

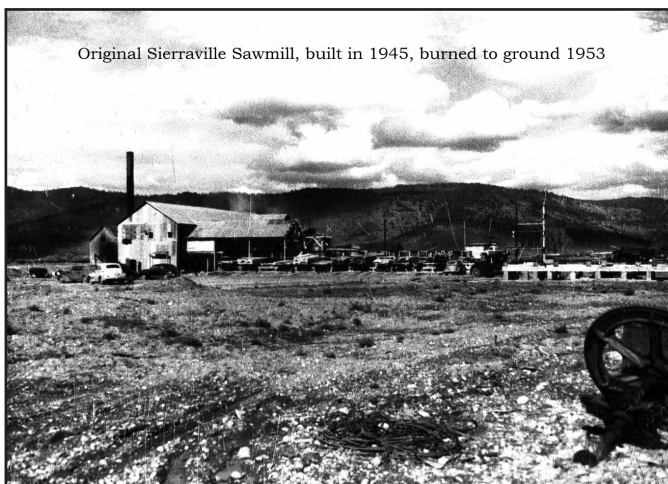
The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

“SIERRAVILLE LUMBER COMPANY”

Virginia Lutes, with Andy Polastrini and Milton Holstrom

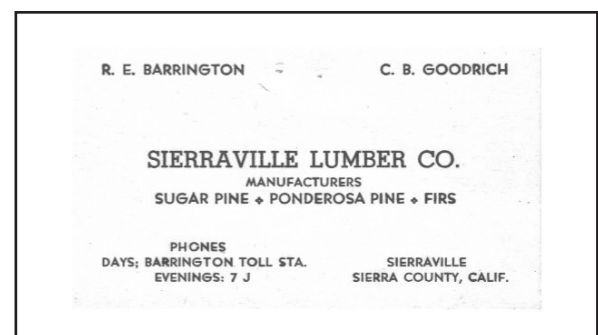
A partnership between Richard (Dick) Barrington, Robert (Bob) Holstrom, and Chauncey (Chance) Goodrich was formed to build and operate the Sierraville Lumber Company in 1945. Sixteen acres of land one mile west of Sierraville were purchased from Marcel and Frances Bony. The land was adjacent to the old Sierraville Horse Race Track, off of what is now Highway 49 and Wilson Lane. Bob Holstrom designed the mill to run 40,000 board feet of lumber in an eight-hour shift.



Original Sierraville Sawmill, built in 1945, burned to ground 1953

Mr. Barrington, and Mr. Holstrom had done business previously; Holstrom had built a sawmill for him at Mt. Hough in Quincy.

Mr. Goodrich operated a dairy at Crescent Mills, and had business holdings in Susanville which included a store. He traveled to Sierra Valley to purchase milk from the Grandi Dairy, Dotta's, and others. During these visits he met Mr. Barrington and Mr. Holstrom, and the three men saw the opportunity to work together in the lumber business. Mr. Barrington purchased a home on Main Street that had been constructed around 1863. Chance Goodrich moved to Calpine, purchasing vintage cabins for the family from of the Davies-Johnson Lumber Company. He then purchased a home on Main Street in Sierraville that also had been constructed in the mid-1860's. Both residences have been extensively remodeled and are in use to this day.



Sierraville Lumber Company - (Cont. 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 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!

Officers and Executive Board of The Sierra County Historical Society

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If you have any suggestions or comments, feel free to contact any board member or email at info@sierracountyhistory.org

Become a Member!

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	\$20.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION.....	\$25.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING.....	\$35.00
SUSTAINING.....	\$50.00
LIFE (per person/couple)	\$300.00

In addition, Museum Renovation Project donations are gratefully accepted.

Please send dues and donations to:

S.C.H.S.

c/o Don Yegge, Membership Chair
PO Box 336, Loyalton, CA 96118

Presidents Message

Sierra County Historical Society welcomes 2020 with some poignant farewells as well as promises of new beginnings. Directors Judy Lawrence and Joe Madigan have stepped down from the board, and we thank them for their years of dedicated service. Judy will continue to focus her energy on the publication of the Sierran. Cindy Ellmore has trained Gerald Gates to serve as webmaster/all-around tech person for SCHS. We welcome Gerald, but will never forget Cindy's hard work to keep us historians a part of the computer age!

After eight years as SCHS President, I am passing the gavel to Sierra County native Jan Hamilton. Jan is retired from a distinguished career in Sierra County Clerk/Auditor/Recorder's Office and as executive officer in the Superior Court. Her roots in Sierra County run deep; her family has been in and around Downieville since 1861. Also joining the board is Scott Mathieson, a retired geologist and physics/environmental science teacher who lives in Sierra City and is committed to preserving our precious history.

Continuing on the board will be the rest of our hard-working members: Vice-President Corri Jimenez, Secretary Susan Hopkins, Treasurer Bill Copren, Membership Chair Don Yegge, and directors Suzi Schoensee, James Connolly, (Alternate) Ernie Teague, and me. I will be on the Oral History Committee and will also serve in the newly created Events Coordinator position. I look forward to working with our energetic and talented Music at the Mine Coordinator Chris Stockdale and with the public.

All the folks mentioned here strive to make SCHS better for you—here's what you can do for us in 2020: How about saving us time and resources by making a New Year's Resolution to receive your Sierran via email? If you like to have a paper copy, you can have the best of both worlds by printing the email version. Please indicate your preference by checking the box on the enclosed application and providing your email address.

All of us at Sierra County Historical Society wish you a happy and healthy new year!

Mary Nourse

Sierraville Lumber Company - (Cont. from Page 1) —

The original sawmill measured 112' x 32'. It was a two-story structure and was operated by electricity. Steam engine power operated the shotgun carriage. The remainder of the mill was powered by the electric company. They installed a 160 horsepower Murphy diesel engine and a circular saw. They also constructed outbuildings. The mill ran 40,000 board feet of lumber per eight-hour-shift. A deep well was bored to supply water, and the millpond water came from the Gifford-Webber Ranch irrigation ditch. The millpond was large enough to float 400,000 feet of logs at a time.

Logs for the mill for early operations were secured mainly from Big Canyon, Nichols Canyon, as well as from the Yuba Pass, Haskell Peak, Doyle and Milford areas. Logging was done on a sustained-yield basis to ensure a long period of operation. The mill hired about 40 people, which included the logging and mill crews. The people in Sierraville were reminded daily of noon when the mill whistle blew for lunch, then again when it was time to return to work. Steam from the boiler was seen on cold mornings rising from the mill.

A few years after the sawmill was built, Bob Holstrom left the company to operate his own mill in Sattley, calling it the Holstrom Lumber Company. Dick Barrington wanted his son Lloyd to be involved with the SLC partnership, so Chance Goodrich sold a part of his interest to Lloyd.

In August of 1953, a bolt of lightning struck the mill and set fire to it. The mill was almost completely destroyed, but it was replaced in a short time by a mill with a capacity of 60,000 board feet of lumber. The new mill was equipped with an electric-powered bandsaw, but the carriage continued to be operated by steam.

Lloyd was struck by a massive heart attack in 1959 and died at the age of 51. At that time, John Bechen became a partner, purchasing Lloyd's share of the business. Mr. Bechen also had financial interest in Buster Adams Logging who did the logging end of the business along with other gypos. Sierraville Lumber Company (SLC) owned their logging trucks; the originals were all "Diamond T" gas powered. The SLC owned the Johnson Store in Sierraville, as well as the café building at the Highway 49/89 intersection which they leased to Vivian Smith. There was an old hand-crank gas dispenser right at that corner where the log trucks filled up. At that time gas was 12 cents a gallon, and the trucks probably only got 3 or 4 miles to the gallon. Later some International trucks were added. Also located on Main Street in Sierraville was the Tom and Della Miller house. Tom had been born in Bodie, California and was a stage coach driver back in "the day", travelling as far as Alleghany. Della took in mill workers and loggers as boarders.

In those days a millwright oversaw all of the mill facilities. Gene Millhouse filled that position for many years. Another millworker was Jim McCollum, who taught Lidamo Polastrini how to operate the "setter", running the carriage to dial in the desired thickness of the cut: 1/2", 1/4" etc. Jim chewed Beech-Nut tobacco, but Lidamo, who was married to Chance Goodrich's daughter June, never smoked or chewed prior to that time. He found the job to be so nerve-wracking that he started with Beech-Nut and ended up chewing 2 cans of Copenhagen a day. He went on to having his own log truck, hauling for SLC.

Other workers at the mill were Roy Alexander who was the saw filer, Fred Deller, "Herb the Indian", "Shorty the Mexican", Le Grand Foreman, Wilbur Smith, and many others from

Sierraville Lumber Company - (Cont. on Page 4) —

Sierraville Lumber Company - (Cont. from Page 3) —

Sierra Valley. The bookkeeper was Don Patton, and later Gary Pellamor. The workplace had a room for sales manager Dick Barrington and an office with a large safe that was shared by Chance Goodrich and John Bechen. Chance spent most of his time in the mill.

The process to turn trees into lumber was labor-intensive. The trees were felled, limbed, bucked into correct lengths of 33 feet, and skidded to the loader who loaded the log trucks. Buster Adams had a boom to load the log trucks, and Abe Benner Logging had an A-Frame on skids to complete the loading.



Sierraville Lumber Company mill and mill pond
circa 1960, photo courtesy Polastrini family

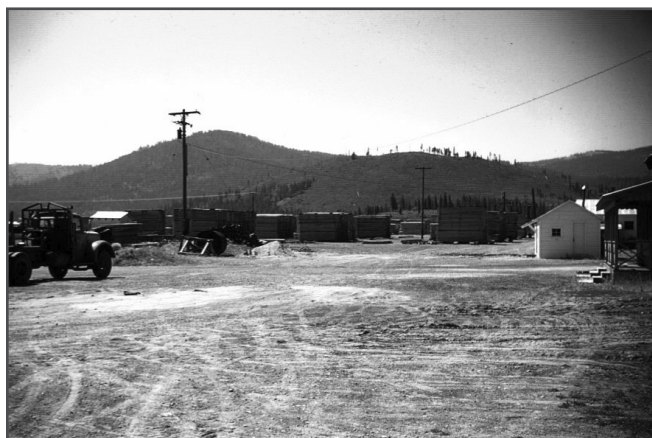
The timber was taken from the woods to the mill where Tom Griffin unloaded them. No stakes were used on the trucks at that time; “cheese blocks” were used, so when truck came up to the “jammer” they were tapped out and the logs were rolled off the truck by the jammer. A cable that ran under the truck bed to the mill pond was fastened under water to a “dead-man”.

Many logs were too large to roll off and into the mill pond on their own, so a “cat” would be used to drag them off. Then they were skidded to the mill pond or to a log deck. The logs were stored in the millpond until ready to be

turned into lumber. There was a “pond man” who would then guide the logs to the slip of the mill. A local preacher, Bill Heath worked as a pond man. One day the pond had a lot of bark floating on the surface, and it looked solid. Without thinking, Bill walked right out onto the bark and disappeared. Tom Griffin and truck driver Lidamo Polastrini watched and wondered if that preacher thought he could walk on water, but about then he bobbed back to the surface. A lot of ribbing went on about that incident. (As a side note, Chance Goodrich had donated the lumber used to build the Sierraville Community Church).

The pond man would cut the 33’ logs in half, 16’5” with a saw operated while in the pond. From the mill pond, then to the slip, the log would be grabbed by a pull chain. It would be flipped onto the shot-gun carriage that went to the second floor of the mill, and then the log would be moved by conveyor belt to the gang saw. The setter would sit on a machine going back and forth along the log, guiding and flipping it to remove the bark and form a cant (square). The sawyer controlled the number and type of cuts per log. A man would be constantly working to remove the waste and direct the cut lumber to its next destination. The gang saw would cut slabs to the proper dimension, and the edger would clean up the boards, removing any remaining bark. Next a cut-off saw would come down from the ceiling to finish the lumber cut. There would be split-second decisions made as to the size and cut of the wood. The boards would be trimmed and scraped, and the waste from this process was used for fuel for the steam engine. The boards would then move on to the green chain where every board was graded, sorted, and stacked. The lumber stacks were finally moved outside to drying areas for storage, then sold and trucked to Reno. The truckers carried out the final stage in support of the lumber process.

One local driver was Vincent Amodei who contracted to haul the finished lumber to Reno. He would make up to three trips a day, and often would go to the mill at night to load the lumber himself in order to get the load to Reno. Jerry Burelle was also a hauler who owned two trucks, and delivered lumber to Reno and Los Angeles. Another important position supporting the lumbermill was the saw filer.



Sierraville Lumber Co. Lumber yard

This was a very skilled man who was responsible for maintaining sharp saw blades at all times. In addition to these positions, there was an office staff conducting the mill's business operation.

Sadly, in 1962 the fire alarms again sounded and trucks from Sierraville, Sattley, and Calpine responded to a fire at the Sierraville Mill. Andy Polastrini, grandson of Chance Goodrich, remembers that the tall smokestack for the boiler again was struck by lightning. The boiler room burned throughout the night, and the flames could be seen from Sierraville. About \$50,000 worth of losses in band saws, tools, and grinders occurred. The mill was down for about two and a half weeks, and then resumed operation. In 1965 the mill was sold to Feather River Lumber Company, and in 1967-68 it was dismantled. Joe and Esther Goss purchased the mill office and moved it to East Willow for a residence. Ellis Smith bought the property for his logging outfit, and

he used some of the remaining structures. Around 1973 Mr. Smith decided to shut down his business because his employees had voted to unionize. He auctioned off his equipment. Some structures still stand on the property: the old equipment shop, the lathe shop and millwright mechanic building, a small pond, and a newer residence.

On June 8, 2019 this story was brought to us by Andy Polastrini, (grandson of Chance Goodrich, son of Lidamo and June Polastrini), with help from Milton Holstrom (son of Bob Holstrom) and numerous loggers and friends adding anecdotes and memories of logging/lumbering life and Sierraville history.

“Here are some definitions of the logging terms that are used in the Sierraville Lumber Company article.”

Bandsaw: A mainsaw that is a vertical band and cuts vertically.

Gypos: Name for independent contractors in logging and trucking business.

Millwright: The lead mechanic who maintains the sawmill.

Setter: Person riding carriage carrying logs into mainsaw who adjusts width of lumber being cut.

Fell: To fell a tree by cutting it from its stump. Generally called “Fall”.

Limb: To remove the limbs from fallen trees.

Buck: To cut fallen trees into different log lengths.

Skid: To drag cut log lengths to the landing for loading to trucks.

Boom: The component of a log loading machine that lifts logs onto trucks.

A-Frame: A structure in “A” shape used for lifting logs or truck trailers.

Stakes: The vertical metal component on a log truck trailer that holds logs on trailer.

Cheese Blocks: The metal component of a log trailer that holds logs on the trailer. Used until “stakes” replaced them.

Jammer: The log loader in the woods that loaded logs onto trucks.

Dead-man: Usually a buried log that anchored cables holding up high line equipment that was pulling logs to landing.

Cat: The short name for a crawler tractor used to skid logs to log landings.

Slip: The area where logs enter sawmills from a mill-pond.

Shotgun Carriage: The carriage carrying the log into the main saw that is steam powered and moves forward at one speed and back much faster.

Gang Saw: After the log is squared, it is called a cant. Often the cant is removed from the carriage and run through a gang saw with multiple saws.

Setter: The person riding the carriage setting the width of the boards to be cut by the main saw by "setting blocks" which are a component of the carriage.

Cant: The squared remainder of a round log that is left after all four sides have been sawn.

Sawyer: The person who determines the width and quality of the board as it comes into the mainsaw in a sawmill. He is in charge of cutting the lumber.

Band Saws: See number one above. Vertical saw bands cutting down that replaced the former circular saws.

Richard Edward Barrington

1880-1967



Richard E. Barrington was born at Boca on the Truckee River in 1880 to parents of the Wa She Shu (Washoe) people. He became the first child enrolled at the Stewart Indian School. His parents heard that a new school for Indian children would be opening, so they walked to Carson City, Nevada to find out more. Richard was ten years old at the time and was playing with other Washoe children near a pond when William Gibson, the new Superintendent of the Stewart Indian School, approached in a wagon. The children ran, but Richard hid in the willow bushes. He was found and taken to the school. Ninety students that year were brought to the school in a similar manner; the Washoe spoke little English and did not understand what was happening. The student information card at the school for Richard Barrington is shown in the name of Dickie Jack, and he went by that name for the years he was at the school. The young boy was very intelligent and excelled in his studies. He graduated in 1901, one of seven students to finish this first graduating class of the Stewart Indian School.



First Graduating Class, 1901. Their motto was "Not at the top but Climbing." Left to right: John Cromwell (Paiute), John P. Jones (Washoe), Harrison Diaz (Paiute), Richard E. Barrington (Washoe), George Minkey (Washoe), Tiffany Bender (Washoe) and John Minkey (Washoe) and Miss Belle Van Voris, principal teacher. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

He continued his education Richard Edward Barrington at the Carlisle Indian School. He went on to be a leader not only in his personal life, but also as an elder of his Washoe people.

By 1910 Barrington was in Sierra County, married to his wife Jessie for six years. They had one son. Barrington was to move between the two worlds of lumber and the Stewart Indian School for a number of years.

Richard was an accomplished baritone and composer. He organized an Indian band that played at the Forty-Niner Camp Band at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1915. By 1917 he was the bandmaster, a property clerk, and an instructor in the shoe and harness-making department at the school. His wife Jessie worked as matron for the older boys. In 1920 he transferred to Pueblo Bonito, New Mexico. Barrington soon returned to California to work in the lumber industry. His son Lloyd was the first Indian graduate of UNR in 1927, and went on to attend law school in San Francisco. He enlisted in the military during WWII.

Richard and his son Lloyd became involved in the lumber business, and in 1945 Richard became a partner in the Sierraville Lumber Company along with Robert Holstrom and Chance Goodrich. Lloyd became a partner in later years prior to his unexpected premature death. Jessie Barrington was an accomplished basket-maker. She often would gather with friends near Sierraville to weave baskets near a stream east of town. The Barrington's purchased a home on main street in Sierraville where they lived the rest of their lives.

Richard Barrington worked for the welfare of Native Americans throughout his life. He testified before Congress for the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California's, Indian Claims Commission. His testimony was helpful in establishing the Washoe Tribe as a distinct unit. He also provided scholarships for Native American students at UNR.

At the age of 84 in 1964, Richard Barrington was awarded the University of Nevada's Distinguished Nevadan Award. He passed away in 1967 at his home in Sierraville and is buried in Loyalton near his wife Jessie and son Lloyd.

The Sierran

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

THE SIERRAN

WINTER 2020

Beginning in October, four undergraduate students from the University of Nevada Reno's Historic Preservation Program have been undertaking an architectural survey of the Sierraville School as well as designing a historic exhibit for the school's halls under the supervision of Architectural Historian/UNR Adjunct Professor Corri Jimenez. The students are all enrolled in Ms. Jimenez's "Principles in Historic Preservation" class, and as a final project, the students are writing the well-needed "Sierraville School Historic Preservation Plan" for Sierra County's Planning & Building Department and the Sierra-Plumas Joint Unified School District.

Undergraduate student Nathan Barnes, has completed a thorough survey of the historic metal windows in the school, documenting new glazing needs while Ms. Jimenez has reviewed concrete issues happening on the building, best seen in spalling on the front. Three undergraduate students, Olivia Canfield, Robin Smuda, and Eileen Lavelle, have designed a historic exhibit for the school's halls as a timeline through captioned historic photographs. Using 21st century technology, Mr. Smuda video recorded former students and teachers where Ms. Canfield and Ms. Lavelle went through the hundreds of linear feet of archival information stored

at the school. In the end, the school's historic preservation plan will provide needed recommendations for its rehabilitation and exhibiting the over 150-year history on the site.

