

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

SIERRA CITY'S SMALLPOX OUTBREAK

1887-1888

By Mary Nourse

Sierra County is no stranger to adversity. Sensational events like mining accidents, stagecoach robberies, hangings, and duels dominate the pages of history books, but the everyday adversity of ordinary folks is noteworthy as well. In her book *Like a Leaf Upon the Current Cast*, Katie Green noted, "From the outset illness of one type or another plagued Sierra County. Major William Downie's memoir *Hunting for Gold* mentions that he suffered from scurvy until he was able to obtain lime juice. And when he arrived at Cut-Eye Foster's Bar on the Yuba he claimed that, 'in almost every tent somebody was sick...' From research she did for the writing of *Daughter of Fortune*, Isabel Allende claims that one out of every five immigrants died who came to the gold fields in 1849-50.

From the beginning of settlement, the local newspapers reported each week on the latest fatalities from cholera, pneumonia, tuberculosis, diphtheria, ... and a smallpox epidemic claimed prime attention in the newspapers for weeks in the winter of 1888. There was an outbreak at China Flat, one mile upstream from Shady Flat. In alarm, the residents called a meeting on January 12 "to take action in regard to protection against smallpox".

Smallpox affected every aspect of life, and for some survivors it had lifelong effects. In his memoir *Recollections of Seventy Years*, Walter Gilbey said, "The occasional outbursts against vaccination are unaccountable to one who remembers the old days. When I was a lad the number of people whose faces were pitted with smallpox was legion. 'Blind from smallpox' was on the card worn by most of the unfortunate street beggars who had lost their sight. The anxiety of parents to have their daughters married at an age which would now be considered almost scandalously immature was one "by-result" of the frequency and severity of smallpox; if a girl's face were marred, her prospects of matrimony were impaired, and the ambition of mothers was to see their daughters safely married before they caught the disease."

School, sports, and social schedules were torn asunder during outbreaks. On June 21, 1883 the *Morning Grass Valley Union* reported that the public schools of Nevada City would be continued through the following week to make up for the lost time of the vacation during the smallpox scare. Eastern papers disputed whether a college regatta or smallpox was

FUNERAL NOTICE

Died at Sierra City, California
February 22, 1888

Small-Pox

As the deceased has no friends in town, his enemies are invited to assemble at Spencer and Moore's Hall, at eight o'clock to dance on his coffin. The funeral exercises will be under the auspices of the Butte's Band which will pipe its level best for the occasion.

Tickets \$1.

P.S. The wake will continue ad libitum at the close of the dance.

the worst affliction to a city. In Carson (City), Nevada in 1889 it was believed that the virus rode to town on some costumes brought from San Francisco and used at a masquerade. The headquarters of the costumer were at the Ormsby House, and a family of children was infected when they all tried on the outfits.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SMALLPOX

The first successful smallpox vaccine was introduced by Edward Jenner in 1796. He observed that milkmaids who previously had caught cowpox did not catch smallpox, so he inoculated a thirteen-year-old boy with

vaccinia (cow pox virus) and the boy developed immunity to smallpox. George Washington, himself a smallpox survivor, dealt with an outbreak during the Revolutionary War by deciding to vaccinate his new recruits.

Vaccination against the dread disease was encouraged throughout decades. An 1868 item in the *Grass Valley Union* touted protection from smallpox: "In order to give all an opportunity to be protected from this loathsome disease—the smallpox—the undersigned will vaccinate all who may apply at either of their offices. Those having the ability to pay will be charged fifty-cents each. All others can be vaccinated free-of-charge. All are invited to avail themselves of this opportunity. Jar. Simpson and J.P. Blanks." In 1880 another pro-vaccination notice appeared in the *Union*: "As the smallpox is appearing at different points through the State, it would be well for the people of this place to attend to the matter of vaccination. In San Francisco children are not permitted to attend the public schools without being vaccinated. As a precautionary measure the same plan might be adopted here."

When outbreaks of smallpox occurred, drastic measures were employed to prevent its spread. Towns often built facilities known as pesthouses on the outskirts of town. A "pesthouse", "plague house", or "fever shed" was a type of building used for persons afflicted with communicable diseases. Often used for forcible quarantine, many towns and cities had one or more pesthouses accompanied by a cemetery or a waste pond nearby for disposal of the dead. In the case of Sierra City, the pest house was located in the

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— 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 had ambitious plans for an exciting summer 2020 season, however the COVID-19 pandemic affected all aspects of our operation. Sadly, we had to close the museum and cancel the concert series, but nevertheless, good things are happening at SCHS. Our Museum Curator, Melissa Brewer, is back working full-time. With a Master's of Library and Information Science, and being an experienced archivist, Melissa is now able to concentrate on accessioning our vast collection of historical records. Melissa's husband, Sam, was temporarily hired as Museum Manager, so he can assist her while keeping true to the pandemic restrictions. They are doing an extraordinary job and have recently opened the Sierra County Historical Society Online Store where they are offering gifts, books and memberships, as well as accepting donations to SCHS. You can access the store at sierracountyhistory.org.

We have a new Facebook page where members and volunteers have posted some great historical pictures, and the interest in this page has been remarkable.

If you have photos you would like to share, contact Don Yegge, our Membership Chair. We also acquired new recording equipment for our Oral History Committee. As soon as it is safe, they will continue their important work of preserving the voices of the past. All of us at Sierra County Historical Society hope you have a healthy summer.

Jan Hamilton

Editor's Message: Greetings and Goodbyes

I would like to welcome President Jan Hamilton aboard, and bid farewell to Sierran editor Judy Lawrence. Jan has deep roots in Sierra County, and brings energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to the job. Judy served for 17 years as Sierran editor, and was a dynamic board member as well. She will be sorely missed, but I'll bet she won't totally stay away. Once we can get together again, Judy will be first to show up in the KY Mine picnic area with her tablecloths and a carload of Costco supplies! After 8 years as president, I am excited to take on the jobs of events coordinator and Sierran editor. I will be doing two things I love-writing and planning parties!

Mary Nourse



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Wild Plum area. Men who had recovered from the disease watched over those who were ill. Women generally remained at home.

Once the disease appeared, disinfectants were used prophylactically as seen in this 1869 ad from a San Francisco publication.

The *Grass Valley Union* in January, 1869 revealed the willingness of the community to seek alternative cures. "The almond-eyed sons of the Celestial Empire are beginning to receive some consideration at the hands of the California portion of the American people. They have proved themselves to be worth something for purposes outside and beyond being subjects to taxation and targets for small boys to throw stones at... It is known, now, that they are smallpox doctors of the first order. San Francisco mortality statistics prove that they do not take the disease as readily as American men do, and that when they do take it, a fatal result is not often the case. The *Alta* thinks they are superior smallpox doctors, and the *Call* is sure they have a wonderful knowledge of disinfectants. They are scientific, at least so far as one disease is concerned."

As seen in the (*Grass Valley*) *Morning Union* in February, 1880, smallpox treatments were still being sought worldwide, "From numerous experiments made in the great hospital at Posen, Prussia, it appears that ice is a most effectual remedy against smallpox. One of the patients in a fit of delirium, escaped to the garden, where the snow lay two feet deep. There he remained all the rest of the night, with no covering but his shirt. On the following morning the fever had subsided and the pustules dried. This strange circumstance attracted the physicians' attention, and after consultation, they determined to keep the temperature of the small-pox wards very low, and apply small quantities of ice to the patients. The results surpassed their expectations and at the end of a week all the patients had recovered."

CHRONOLOGY OF SMALLPOX IN SIERRA CITY 1887-1888

October, 1887 Summarized from *GOLD MINER'S DAUGHTER*, a memoir of Mabel Thomas, daughter of Stephen Thomas who was leader of the Sierra Buttes Mine band.

At age 7 Mabel Thomas began school in Sierra City, attended for 1 day, and came down with measles which had been circulating the community for two months. She recovered from that illness, only to be stricken with typhoid fever which caused her to lose her long hair. Then came

an even worse disease-smallpox. The epidemic was started by a guest from San Francisco who stayed at Mitchell's Hotel which was frequented by miners. He traveled throughout the county, exposing folks as he went, claiming he was recovering from the less deadly chicken pox.

November, 1887 *REPORT BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH*

"In Sierra City the disease (smallpox) at one time assumed almost epidemic proportions. In response to a letter from us asking the particulars of the outbreak in Sierra City, Dr. Tully said that in the latter part of November, 1887, a saloonkeeper named Joe _____ was taken sick and attended by a physician who told him that, 'He has small pox, but as it was a mild case, there was no need of making

any fuss about it.' Consequently, none was made, and visitors were freely admitted to his room and allowed to sit in the barroom before he was fully convalescent, and to mingle freely with the public. The second case was a waitress in the same hotel in which the saloon keeper worked and had visited his room daily. She was confined to bed after a few days' premonitory illness, but no announcement of smallpox was yet made. The third case was a miner who lived in the hotel and was a visitor to the first patient. The fourth case, was also a miner and boarder at the hotel. These cases, the first seen by Dr. Tully, were formally declared to be smallpox, and steps were taken to quarantine the patients. Dr. Jump, of Downieville, saw these patients, eight of which were directly traceable to the mild case in the hotel. Five deaths resulted from the mistake in not taking the necessary precautions with the first case, and having it perfectly quarantined, isolated, and disinfected. The disease spread to North Bloomfield, where two cases occurred with one death. It appeared also in Sierra Valley, Loyalton, and Sattley. In January, 1888, a rigid quarantine was instituted, and the disease ceased to spread."

November 5, 1887 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Alemby Jump, MD. SURGEON AND PHYSICIAN
OFFICE AND RESIDENCE. Commercial Street,
Downieville. Visits Sierra County Hospital daily at
10 AM.

J. Jas. Tully. PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON OF-
FICE. Next door to Tribune Office Sierra
City, California. Special
attention to eye and ear diseases.

Beckwith and Fletcher. L. BECKWITH AND G.T.
FLETCHER. UNDERTAKERS and EMBALMERS.
Sierra City, Sierra County, California. Have constantly
on hand a large assortment of caskets, cases,
coffins, and undertakers' supplies furnished on
short notice.

December, 1887 *SIERRA CITY AND GOODYEARS BAR,* by James Sinnott

"Several cases of smallpox developed in Sierra City, Sierraville, and Loyalton. Local boards of health under the direction of Dr. Alemby Jump, who was County Health Officer at the time, imposed strict quarantines on those ill, and limitations were placed on travel between these towns and other communities, both in regard to passenger and mail service. By early February no new cases were being reported and by the end of the month all quarantines had been lifted."

December 3, 1887 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

LOCAL INTERESTS. "Every bed in the county hospital (Downieville) is now full, and unless things change, an addition will be necessary." (This was unrelated to smallpox.)

"Charles Hartling has been quite sick with an attack of typhoid fever, but we are happy to say, is now able to move around again."

"W. H. Plymire of Marysville arrived on Thursday's stage and will set up some of his finest marble monuments in our

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(Downieville) cemetery. His work is excellent and satisfaction is always guaranteed."

"December 3, 1887 Dr. Du Millieu formerly of Sierra City has located at Pike City where he will practice his profession. He was much liked while at Sierra City."

"The first storm of the season commenced on Monday last and was snow on top of the dry ground. It is not often that we have no Fall rain."

December 10, 1887 THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER

CARNIVAL "On Monday evening the paper carnival and bazaar came off at Busch's Hall, the proceeds of which are to be used in erecting a belfry upon the Catholic Church here. Mrs. Bush had charge of the general arrangements, and Mrs. Tully of the concert proper." The well-attended event which featured talent by the town's children, refreshments, and sale of "pretty things" earned \$221.50 toward the project.

December 17, 1887 THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER

SMALL-POX "Dr. Jump informs us that there are several cases of small-pox in Sierra City. Mr. Pellymonter, Mr. Reynolds, and Miss Hobby are sick with the disease. The citizens have taken steps to isolate the sick and there is no danger of the disease spreading. The cases, so far, are mild ones. Prompt action and this time of year will doubtless stamp it out in a short time."

December 27, 1887 THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER

A special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Sierra County was held to district the county, appoint health officers for those districts, and take such actions as seemed proper to prevent the spread of small pox as required by law and request by the State Board of Health.

"Many leading and influential citizens of Downieville appeared before the Board and requested that measures be taken to prevent the importation of smallpox to said town of Downieville and made suggestions as a means for carrying out their request."

**December 27, 1887- LIKE A LEAF UPON THE
February 10, 1888 CURRENT CAST**

The quarantine against Sierra City prevented defense attorney, Bert Schlessinger from transmitting important papers in the Ah Jake murder trial to the Superior Court in Downieville. Even though he tried fumigating the documents, they were rejected by the postmaster. "Later, he bitterly charged that the District Attorney took advantage of his (Schlessinger's) unavoidable absence from his duties by conducting official business related to the progress of the trial." In July, the Superior Court judge ordered Ah Jake to be hanged the following September, but his sentence was eventually commuted to life imprisonment by the governor, and he was ultimately pardoned on January 1, 1890.

December 29, 1887 THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER

LOCAL INTERESTS "Dr. Tully is sick with the small-pox at Sierra City."

"A man by the name of Lucus died with small-pox at Sierra City this week."

"There are between twenty and thirty cases of small-pox at Sierra City, and the disease is spreading."

"Truckee has appointed an inspector to look after persons etc. from Sierra City, on account of smallpox."

"The mail and express from Downieville to Sierra City has been dropped by order of the Health Board until further notice."

"The most stringent measures should be taken to confine this disease to the city. How it got such a hold in the city should be investigated as soon as the epidemic abates."

"The report that there was a case of small-pox in Downieville is untrue. John Curran of the Mountain House came here sick last Tuesday night and the report spread that he had the small-pox. Such is not the case, however, as he is now all right. He had a bad cold, the symptoms of which are the same as those of smallpox."

"The Board of Health has made arrangements for a pest house in Downieville, just as soon as small-pox makes its appearance in Downieville. Notice should be immediately given to the health officer in case of any symptoms of this disease. Timely notice being given, its spread can be prevented. Had the first case in Sierra City been known to have been small-pox, there would have been no difficulty in confining it to a few cases. As it is, there is no telling where it might be subdued."

December 31, 1887 THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH OF DOWNIEVILLE DISTRICT "The Board of Health appointed by the Honorable Board of Supervisors of the County of Sierra to take measures in preventing the spread of the smallpox consisting of Messrs. H. Spaulding, W.T. Luther, J.A. Vaughn P.R. Gardner, L. Foss, A. Cohn, and A. Jump, M.D., all being present, proceeded to organize, and on motion elected H. Spaulding President, and A. Cohn Secretary. A motion was also carried that Mr. Spaulding act as Treasurer. Dr. A. Jump was elected Health Officer for this District, and W.T. Luther was elected Collector (sic).

January 1, 1888 PRESS DEMOCRAT

"As of December 31, the roads are blockaded from the snow-storms. The outgoing mail has been stopped by the Downieville Board of Health, owing to the smallpox. The trade throughout the town is almost entirely suspended. A per capita tax of \$2 has been levied in this district to defray the expenses incurred by the Board of Health."

January 4, 1888 MORNING UNION

"On account of small-pox being epidemic, at Sierra City the Board of Supervisors of Sierra County have passed an Ordinance dividing the county into five districts and appointed Boards of Health for each, which are empowered to establish pest-houses, enforce sanitary regulations, and to levy a per capita tax upon the inhabitants of the several districts to meet such expenses as may be incurred. Any person violating any of the rules established by the Board of Health shall be deemed guilty of misdemeanor, and shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty dollars or exceeding five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment in the County jail not exceeding six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment. The Downieville Board of Health has established a rigid quarantine between that place and Sierra City and all mail and express matter is forbidden to be sent

between the two places, and residents of Sierra City are also forbidden to remove to the Downieville district. Green & Co.'s stages made their last trip between Downieville and Sierra City on Friday last. The Downieville Messenger says there are between twenty and thirty cases of small-pox at Sierra City, and the disease is spreading. Dr. Tully, one of the attending physicians at Sierra City has been taken down with the small-pox. An inspector has been appointed at Truckee, on account of the small-pox at Sierra City to look after persons coming from that place."

January 7, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

"Rolando Kuehn, M.D., of Philadelphia arrived here Sunday evening en route to Sierra City to investigate for the State Board of Health as to the extent to which small-pox prevails there, and to take measures for the effective quarantining and abatement of the disease. He will act as physician for the Sierra Buttes for Dr. Tully until he recovers from his present illness."

January 7, 1888 *THE LIVERPOOL MERCURY*

A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE REMEDY FOR SMALL-POX "Edward Hine, a correspondent of the Liverpool Mercury wrote as follows to that paper: 'I am willing to risk my reputation as a public man if the worst case of small-pox cannot be effectually cured, in three days, by cream of tartar. This sure and never-failing remedy: One-ounce cream of tartar dissolved in a pint of boiling water to be drunk when cold, at short intervals. It can be taken at any time, and is a preventative and curative. It has been known to have cured in a hundred thousand cases, without failure. I have restored hundreds by this means. It never leaves a mark or causes blindness, and always prevents tedious lingering. If the people would only try it and report all the cures to you, many columns would be needed to give them publicity.'

LOCAL INTERESTS "C.C. Darling came from Sierra Valley to attend the Board of Supervisors, Wednesday. Passing through Sierra City, the Downieville Board of Health stopped him a mile above town and placed him in a quarantine in David Ackley's cabin. His brother Supervisors and other friends sent him up supplies, such as papers, whiskey, bedding, and cigars. The Board sympathizes with him, and August Busch sent to him several Dutch Almanacs to while away his time. He's a 'darlin'."

January 12, 1888 *MORNING UNION*

"A dispatch from Sierra City says that so far there have been nineteen cases of small-pox at that place. One death has occurred, but it is not certain that it was a case of small-pox. All the towns in the vicinity have quarantined against Sierra City and there is not much probability that the disease will spread."

Winter, 1888 From *HUNTING FOR GOLD IN
LIKE A LEAF UPON THE
CURRENT CAST*

"A smallpox epidemic claimed prime attention in the newspapers for weeks in the winter of 1888, for example. There was an outbreak at China Flat, one mile upstream from Shady Flat. In alarm, the residents called a meeting on January 12 "to take action in regard to protection against smallpox".

January 7, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

"John Curran who was taken to the County Hospital (Downieville) with a trifling sickness and caused the false alarm of small-pox in town was discharged after remaining six days under Dr. Jump's care."

RIGID QUARANTINE "At a meeting of the Board of Health of the Forest City Health District it was resolved to enforce a rigid quarantine against Sierra City until further notice. All persons from Sierra City are forbidden to enter this district, and no mail or express from there is allowed to be taken here. We also ask the people of this district to have vaccination attended to at once. C. Heintzen, President."

SMALL-POX "The Board of Health of Downieville District hereby gives notice that no persons coming through and from Sierra City, and from above Shady Flat, will be permitted to come to Downieville as the quarantine law will be strictly enforced."

VACCINATION AND SCHOOL CHILDREN "Owing to the fact that smallpox is epidemic in several localities in Sierra County the Board of Trustees of Downieville School District have by resolution duly entered, ordered that no child shall be admitted as a pupil to the public schools of Downieville unless he or she gives satisfactory evidence, physician's certificate or otherwise, he or she has been properly vaccinated. The teachers of the schools will cooperate with the Board in enforcing this order. S.A. Smith, F.R. Wehe, Robert Forbes, Trustees."

January 14, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

SMALL-POX EXPENSE "At the recent meeting of the Board of Supervisors, A. Busch Chairman, introduced a resolution authorizing the payment out of the General Fund of the County of the expenses incurred by the people of Sierra City Health District in providing for the care of the sick and in their efforts to prevent the spread of the disease. The resolution was defeated. Mr. Busch alone voting for it. Mr. B. probably voted yes more as an assurance to his constituents of what he would have liked to have done rather than with the expectation that it could be legally be done. That it was not possible for the Board to assume this expense will be apparent after a perusal of the following extracts from the County Government Bill, read in the light of the fact that the Board of Supervisors when estimating the annual expense of the County, did not contemplate such expense and made no provision therefore." Section 5 of the County Code stipulated that any indebtedness or liability exceeding its annual income must be approved by 2/3 of the voters and that supervisors would be personally liable for any damages caused by violation of the code."

QUARANTINED THEMSELVES "Thursday a man named Lee came down from Hog Canyon for medicines. He lives a mile below the mill where Adam Weitzell is. Mr. J. Rogers came down and reported that the four men had quarantined themselves. He says they sent the Chinese cook to Sierra City for medicine for Adam, but that he was not permitted to enter the place. He managed to get his note to Seitz, but was arrested, confined for overnight and hustled out of town the next morning with nothing but a box of pills. There is probably another side to this story, as the alleged act is nor characteristic of the people there."

SMALL POX "There has been only one new case of small pox at Sierra City, to wit: Mrs. Mitchell, wife of the proprietor of Mitchell's Hotel where the disease first made its appearance. The people of Sierra have had some difficulty in controlling some of the persons who have been living in the midst of the disease. Monday one Lewis was arrested and

taken before Justice Mooney upon a charge of misdemeanor for going about the city and exposing people to infection. He was found guilty and sentenced to jail for 20 days and had to pay a fine of \$20, or in default, to serve 20 more days in jail. It could not be called sooner owing to the absence of supervisor Bush which makes five days' notice necessary to make the meeting legal.

"We learn Ed Freeman is very sick with the disease at his home in Sierra Valley. There are also two cases reported at Sattley-one a Mr. Choate and the other a child of Mr. A. D. Church. On Wednesday a new case was reported at the City, but the name we did not learn."

LOCAL INTERESTS "We learn by a letter that as far as known, all the ex-residents of Downieville in San Francisco have been vaccinated."

January 15, 1888 *MORNING UNION*

"The San Juan Times says a letter has been received at that place from Mrs. Dr. Spedding, of Sierra City stating that only seventeen cases of small-pox had developed at Sierra City, four of which have been cured, and that no deaths had occurred. The disease was not of a malignant type, and therefore easily handled. The physicians believed they had the disease under control, and would be able to prevent its spreading."

January 21, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

SMALL-POX Smallpox is still epidemic at Sierra City, although only a few new cases are reported within the past few days. The number of cases reported since the appearance of the disease, is some twenty-three, or about that. There are rumors that matters are much more serious than are reported, but we have no reason to suppose the report is true. The Board of Health and the people of Sierra City appear to be working together in harmony and doing all that men can do to get rid of the disease, but through the neglect of somebody it got such a start that it will take a long time to stamp it out. Three new cases were reported on Thursday morning. There have been two deaths reported, one of a workman in the chlorination works, and Mrs. Julia Spencer, wife of John Spencer, of Spencer & Moore, who died the first of this week. Mrs. Spencer was the daughter of Charles Byrne, and was born at Snake Bar near Downieville, and was only 20 years old. Having been married about last Fourth of July. There have been only two cases reported in Downieville Health District, Sullivan at China Flat, and Adam Weitzell at Hog Canyon. The former seems to be getting along well and the latter has just been reported at this writing. The Board of health. The Board of Health has sent a man up to the Canyon to inquire into the condition of the patient and to carry up medicine, and vaccine points for the men working there. Both these men contracted the disease at Sierra City. The Board of Health of Downieville are doing all that lies in their power to prevent the small pox reaching this place, and if the people will obey such orders as the board may make, and see that all are vaccinated, it will aid the board materially. The members of the board are not acting as such for "fun," and they expect to be credited with exercising their best judgment in all cases as they arise. Every case of sickness reported is immediately investigated, and Chinatown is searched every few days. So far, no strange Chinamen have been found. Several small gangs of Chinamen have been reported moving along the river, but none of them can be traced to this place."

January 28, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

LOCAL INTERESTS "Dr. Jump expects vaccine points on the stage today, (Saturday)."

"Word comes that some members of Jos. Kelly's family, at Loyalton, have had the small-pox."

"It is reported that the quarantine against Sierra City, established by Sierra Valley, has been lifted."

"A man named Morrison died of small-pox in Sierra Valley, about two weeks ago. He was a brother of the man who died there at the commencement of the epidemic."

"A young man by the name of McCoy died at Bassett's, Wednesday, from pneumonia. He has been at work at the Young America Mine until quite recently. His parents who live at San Juan, were with him when he died, and asked permission to take the remains to San Juan for interment, and also asked permission to pass through with the remains. It appears that they reached Bassett's by way of Truckee, and that since the general rains they are unable to return the way they came. Upon showing there had been no infection near them, they were permitted to pass through with the body, which they did Friday. The Board of Health does not desire to place any obstacle in the way of anyone, unless they are compelled to do so in the interest of the health of the people."

"There is no news of anyone having taken the small-pox from Adam Weitzell. We learn that the evening of his death he came to the door and talked with the men at the mill."

"A man by the name of Uren was the latest case of small-pox reported in the City, and he was taken last Tuesday. The report which has gained credence that Miss Molly Seitz had been attacked with the small-pox, is denied. Her many friends here will be glad to hear this. As near as we can ascertain there have been about thirty cases of it in all in Sierra City. It is hoped and believed that the disease is under control and that there will be few new cases in future."

February 4, 1888 *THE MESSENGER*

LOCAL INTERESTS "Dr. Jump has received one-hundred vaccine points from a Pennsylvania Farm and wishes all who have heretofore been unsuccessfully vaccinated by him to call and try again."

"By a letter from Loyalton we learn that five members of the family of Joseph Kelly, of that place, have had the small-pox. The disease was contracted by one of the family at Sierra City while on the way home from the trial of Mr. Kelly at this place. They stopped at the City Sunday night, December 10."

February 11, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

"The quarantine against mail matter coming from Sierra City to Downieville has been raised, the first mail coming down Wednesday. It will not be long, provided there are no new cases, before the restrictions upon travel are entirely removed. We are not yet advised that the quarantine established by the Young America Mine against Sierra City has been removed, but doubtless it will be when all danger is past."

"First mail and express from Sierra Valley and Sierra City, since the quarantine, arrived Wednesday morning. It was thoroughly fumigated. Travel is still suspended."

"We ask to be indulged in a little more of the natural amount of 'small-pox' literature this week, as we are in receipt of mails from the quarantined portions of the county for the first time in six weeks."

"Dr. Pritchard of Sierra Valley has busied himself during the epidemic at Sierra City railing at the Health Board of Downieville because of the efforts the Board was making to keep smallpox out of this place. He represents our people as scared nearly out of their wits. We really had not observed anything of the kind, and it is not true. They wanted to keep small-pox out of Downieville, and by prudent action having done so, they are content."

PUBLIC NOTICE "The impression having obtained in Downieville that the quarantine against Sierra City had been raised, notice is hereby given that such is not the case. The Board of Health has raised the quarantine on mail and express matter and on that alone."

February 18, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

REPORT OF DR. SPEDDING Sierra City, California February 13, 1888. To the President and members of the Board of Health, Downieville. Gentlemen: Agreeable to your request I have the honor to report as follows respecting the status of small-pox at the present in this town. Two patients have this day been restored to their homes, which leaves six now remaining in pest-house, one under treatment for the disease, the others all being convalescent and rapidly recovering. The patient referred to as being under treatment is Samuel Uren, who was taken to the pest-house on the 23rd of January last, and discharged on the 2nd of February, being free from all signs of the disease. After being at home for some days, he was again taken ill and a similar eruption having appeared it was from a return of the varioloid in a very mild form and will again be around in a couple of weeks. His house is quarantined and has been thoroughly fumigated and no apprehension is felt for an outbreak of the disease from that quarter. So far, you are in possession of a true statement of the disease in its present condition, and so far as I am concerned, I do not if apprehend an increase of the epidemic, and have no suggestions to offer, leaving the matter of quarantine etc. etc. to the good and wise discretion of your honorable Board. Your Ob't Ser'vt, Robert D. Spedding, Health Officer PS There are no cases in private houses in town.

LOCAL INTERESTS "Hon. H.K. Turner has recovered from his light attack of Small-Pox."

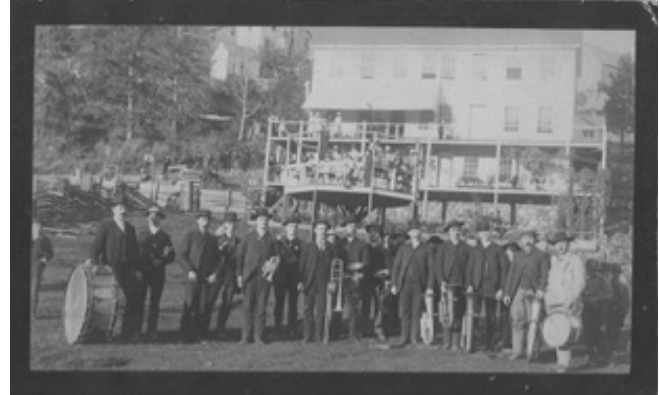
"Dan Sullivan of China Flat has entirely recovered from smallpox."

"J. Schiaffino and R. Castagna of Sierra City, were here Tuesday and seemed pleased after their recent quarantine, to again visit their Downieville friends."

"D. N. Mitchell at Sierra City has thoroughly fumigated his hotel since the disappearance of the small-pox, removed and burned all carpets, bedding and everything else that could retain and spread the germs of the loathsome disease, repainted and white-washed his rooms and now this favorite stopping place is as healthy and safe as any in the mountains. We wish its estimable host and hostess an indefinite new ease of good health and prosperity."

February 22, 1888 **SMALLPOX, A HISTORY,**
by Kotar and Gessler

"The notice indicated that a scourge of smallpox had just succeeded in being stamped out. With the quarantine lifted, virtually the entire town turned out to celebrate, including 35 persons who had recovered from the disease. The dance program included, the "Small-pox Polka", the "Virus Jig", the "Vaccination Reel", and the "Quarantine Quadrille". While the article was meant to be amusing, smallpox was no laughing matter. Although its origins are obscure, the speckled disease seemingly plagued mankind from "time Immemorial" leaving staggering death rates, horrifying scars and blindness in its wake."



THE SIERRA BUTTES BAND

1888 *THE PHILADELPHIA LEDGER*

(From Handy-Book of Literary Curiosities by William Shephard Walsh.)

The Philadelphia Ledger also ran the smallpox funeral notice, commenting, "They had a weird sort of dance in Sierra City on Washington's Birthday says a California exchange. Previous to that holiday, the following printed notices, bordered in black, were posted all around town.... That evening the people turned out en masse, and had a rip-roaring break-down in celebration of their at last being out of quarantine. The dances indulged in during the evening were the small-pox polka, the virus jig, vaccination reel, and the quarantine quadrille. Thirty-five recently recovered small-pox patients participated in the festivities."

March 3, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER,*
Local Interest

QUARANTINE RAISED "The quarantine against persons coming from or through Sierra City to Downieville has been raised and travel resumed. We are informed of a few convalescent cases in the pest-house. There need be no fear entertained of being exposed to smallpox by visiting Sierra City."

LOCAL INTERESTS "It is untrue that Miss Gussie Wood, formerly of Downieville residing at San Francisco, was obliged to have one of her arms amputated after being vaccinated."

March 4, 1888 *THE MOUNTAIN MESSENGER*

MINER'S DRUG STORE "A fresh supply of French and English disinfectants for small-pox just received at the Miner's Drugstore."

QUARANTINE RAISED "The quarantine against persons coming from or through Sierra City to Downieville has been raised and travel resumed. We are informed of a few convalescent cases in the pest-house. There need be no fear entertained of being exposed to small-pox by visiting Sierra City."

The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The Academic Artifacts at Sierraville School

The Sierra County Historical Society hired intern, Nathan Barnes, student of English and Historic Preservation to work on the arrangement of a collection of documents at the Sierraville School this past spring. The project is an index of records from the Sierra/Plumas Joint Unified School District in order to preserve the documents and make them accessible to the public for research purposes. The collection is currently housed at Sierraville School, and will be made database-accessible with the PastPerfect museum computer program.

Many artifacts at the school have been indexed, to be archived and organized for easier access in *PastPerfect*. These items are arranged in the exact state in which they were kept - in cardboard boxes labeled with such unassuming labels as Office Depot, Quill records, or nothing at all. One container of documents once held "Big A" cantaloupes. Another known simply as "Box 26" holds stacks of pamphlets and booklets and sits atop *Mountain Messenger* and *Sierra Booster* copies from the 1950s. These items give context to the community and insight into instructional materials from the early 1900s through items such as the printed "Songs of the Gold Rush Days" papers. An overview also to the geography of the Feather River and Yuba River regions is accessible through fifty or so maps from the *American Automobile Association*. Metsker's Maps as well provide a layout of Sierraville's proximate location in the Sierra Valley. Familiar names such as Milt Gottardi appear in governing board election transcripts and faded signatures from C.G. Church and F.H. Turner stamp an old school district deed, while many others show up at the end of district business meeting notes. Printed on faded, aged newsprint the first *Sierra Booster* in this box captures an everlasting summer moment in Sierraville and the surrounding area at fair time: "Hot dogs, Apple Pie, and *The Sierra Booster*."