

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —
Member of the Conference of California Historical Societies

Yarringtons In Sierra Valley (Part I - 1860-1900)

By Margaret Riffel

Rocky Point, a Sierra Valley community with a population of 50 in 1880, can be found today at the intersection of Hwy 89 and Carman Valley Road. June blooming yellow roses and an old apple tree mark the location of Halsey and Henrietta Yarrington's ranch home where they settled in the late 1860's. Although an exact date of their arrival isn't documented, daughter Elizabeth or Lizzie Yarrington (later Mrs. Wm. McKenzie) was born in Sierra county in October 1866. Elizabeth was the 3rd child of Halsey and Henrietta(Lockart)Yarrington. Halsey, a native of Norwich, Vermont, came from a well established New England family that settled in colonial America from England just prior to 1700. Family records show that his first wife, Sarah Ellis of Thetford, VT, died in 1848. Their children remained behind in Vermont while Halsey ventured off to California. He was listed in an 1861 San Francisco city directory as "Yarrington, Halsey, veterinary surgeon". A more common term for this occupation might be horse doctor. Descendants today believe that Halsey probably first set eyes on the beautiful Sierra Valley when his veterinary services were requested at the Winters Ranch located in the Washoe Valley, Nevada. According to Clysta Vann, a granddaughter, Halsey and another man from S.F. stayed in the Reno area for a year at the Winters ranch to care for the horses. The Winters' Ranch, memorialized now by Nevada Historical Marker #94 at Bower's Mansion turnoff, was purchased from the Mormons by Theodore Winters.

Theodore Winters was known for raising outstanding race horses and held races at his ranch. The San Francisco directory was possibly used to bring H.J. Yarrington up to the area as directories were a resource for goods and services needed by residents of the West. Halsey, it is believed, returned to San Francisco after his work at the



Rocky Point Settlers
(pictured left to right) - Henrietta Lockart Yarrington Lloyd circa 1880 and her husband Halsey Joel Yarrington circa 1870's (Halsey not identified for sure, but his granddaughter Clysta Vann thought it was)

Winters Ranch, but found it necessary to leave the city because it didn't agree with his health. In *History of the Sacramento Valley* c.1931 by Wooldridge a biographical sketch of Ray E. Yarrington, one of Halsey's sons, reads, "Halsey Joel Yarrington, who was a native of Vermont, came around the Horn to California in 1849, and took up a claim within what is now the city of San Francisco. He there became subject to asthma, which necessitated a change of location, so he moved to the mountains.

Coming to the Sierra Valley, he camped at the Spring about two miles northwest of Sattley, and at once took such a liking to the location that he took up a claim of government land, on which he made improvements.

Yarringtons in Sierra Valley (Continued on Page 3)

— 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 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, PO Box 294, Sierraville, CA 96126

SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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THE SIERRAN Editor	Judy Lawrence
5016 Holyoke Ave., Sacramento, CA 95841	
(916) 332-1044 Sacramento	(530) 994-3066 Sattley

Kentucky Mine 2005 Summer Concert Series

After much discussion with audiences and community, the Kentucky Mine Summer Concert Series has moved to Friday nights. We have a great entertainment line-up. Some entertainers you will remember being at the outdoor amphitheatre in years past, and you will see some exciting new talents.

All performances begin at 8:00 p.m.

July 1st Black Irish Band

July 8th Sourdough Slim

July 15th Tom Rigney & Flambeau

July 22 to be announced

July 29 David John & the Comstock Cowboys

Aug. 5th to be announced

Season tickets and individual performance tickets for children and adults will be available in May at area outlets. The facility is handicapped accessible. Light snacks are available or take advantage of the picnic area. A BBQ dinner available to all is being planned prior to at least one performance. Remember to plan ahead, as theatre seating is limited.

For further information and updates, contact Shirley Leschinsky, Event Coordinator, at (530) 283-1764 or email: shirley@events4u2.com.

Yarringtons in Sierra Valley (Continued from Page 1)

He preempted a piece of land and later homesteaded one hundred and sixty acres. He carried on ranching operations, kept cattle and horses and also maintained a roadhouse for the accommodation of freighters who traveled between Truckee and the Johnstown and Eureka Mills mines." It is conjectured by present day descendants that he was quite anxious to escape the congested life in the city and that the wide open rural spaces of the Sierra Valley reminded him of his homeland in Vermont. The land, later termed Rocky Point or Yarringtons, had a good spring and was located east of the Sierra Valley floor up towards the hills and trees which would offer some protection from the wind. Apparently Halsey's health improved quite quickly upon settling in the valley as this was told to family by Ellen, Halsey's eldest. Ellen Yarrington (later Mrs. Frank Vann) wrote about the family moving from the city to the mountains in a Sperry flour sponsored contest. Apparently the Sperry Flour company had

essay contests where contestants wrote about ingenious uses of their flour sacks and the number of years they were customers.

Although a copy of this essay is yet to be located, it told of the family moving to Rocky Point by mule pack train

carrying even their furniture by that means from Marysville up over Yuba Pass

into the Valley. Once established at Rocky Point, granddaughter, Clysta Vann, said the property had a very large white house with an all white interior. There was an upstairs, cellar and two kitchens, one main large kitchen and a summer kitchen. The home served dinners and offered lodging to freighters. The house was scaled tongue and groove with lumber from McNair Brothers' Mill. Later owners, Clysta added, tore down the original house and built a smaller one. In the 1870 census of Sierra county, Sierra township, the Yarrington family is found on the same page as the Knuthson, Summers, O.B. Dolley

and Freeman families. Two families of Freeman are listed in separate households. One is headed by a W. Freeman, age 54 native of Tennessee and the other is headed by his son J.E. Freeman, age 36 also of Tennessee. In the census all the families have their occupation listed as 'farmer' and all their children ages 6 through 12 years of age are checked off as having attended school during the year. Two years prior to this census in 1868, Plumas county established the school districts of Rocky Point, Beckwourth and Summit all located in Sierra Valley. Giving the name, Rocky Point, a more Sierra county namesake was the establishment of a post office in 1876 by Henrietta Yarrington. In History of California Post Offices (1849-1976) by H.E. Salley, the entry for Rocky Point states it was, named after a geographical feature of the area. Located five miles north of Sattley. Mrs. Henrietta Yarrington, 1st PM. This post office, unlike post offices today, was located at the ranch. Men of the

area who registered to vote designated Rocky Point as their post office. The schoolhouse, Rocky Point, was moved to different locations. The family has an undated photo of the Rocky Point schoolhouse in one of its locations.



Rocky Point School located in Sierra Valley. Students identified in picture from right to left: Jim Humphrey, Halsey Yarrington, and Lester Yarrington. Photo courtesy the Riffel family.

Aptly named, Rocky Point, the photo shows the school's location

in a rocky area found just south of the Sierra and Plumas county line on road A-23. Named on back of the photo from the right side is Jim Humphrey, then brothers Halsey and Lester Yarrington. The family calculates the year of photo at about 1884 because in the 1880 census the Yarrington's cousin, Jim Humphrey, was 4 years old, Halsey 6 and Lester 8. Though it is not known how the family acquired this photo, the family has some items from Mrs Carolyn S. Kendall who taught at Rocky Point 1885-1887 and taught earlier in 1883 at Beckwith which

Yarringtons in Sierra Valley (Continued from Page 3)

is another Sierra Valley school. It is also notable that in 1884 both Halsey Yarrington (spelled Holsey Yarrington in homestead record) and his daughter, Ellen Yarrington, each received ownership of 160 acre homesteads they had applied for in the late 1870's. Shortly afterwards in November 1886, Ellen Yarrington sold 60 acres from her homestead to Carolyn S. Kendall of Oakland for \$200. Carolyn's daughter, Flora Kendall, taught music in Oakland and was still living in Oakland in 1900 as a music teacher. Although Carolyn Kendall was named as being from Oakland when she bought the Rocky Point parcel, she was a teacher in both Plumas and Sierra counties during the years 1883 to 1887. Her other daughter, Marion A. Kendall, taught at Calpine the years 1887-1888. In *Dictionary of Notable Americans*, Vol. VI 1904, a biographical article appears on Carolyn's husband, Paul R. Kendall who was born in MA in 1822 and died in N.Y. in 1897. There is nothing written about Mr. Kendall coming to California so it would appear that Mrs. Kendall, a native of Bethel, Vermont and her two daughters came out to California on their own. Property records show that both Carolyn and Marion Kendall purchased and sold property independently. Ellen Yarrington remained lifetime friends of the Kendall women and inherited some the Kendall books and paintings that the family still have today.

At the Rocky Point ranch Henrietta Yarrington, besides being postmaster, also made lots of butter according to Clysta Vann, a granddaughter. She related that butter was in great demand from the local miners. Henrietta preferred to use the kegs made by Tom Bennett who ran a keg factory in Upper Mohawk Valley. Tom's kegs were made of fir which was preferable as "it didn't taste the butter." With the ranch being already on a freight route,

it was very easy to obtain transportation to market their butter directly to miners working in mines at that time. The Mountain Messenger, a Downieville newspaper, ran this article about their Rocky Point neighbor on Jan 4, 1883, "Mr. John Summer, a rancher of Sierra Valley, at this time, along with other farmers of the Valley, sells butter in Downieville, Sierra City, and Goodyears Bar. On one trip 100 pounds was stolen from his wagon." Another neighbor invented a churn that may have been used by the Yarringtons. In 1880 George F. Freeman of Rocky Point was issued a patent for his invention of a new kind of churn. An article in the M.M. of July 6th of that year describes the machine.

It was necessary for Halsey and daughter Ellen Yarrington to raise crops for a period of five years under the Homestead Act of May 20, 1862. In the Yarringtons' homestead application papers dated Sept. 1883, a question on the application was, "How much of the land have you cultivated and for how many seasons have you raised crops thereon?" Ellen's written answer was that she had cultivated about 20 acres for five years but the crops were destroyed two years by grasshoppers. The next year in 1884 the Reno Evening Gazette dated May 26, 1884 picked up an article about one of their crops from the Sierra Valley Leader, a Sierraville paper, The byline, ARABIAN MILLET. Unirrigated Grass Stands the Winter and Doubt is Removed.

The Sierra Valley Leader says, "We were shown the other day by Mr. H.J. Yarrington several roots of the evergreen millet, the seeds of which he planted last Spring. The roots looked fresh and there is no doubt but that they stood the Winter well. There has been some doubt as to whether these plants would stand our Winter climate. It now seems that it will and as it is a most valuable forage plant our farmers should cultivate it more extensively. Mr. Yarrington stated that last year he sowed only a pound of seed and that in the month of June on very dry land, and that no rain fell on the land nor was it irrigated at all during the Summer. It thrived and did well, producing seed which will be planted this year. Mr. E.P. Dolley also had similar experience with the same quantity of seed under similar conditions. The above grass is the same that is called Arabian." Neighbors also found their farms in the Mountain Messenger though later in the 1880's.

ROCKY POINT

"At O. McElroy's farm, 25 tons of hay has been harvested. Jacob Knuthson made several hundred pounds



Henrietta Yarrington dressed in dark clothing at the Rocky Point Stage Station/Post Office entrance in 1890.

of butter this year. He has a large tract of valuable farming land, and a nice residence, where, with his wife, he is enjoying good health and prosperity, as they should in their declining years." Neighbors relied on one another a great deal according to present day descendants. Halsey Yarrington was often called upon to help with the delivery of babies in the area. The family surmises that his veterinary background made him a good resource for this help or service. Also, descendants were told that if a baby didn't live or was stillborn, they were buried at Rocky Point in a rise or hill in front of the house. This area for burials was pointed out to relatives long ago when the grave area was still visible. The site is not visible today. In 1878 water right deeds show that neighbors J.H. Fletcher, George Wood and H.J. Yarrington shared rights to parts of Bear and Deer creeks for irrigation in Sierra Valley. Ellen Yarrington helped out the community by teaching at the Rocky Point School. The Yarrington's closest neighbors, Carolyn and Marion Kendall, were teachers. Though Ellen was not officially named a teacher in school records, it was passed down to the family that she taught. Ellen told her daughters about the surprising outcome of one of her students. Ellen relayed to the family how she came to the conclusion that one particular student "was never going to amount to much." Then with a laugh Ellen declared, "Well, it turned out this student ended up accomplishing more than any other student!"

He went on to work at the Reno Power Company in an important position. Keeping the ranch going was a daily chore, yet the Yarrington family did manage to participate in other activities and events. One very enjoyable event was the Masquerade Ball according to the Yarrington sisters who passed down stories to the family. Niece, Grace Riffel Micke, recalled, "Masquerade Balls were usually put on by one of the fraternal lodges. Lots of thought and time went into planning your 'character'. Everyone would try to look, dress and act like some else as to disguise their identity. People dressed as famous people in history or of the time. Books were a popular source for masquerade ideas. It was a lot of fun." Grace also added, "Music for events was provided by pooling players together from the community. Almost every family had a member that could play an instrument. If music was desired at any event the word went out to neighbors to get a group together." Lodge life, Grace continued, was very important. Ellen Yarrington, was a member of Order of the Eastern Star Beckwith Chapter. At least two of the Yarrington brothers, Raymond and Lester 'Let' belonged to more than one fraternal organization.

Special Thanks to Susan Haren

TO BE CONTINUED ~

Sources for Yarringtons in Sierra Valley, Spring 2005

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- Reno Evening Gazette May 26, 1884 from Ancestry.com online historical newspaper collection
- National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region in San Bruno, CA - US Postal Records
- Sierra Valley Leader Newspaper 1888-1889 Microfilm California State University, Chico
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- Superior Court- County of Santa Clara, Probate file case #13,307 of Marion A. Kendall

Uncle Marion Remembered - Part II

The first part of this article written by Marion Westall for his niece, Edna Westall Gottardi, appeared in the Fall/Winter copy of "The Sierran". It told of how Marion's father, Alford Westall from England, and his mother, Susan Dobbins from North Ireland arrived in Scales, Ca. and were married and started their family of ten children, Marion being the second child.

The work in the diggings was progressing. Jim Kingdonon and Fare Doult had to find new locations for their houses. The tunnel that Father had worked so hard in ran out of grade. There were a large number of chinks with picks, shovels and wheel barrows bottoming up the seasons work. A tunnel had been started in Gold Run to tap the channel at the base of Little Ball Mountain. Mother had a flock of chickens; Black Spanish, White Leghorn and Plymouth Rock. Charley Chinaman became quite friendly, paid Mother a dollar a piece for her star hens but they must be yellow legs, no black legs for him. Father came from town one night feeling quite elated. Some one had given a pullet and young rooster, a prize chicken of the buff cochan variety. They mixed with the flock, in time became very meaty. One night the hen disappeared. There was quite a guess as to who or what had taken her. Some weeks later there was a disturbance in the chicken house. Father rushed out to learn the cause, as he approached the door a big lantern-eyed owl came out with a struggling rooster in his talons. The sighs and shouts of father did not scare the owl. He got away with the prize. The hillside was covered with mehaly carpet. We sat on the back porch in the evening, watching the calves in the pasture and the cows coming home with deer trailing them. Since the Forest Resorv. The pine trees are growing so thick that if a deer was in a hurry he would have to knock his horns off to get through. A fine harvest for fires.

When I became of school age my sister, Martha, and I was sent to school at Scales, three miles away. Willy and Jimmy, Jim's boys, and Sammy, Sam Kingdom's boy preceded us. Owing to the feeling between us, there was no effort made to be agreeable, all efforts were made to annoy. The big boys taking advantage of the feeling, dubbed me Johnbull and Uncle Sam sicked us on to fighting on every occasion. They even got us throwing rocks on Ruteshouser store house. They rolled off into the passing wagon road. They annoyed McMahon when loading his pack train of horses, mules, and jacks with freight for Eureka, a mining town on the trail to Downieville. Rutishouser, enraged, spoke to us. We laughed at him. He contacted the teacher who told Ben Atkinson and Ben Evens the offending leaders, what he

thought of them and to cut it out or leave school. Sam was invited up to the teacher's desk. The teacher took a firm hold of the fingers of the left extended hand and applied several sharp cracks with a flat ruler. Sam's dignity was hurt. He returned to his seat crying and mopping up the tears with a white hankerchief. My turn came next. I had no dignity or tears but was dam mad.

My brother Ed had become of school age and joined us. We had a mop of hair. Father asked Bill Scott if he would cut it for us. He said he would come to him one at a time at the noon lunch hour. Father told me to go next day. Mr. Scott got me in his chair, drew a line over the top of my head from ear to ear, cut the hair on the back of my head as short as he could, just clipped the rest. School was in session when I entered. The gawking and tittering broke in to a roar at recess. They called me red lion. The next day Ed exacted a promise from him that he would not cut the same way for him. The promise was not kept. I then saw how ridiculous I looked. Next day he did a very fine trimming up on our head.

I was pretty dumb at school. The ruler could bring tears, but every afternoon seven or eight stood in a spelling down class, each one trying to get the head mark. I could never make it. Every time one will spell the word, I missed and pass up, tears and sobs could not be held back. Even though my mother would go over my spelling lesson for the next day with me.



July 1944 - Marion Westall with his granddaughter, Shelly Westall. Marion was 77.

The Williams brothers had gone to the South Africa diamond fields and Joel Bean had been appointed superintendent of the Cleveland Hydraulic Mine at Scales. Father gave up his job at Fareplay and went to work for Joe Bean. He had a nice little cabin to batch in and was soon joined by Will and Joe Bean's nephews, just out from the state of Maine, who left mining and milling and became doctors, quite a feat. Father was able to come home oftener, not having the mile to walk to work. There was a heavy snow fall that winter and when the sun had melted the snow enough to start spring water, Father was sent up to Long Ravine near Port Wine to turn the water in the Big bold mountain ditch. He worked until after dark not wishing to go back tomorrow. It was dark, snowing, and the wind was a gale. Snow flakes cut his face. He became confused. He was lost. While debating his next move, the moon peaked out through the clouds. He got his course for two reservoirs in Gold Run he knew well. The wind was on his left side, using the wind for a guide, he proceeded with renewed energy. He soon came to a snowshoe track. "Hello, someone's ahead. I will follow," he thought. On discovering the track was his own, he decided to dig a hole in the snow, making it large enough so he could partly lie down to wait til daylight. At home, Mother was sitting by the big stove with a candle lit. I left my room and started past for the outside door. Mother awoke me and sent me back to bed. Becoming worried, she aroused Hillman and Corduroy from LaPorte, living in the Laferty house and working on a contract in the tunnel for Sam Kingdom. They not knowing the woods around Big Ball mountain, went to Scales. A posse started out to hunt Father. About ten o'clock next morning, still snowing, Father came home

tired and hungry. He had seen no one, no one saw him. One of the parties picked up his track and followed him in.

They were running their debris through a flume-less tunnel. Rocks would lodge, wall up and slow up work in the diggings. Father was sent in the tunnel with a double sprong, long handle hook to keep the rocks moving. The pipers were careful for a time, a hole or reservoir of water formed. The pipers, thinking that by throwing their pipes in the water doubling or tripling the amount, they would be helping. To the contrary, Father was having a bad time to keep his feet from being mashed, legs broken, or being washed out over the dump into the creek. When the water was shut off, derricks were started to move the large rocks that had been uncovered. Plenty mad, Father went to the diggings and told them never again would he enter the tunnel unless they quit flooding the water when he was in it.

During spare time Father decided he wanted to plant potatoes. He hired Ed Rowe, who was driving a fine, fat span of bay belonging to McChesner, to plow and help. The family moved across Gold Run to a two-roomed house. There was a fine patch of small but the sweetest strawberries I ever tasted. The potatoes in bloom were doing fine. One P.M. we went out to view them. Sam Kingdom saw and little pigs were digging potatoes with great skill. I had the shotgun. "Shoot her in the ham," Mother said. I up and let her have it. She pivoted on her hind legs, squealing unmercifully. My brother, Sam, about fifty feet to the right, commenced jumping up and down trying his best to equal the sow in noise. Mother, seeing that I had shot him too, grabbed her hair with both hands saying, "I might have known God would punish me."

TO BE CONTINUED ~



Eva Fournier, teacher at Loganville School, who married Marion Westall. Students from left to right are: Ed Westall, Sid Westall, Lucy Westall, Andrew Fournier and Edna Westall—1916.

HISTORY 1 - POLITICS O

History was made today, November 2nd, by the County Board of Supervisors when they voted 5-0 to support the effort being made by the Tsi-Akim Maidu to seek federal recognition as a tribe. Even though we know the Maidu locally as a tribe, they are not recognized as such federally. They were First Americans and are certainly deserving of federal recognition along with most other Native Americans. This fact was generally understood by the board of the Sierra County Historical Society and therefore they opted to sponsor the Maidus to the board of supes and requested a supporting resolution from them. Identical resolutions have already been passed by Plumas County and Nevada County. The Maidus have waited a long time for this, considering they have been here in these three county areas for thousands of years. Don Ryberg, Tribal Chairman, was extremely happy over the board's action and was looking forward to informing the rest of the tribe.

Editor's Note: This article was originally submitted for the Winter Sierran.

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society
P.O. Box 260
Sierra City, California 96125

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2005 Kentucky Mine Museum Schedule

The Kentucky Mine Museum historical park will open for tours on Memorial Day weekend and run Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm until Labor Day weekend. Tours will be given at 11 am and 2 pm each day. Special tours for large groups can be arranged by calling Anne Eldred, Museum Curator, at (530) 994-3514 or (530) 862-1310 (the park). Louie Unland will be another Curator available during regular hours.

Message from President Bud Buczkowske

Thanks to our gracious benefactor the 2005 Concert Series will present six concerts at the Kentucky Mine Museum Amphitheatre (two more than last year).

Our water rights are in question and as a result there will be a meeting with the State, the U.S. Forest Service, the Lewis Family, and members of the Sierra County Historical Society.

The museum is considering offering brochures with local bat information to give to visitors—have some good signs with graphic design on display.

The Sierra County Historical Society will have a booth at the *Sierra Valley Barns, Birds and Barbeque* to be held June 18, 2005 at the Rodeo grounds in Sierraville. We will have all of our Sierra County books by the Historical Society on sale that day. This will also give the Historical Society an opportunity to promote membership.

Respectfully,

President Bud Buczkowske

Historical Society Book \$ALE!

- ✱ *Sierra County / Sierra Valley Barn Book* (third printing) \$14 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 available for \$8 (includes tax. Add \$2 for 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 \$14 (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. \$17 (only a few copies left). Order from the Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ *Index for Historical Society Bulletins and The Sierran* (1969-2004) Make checks for \$10 (includes tax and postage), payable to the Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126
- ✱ *History of the Schools of the Sierra Valley*
This is our most recent publication and includes many, many pictures. Make checks for \$28.80 (includes tax and postage), payable to the Sierra County Historical Society, Box 141, Sierraville, CA 96126