.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$20.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$30.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$250.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair:

Lynn McKechnie
P.O. Box 294
Sierraville, CA 96126

SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Office Address:

Kentucky Mine Museum
P.O. Box 260, Sierra City, CA 96125
(530) 862-1310 FAX: (530) 862-1312

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**The PURDY Family — PURDY The Town —
The N&O Railroad (Continued from Page 1)**

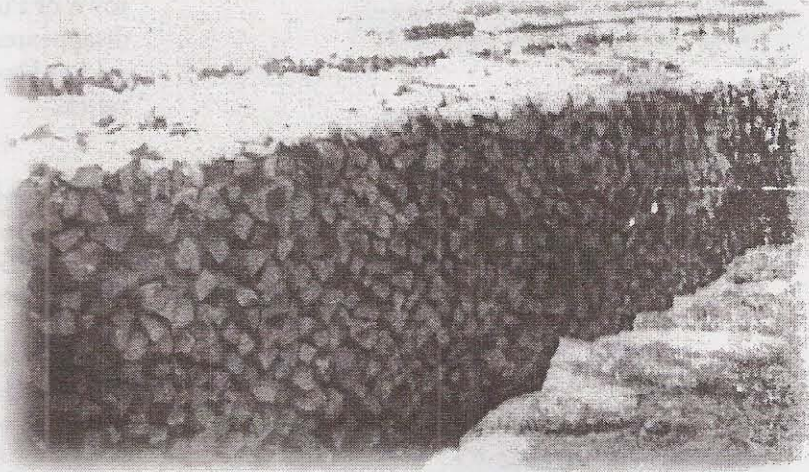
In 1858, Solomon and H. H. tried another business venture and operated a foundry in Downieville. That same year, Sol Purdy had an ad in the newspaper for "Jewelry, Watches and Cutlery". Still another Purdy was in the jewelry business, for S.F. (the son) had an ad in the paper in 1870 as a "Watchmaker and Jeweler". An interesting item in 1891 in *The Mountain Messenger* stated that H.H. Purdy was going to close out his general store and "pay strict attention to the Jewelry Business". This man was surely a Sierra County entrepreneur.

Both Sol and H.H. were active in Sierra County affairs, for Solomon was Public Administrator from 1862-1866 and H.H. served as Deputy County Treasurer in 1856. During this time the three Purdy men bought land in Long Valley, located in the southeast corner of Sierra County bordering Nevada. A map of agricultural lands in Long Valley in the Territory of Utah surveyed by O.S. Dodson on May 25 and 26 of 1862 showed H.H. Purdy with 160 acres, Sol Purdy with 119 acres and S.F. Purdy with 160 acres.

In 1860 H.H. went to Silver City, Nevada, and worked there at this trade for a year. He moved to his ranch in Long Valley in 1861 and remained there until 1869 when he returned to Downieville and again operated a jewelry store.

In 1890 four mining claims located north of Downieville were recorded for H.H. Purdy. He was still in business there in 1891 and that is the last record I found for him. He never married.

A newspaper article in *The Mountain Messenger* of November 1875 told of the "Misses Purdy of Long Valleytheir elegance in dress....they harness and drive horses of their own breaking....are in the potato business....dug 517 pounds of the most excellent tubers". These ladies were Sol's daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah. Sarah served as postmaster in



Thousands of cords of wood were cut and stacked by local Native Americans.

Purdy for a number of years starting in 1889. Neither of them married.

The *Nevada State Journal* reported the following items:

- ✿ The 50th wedding celebration of Sol and Jane Purdy in Reno on May 5, 1877.
- ✿ Solomon Purdy died October 16, 1881 in Long Valley at the age of 80 years.
- ✿ Elizabeth (Lizzie) Purdy died October 10, 1886 leaving one sister. Both parents had died in recent years.

This brings an end to the Purdy family in Sierra County.

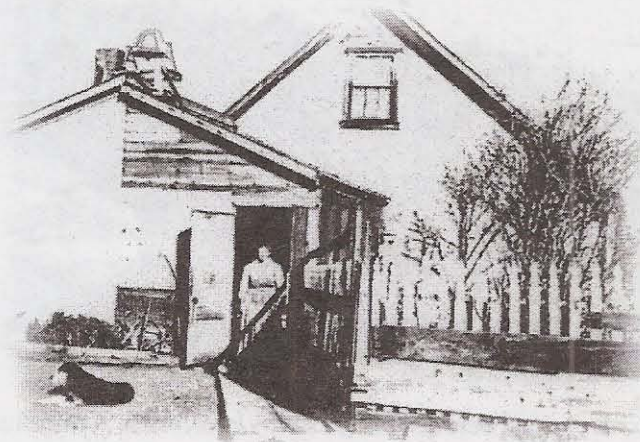
The Town of Purdy

The town of Purdy, named for Solomon and H.H. Purdy, was on their ranch property in Long Valley. It was a rail-road town supplying the wood necessary for the Nevada and Oregon Railroad train which began to operate in 1882. For the thousands of cords of wood needed, Native Americans were hired to do the cutting, splitting and stacking.

Purdy is located near the California and Nevada border at the southern end of Sierra County. (In an 1895 Atlas, the town of Purdy is shown as being in

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**The PURDY Family — PURDY The Town —
The N&O Railroad (Continued from Page 3)**



Clementina Ramelli, grandmother of Alvin Lombardi and Eslie Cann, pictured one mile from Purdy.

Washoe County, NV). The town consisted of a few houses and shacks, plus a building that served as a depot, telephone company office, lunchroom and post office (see page 1). The post office was established in 1889 with Sarah Purdy as postmaster. (The late Alvin Lombardi, of Loyalton, had numerous post cards addressed to his mother, Emma Ramelli, in Reno, NV, with the postmark of "Purdys" and dated in the early 1900's. He also has a letter addressed to his grandmother, Clementina Ramelli in Purdy, CA. She is also the grandmother of Eslie Cann of Doyle, CA). The post office was discontinued March 4, 1911 and was moved to Bordertown, NV. It operated there until October 1, 1913 when it was closed permanently.

Nearby was a schoolhouse for the 5 to 7 children from the Caesar Ramelli and Dave Evans families who lived on neighboring ranches. In the fall of 1888 a new schoolhouse, a one-room wooden structure typical of those early schoolhouses, was built in Long Valley. It was used until 1903 when another new building replaced it. This was used until 1908 when the district was suspended because the average daily attendance was less than five pupils.

Travelers on U.S. Highway 395 in the years between 1953-1976 will remember the site of the California Agricultural inspection "Bug" Station where the

town of Purdy was located. The town gradually disappeared and the Purdy ranch was eventually sold to David F. Evans who owned the neighboring ranch.

The N&O Railroad

The following history of the N&O Railroad is included because it was the reason for the town of Purdy to exist.

The Nevada & Oregon Railroad Company originated in Reno, NV in 1880. The original plan was for it to run to the Columbia River in Oregon with a branch into the Feather River country ending in Clio, CA. The first spike was driven in Reno on May 28, 1881 and the first operations began on October 2, 1882 with service to Oneida, CA, which was 30 miles from Reno. A crowd of nine people made the inaugural run. Oneida, on the Evans ranch, was less than two miles from Purdy. The railroad's first excursion was run on a wet, chilly November evening when 60 people left Reno for dinner and dancing at Dave Evans' hotel in Oneida.


On June 6, 1888, tracks had reached Doyle, CA. (57 miles); on June 1, 1900, service began to Termo, CA (130 miles); on Dec. 1, 1908, service began to Alturas, CA; and, on Jan. 10, 1912, service began to Lakeview, Oregon (238 miles) which turned out to be the end of the line and the end of their dreams.

Problems with the Board of Directors of the N&O, including a murder, lack of financing, and winter weather made progress in building track slow. In 1888, the N&O became the N-C-O Railway, the "C" for California.

The narrow gauge operations ended on Jan. 30, 1918. Southern Pacific Railroad acquired control of the NC&O in 1926 and all narrow gauge service ended with the completion of standard gauging to Lakeview in 1928.



This completes the circle and the demise of all threethe Solomon Purdy family, the town of Purdy and the narrow gauge railroad that traveled through Purdy.

Thaddeus Purdy was admitted to the bar in 1852 in Sierra County, and served as District Attorney in Downieville until he was accidentally killed in the fall of 1853. Benjamin Green and H.H. Purdy, the Downieville jewelers, made a very handsome coffin plate of silver dollars, which a few years later was removed. The coffin was shipped back east to Mr. Purdy's father. It is possible that Thaddeus Purdy was a relative and the reason the Solomon Purdy family came to Downieville. 

Resources

- History of Plumas, Lassen and Sierra Counties—Fariss & Smith—1882
- Sierra Valley, Jewel of the Sierras—James J. Sinnott
- Downieville, Gold Town on the Yuba—James J. Sinnott
- N-C-O-Timeline by Tom Armstrong (on internet)
- Information from Tim Purdy (no relation) of Susanville, CA
- Interview with Alvin and Adele Lombardi of Loyalton, CA
- Material and pictures supplied by Adele Lombardi
- Help with census records, newspaper articles and internet—Kris Scholberg

Annual Meeting Notice

Sierra County Historical Society
September 21, 2003
Alleghany Museum - 9:00 am

All members and guests are to meet at the Alleghany Museum (Museum is at far end of town where General Store was). From there, we will carpool to the 16-1 Mine and picnic. You may wish to bring your lunch and beverage. There will be Mine tours at no cost to members. Please bring boots and flashlight. You may wish to bring your lunch and beverage. Donations gratefully accepted.

If you have questions or need information call (530) 287-3287 or email: jelylady@sccn.net, or stop at Bud & Joe-Ann's home at 123 Main Street, Alleghany, CA.

Directions

Ridge Road: From Nevada City on Hwy 49, drive 15 miles to North San Juan, 4.3 miles from gas station in North San Juan, turn right onto Ridge Road (sign Alleghany 19 miles).


Mountain House: From Downieville/Sierra City, drive 4 miles past Downieville, turn left to Goodyear's Bar, cross bridge over North Yuba, at stop sign turn right (14 miles to Alleghany). Once out of Goodyear's Bar cross a small bridge, from

there travel 9 miles of gravel road to Forest City. About 3 miles up is a huge pine tree (on left). Once over bridge, as you enter Forest City, turn right onto paved road, continue to top about 1 mile to abandoned Ranger structure. Turn left (you are 3 miles from Alleghany). As you enter Alleghany stay on Main Street (on left as you enter town).

Footte Crossing: Also called Tyler Footte Crossing (4x4 advisable). Driving from Nevada City on Hwy 49, turn right at Footte Crossing (before North San Juan). Not recommended unless you've driven this beforehand).

Galloway: (4x4 advisable). Shortest route from Downieville to Alleghany (9.8 miles). Drive 5 miles of gravel road (very steep climb). At the end of gravel road is Ridge Road (paved). Turn right, drive 3.4 miles to "Y" road sign, turn left onto Hell's Half Acre, drive 1 mile of gravel road, as you enter Alleghany the General Store is on left.

Henness Pass: (4x4 advisable). For experienced drivers only.

Marysville Road: Driving from Marysville/Yuba City, look for Ranger Station on left just before Hwy 49. Marysville Road leads to Hwy 49, turn right onto Hwy 49, drive 1 mile, turn left at Alleghany sign. Drive 19 miles to town. 

Note: There are no gas stations in Alleghany. It's 25 miles to the nearest one at Casey's Place.

This article about the B&L Railroad appeared in *The Mountain Messenger* in 1903. It's included here as a follow up to the B&L feature story in the last Sierran.



Photo courtesy of Nevada State Museum Photograph Collection

The B&L Railroad circled the mill pond of the Roberts Mill in Loyalton.

Railway War at Beckwith

A war has broken out between the Sierra Valley and the Boca and Loyalton railways at Beckwith, and much excitement has prevailed there for several days. A dispatch from Quincy of June 3rd says, "The people were wrought to a fever heat this afternoon in the expectancy of a battle between the large forces of the two major railroads."

The Boca and Loyalton railroad has built a branch railroad from its line from Beckwith toward Clover Valley. The Sierra Valley railroad has objected to the other road crossing its tracks, demanding \$5,000 for the privilege.

A week ago the post office department ordered the discontinuance of the mail service over the Sierra Valley from Beckwith to New Mohawk, and all San Francisco mail is now being carried over the Boca & Loyalton and by stage from there to Quincy.

This has intensified the feeling between the two roads, and on last Saturday evening seventy-five men employed by the Boca & Loyalton forcibly cut the rails of the Sierra Valley railroad and made the crossing.

An injunction was issued this morning against the former road. This afternoon it was reported that a large force of men will come from Reno to tear up

the Boca and Loyalton crossing. The latter has placed 150 men on guard to prevent and protect the crossing.

Lawyers on both sides are busy trying to prevent trouble. Hostilities have been postponed until tomorrow, and Sheriff Hall is traveling to the scene of the trouble with an injunction to prevent trouble at the crossing.

A later dispatch from Quincy states that on the night of June 3rd, about four hundred employed by the Boca & Loyalton railroad stood guard at Beckwith to prevent the Sierra Valley railroad forces tearing up a crossing made by the former over the track on Saturday night.

Sheriff Hall arrived on the scene of the impending conflict at 1 o'clock the following morning and served an injunction on the Sierra Valley railroad. The armed men have since been dispersing.

Briefly, the situation is this: The Boca & Loyalton has crossed the tracks of its competitor and is enjoined from doing so again, and the Sierra Valley railroad is enjoined from tearing of the crossing of its enemy. The difficulty will be settled in court. ↪

As reported by *The Mountain Messenger*, Saturday, June 13, 1903

Well done, thou good and faithful servant!

All of the Sierra Valley was saddened by the news of the death of Rita Bradley. The Sierra County Historical Society was particularly saddened as Rita was, for many years, the mainstay of the Society. If anything had to be done, Rita was there to do it. She served on the Board of Directors for over a decade and as a docent at the Museum. However, Rita's reputation for hard work and dependability was not just confined to the Historical society. She enjoyed that reputation at the Sierra Valley Grange and with all in her parish at Holy Rosary in Loyalton. Following is her obituary as published in *The Mountain Messenger*.



Rita F. Bradley

Aug. 20, 1914-May 21, 2003

Rita F. Bradley, of Sattley, died on May 21, 2003 at Washoe Medical Center in Reno. Mrs. Bradley was born August 20, 1914 in Verdi, NV., to Isaac and Delia Martinetti. When she was two years old the family moved by covered wagon to the Sierra Valley via the Dog Valley Road. She attended the Sattley School through the eighth grade. She then boarded in Reno during her high school years, graduating from Reno High School in 1932.

She returned to Sattley and assisted the family running the Sattley Store. On May 1, 1943 she married Harry Bradley. They ran the Bradley Ranch and Rita took over the store and the position of Postmaster in Sattley for 35 years.

Rita was a member of Plumas-Sierra Cattlewomen; a 60 year member of Sierra Valley Grange; Sierra Co. Historical Society; for many years she volunteered at the Kentucky Mine; a member and past president of Holy Rosary Catholic Church Altar Society. She loved her garden and had a home full of flowers and plants.

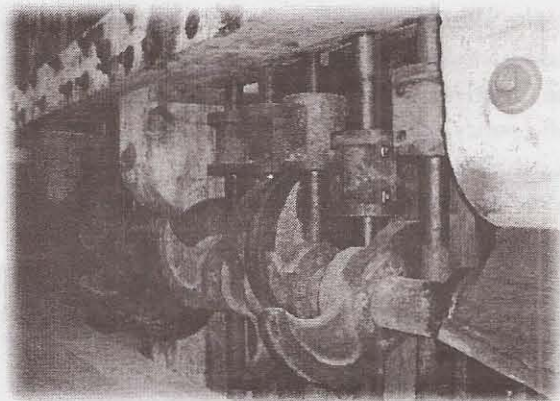
She is survived by her son, David of Calpine; daughters Romilda Jones of Lincoln and Nancy Harnach of Calpine; brother Elver Martinetti of Sattley; sisters Elwina Reeves of Lincoln and Dorothy Androus of Chico; three grandchildren, Jennifer and Charles Harnach and Katie Bradley; and five great-grandchildren.

Services were held Tuesday, May 27, 2003 at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Loyalton. Burial in Vinton Cemetery.

Kentucky Mine Entertainment Series



Due to the generosity of one who has enjoyed the outdoor concerts at Kentucky Mine, this season five events are scheduled. Bob Morales from Sierra City has graciously accepted responsibility for this year, and as we go to press, has done a fine job of bringing this entertainment to Sierra City. Thank you Bob and crew, and thank you to our generous benefactor. ☺



Kentucky Mine Curators Share Job and Vast Experience

The Kentucky Mine Museum and Historic Park welcomes back Anne Eldred as our director this season. Anne is job sharing with a new nugget to our fine staff, Evelyn Whisman. Evelyn brings with her experience from the Plumas Eureka State Park, the Empire Mine and the Plumas Co. Museum. These two individuals are outstanding tour directors. If you have not yet visited the Kentucky Mine, we urge you to do so. Our season this year will end in late September, open Thursday through Monday 10AM to 4 PM. A new brochure was designed for the museum by our editor of this Sierran, Judy Lawrence, and it is beautiful. Thank you Judy! And thank you to our fine curators, Anne and Evelyn. ☺

As The Sierran goes to press, we have just learned that Evelyn Whisman and her husband are moving to Willows, CA. We had hoped she would be available next year but their move ends that hope. We thank her for her dedicated help.

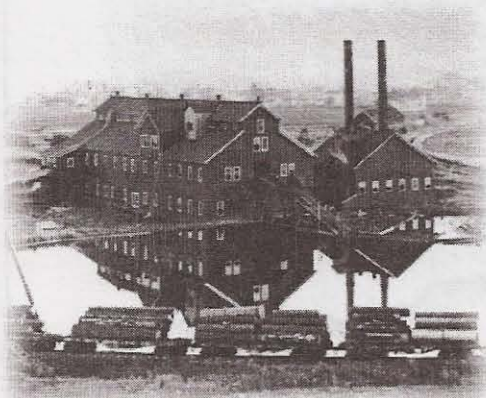
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SAVE THE DATE!

Sierra County Historical Society
Annual Meeting
September 21, 2003
Alleghany Museum - 9:00 am



THE SIERRAN

SUMMER 2003

A Shelf of Histories

- ✱ *Sierra County / Sierra Valley Barn Book* has been reprinted. \$17 includes tax and postage. Orders payable to: Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ *The Historical Homes of Sierra Valley in Sierra County*, by Maren Scholberg is now available for \$10 (includes tax and postage.) Orders payable to: Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ Jim Olsen's popular memoir, *The Camps of Clover Valley*. Make checks for \$19 (includes tax and postage), payable to the Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ *Sierra County Pioneer Cemetery Historic Survey* (to 1925) compiled by Lee Adams in 1997. \$22 (only a few copies left). Order from the Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ *Voices Still Echo in the Canyon and Whispers on the Wind* by Bud Buczkowski, recounting the history of Alleghany and some stories from the Goodyears Creek/Canyon Creek band of the county, respectively, replete with photos. \$22 includes tax and postage. The books may be ordered directly from Bud at Box 904, Alleghany, CA 95910