

The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

TIMELESS SIERRA SUMMERS

By Mary Nourse

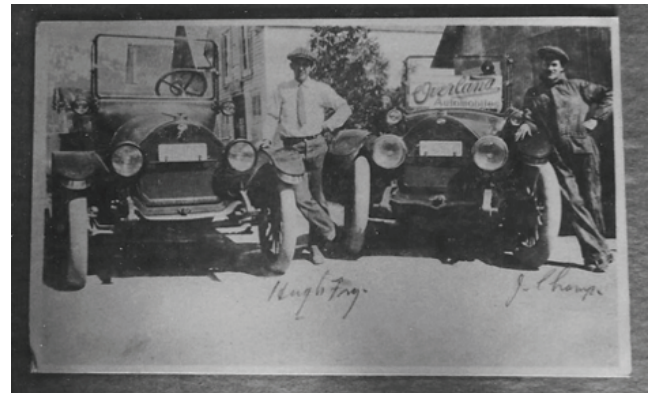
Now that the summer season is on in earnest, hundreds of people from the lower altitudes are flocking to the mountains for recreation.” This comment might have been written last week in a local paper, but in fact it is a quote from the Grass Valley Morning Union, July 2, 1915. It followed the headline: SIERRA CITY IS TOURISTS’ MECCA, and the article cited the invigorating climate, fine fishing and grand scenery. It told how the town was catering to the tourist trade: A new garage for autoists, two good hotels, and many hospitable people. “Herman Busch, proprietor of the Sierra City Hotel, has made a number of improvements of late. He is providing a new room for the bar, so that it will be separated from the hotel lobby. The rooms have all received attention and a fine table is set. John G. Rose, proprietor of the Capitol Hotel, always welcomes the stranger and tourist, showing every courtesy and attention. The hotel is home-like, with the table a strong attraction and rooms that please, and very reasonable prices.

“John Champion has erected a new corrugated iron garage just above the Sierra City Motel, which is the best in the mountains. He has employed a first-class machinist to make auto repairs. Mr. Champion is prepared to serve the auto tourist with storage, repairs, gasoline, oils and supplies and he also has new Overland cars for hire to any of the lakes and mountain towns. He is the Overland agent for Sierra County.”

“Fishing parties report that the nimble trout are taking to the hook more rapidly every day in the lakes and streams around Sierra City and big catches are the order of the day. The town is located on the banks of the south fork of the North Yuba River, a celebrated fishing stream. Sierra City will celebrate Independence Day on Saturday, Sunday and Monday and hundreds of people will be there to enjoy the festivities. The town is only twenty miles from Blairsden, on the Western

Pacific, fifty miles from Truckee, on the Southern Pacific and fifty-six miles from Nevada City.”

Newspaper articles featuring Feather River Lodge also attracted tourists to the area. “Situated on a lawn-covered, fine-shaded knoll overlooking Feather River; good fishing and hunting; table unsurpassed in mountains, boating, swimming, tennis, hot and cold baths, outside sleeping rooms, no mosquitoes.



Hugh Frye with John Champion, Sierra City car dealer in 1915.
SCHS photo.

Great fishing was a significant lure to mountain resorts during that era. According to the Stockton Independent on August 11, 1907, “Word came from the Stocktonians at Webber Lake that the fishing is better there than it has been for many seasons and anybody can catch trout this year. Boarders at the hotel are catching from thirty to a hundred fish a day and the trout are uniformly of large size. One day last week Charles J. Stovel, a San Francisco expert fisherman, made the record catch at Lake Webber when he landed the largest fish ever caught in that home of game fish. The lessees of the place will this fall plant 100, 000 small fish in the lake, having secured

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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

Jan Hamilton, President	Michelle Anderson, Alternate Director
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Susie Schoensee, Director	

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 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)	\$400.00

In addition, donations are gratefully accepted.

Please send dues and donations to:

S.C.H.S.

c/o Scott Mathieson, Membership Chair
PO Box 260, Sierra City, CA 96125

President's Message Summer 2021

With many agencies governing our activities at the Kentucky Mine Museum and their varying regulations regarding Covid-19, our Board voted to remain closed during the 2021 season. This was not an easy decision, but we felt it was the responsible one, and we look forward to a great 2022 season. In the meantime, we can see you at our annual picnic. Find the invitation in this publication for details.

The Oral History Committee resumed work with the addition of new videography equipment. In June, they interviewed Cy Rollins at the Goodyear's Bar Museum, and they have an extensive list of potential interviewees.

Our Curator, Melissa Brewer, continues accessioning our collection. She is working on the photos in *PastPerfect* to make them accurate and searchable. She will be assisted by Cory Peterman with the photo labeling, and some of these photos will be used on our Facebook page. Sierra County entrusted us with their historic maps and paid for the equipment and supplies to preserve them. Melissa will start work on this project in April, 2022 at the Sierraville School.

Don Yegge resigned as Membership Chair and Facebook Administrator. Thank you, Don, for your many years of service on the Board.

As you will note on the enclosed ballot, five members of the Board of Directors are up for re-election. Besides their spots, we have a vacancy due to Don's resignation. Paid members, please vote and return your ballots by September 7. We will announce the election results at the picnic. Hope to see you there!

Jan Hamilton, President
Sierra County Historical Society

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the promise of the State fish commission to furnish that quantity of the Cut-throat species for the lake. There are five varieties of trout in Webber Lake, the famous Loch Loven, the Cut-throat, Rainbow, Eastern Brook and German Brown. Sportsmen favor the Cut-throat species and hereafter the Webber Lake people will plant that variety in large quantities every season.

Tourist travel thrived in Downieville into the 1920s. Mountain Messenger editor H.S. Tibbey told the Morning Union in November, 1920, "Last summer was the best year Downieville ever experienced in tourist travel. Thousands of sightseers and vacationists passed through the town and over the Yuba Pass Road to Reno, Truckee or on through Sierra Valley to Quincy and other points. The many wonderful scenic attractions of the section about the Sierra County seat elicited many pleased comments from the travelers and no doubt the coming season will see an even greater number of tourists pass through that section. The trip from Nevada City to Downieville and over the Yuba Pass Road covers some of the best natural scenery in Northern California and passes through a territory rich in the romantic history, the most picturesque of the old-time mining sections. Fishing and Hunting. Another big bid for the tourist travel in this section is the fishing and hunting that is offered to the vacationist. The streams near Downieville and the Lakes above that place are well-stocked with mountain trout, the most subtle and attractive game fish in the world, while in the hills are deer, quail and grouse in abundance. Many happy tourists this past season spent days of delight following the winding streams in pursuit of the elusive speckled beauties and many were rewarded in their efforts by big catches of fish."



Parade Rehearsal On
Main Street

Parade Rehearsal on Main Street, Sierra City. SCHS Photo



Loyalton Independence Day Parade. SCHS Photo

Sport fishing wasn't the only draw to Sierra County

back in the day. In the 1915 season, the San Francisco Call touted the delights of Campbell Hot Springs in Sierraville. "Unsurpassed for rheumatism, gout, liver and kidney complaints and all stomach troubles: no snakes or poison oak: hunting, fishing, livery; picturesque drives. \$12 to \$14 per week. Round trip tickets by Western Pacific direct to Springs; auto meets train round trip to Truckee."

July 4th was a popular time to visit Sierra City, and Independence Day, 1915 drew the "largest crowd and had the best celebration in history of the mountain town to date." There was a three-day celebration featuring baseball games, a parade, and two dances. "People came from all over Sierra and Plumas Counties and all report having been received in most hospitable style, for which Sierra City is famous. There was a grand ball on Saturday evening, and another Monday night, both of which taxed the capacity of the dancing hall. The Sierra City brass band furnished fine music. On Sunday, two ball games were played, the first between the Forest City and Downieville nines. The Forest boys won by a score of 8 to 3. The second game was between the Sierra City team and a nine from Santa Clara, who are camping in the vicinity. Sierra City took the game by a score of 14 to 8. On Monday the Downieville team hooked up with the Clio aggregation, Downieville being the winners. The last game was an intensely exciting contest between Sierra City and Clio. It was nip and tuck all through. Sierra City finally winning by a score of 10 to 9." In all the celebration was declared the most successful ever pulled off at Sierra City. Ball games remained popular in the area, and were revived in Sierra City in the 1980s when informal softball games were played in Herringtons' meadow on lazy Sunday afternoons. It is easy to see why residents and visitors have long sought relaxation in the picture-perfect world that is Sierra County. It is truly a timeless mountain mecca.



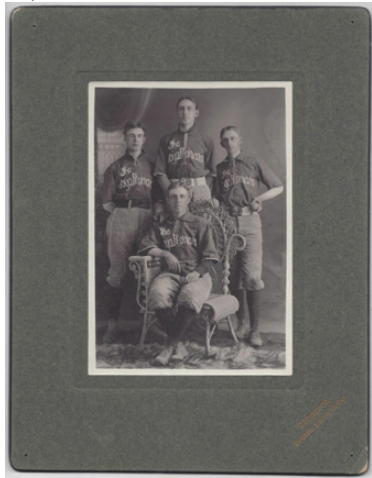
Calpine Baseball Team. SCHS Photo

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Sierra City Baseball Field on the "Flat". SCHS Photo



Loyalton Baseball Team . SCHS Photo

Sources:

Morning Union, July 7, 1915

San Francisco Call, June 5, 1915, Volume 97, Number 136

Stockton Independent, August 11, 1907

Morning Union, November 12, 1920

Crow City- Past to Present

By Corri Jimenez

A

request by residents of Jim Crow Road to change its name prompted an important dialogue in Sierra County about the history and significance of Jim Crow. On June 1, 2021 the Board of Supervisors approved a new name: Crow City Road.

Just who was "Jim Crow?" What was Crow City? And, who were the early African Americans who settled Downieville? Let's continue to examine our past and record it accurately as we move forward.

"Jim Crow"

In *Hunting for Gold* by Major William Downie, he says he met the "Kanaka Jim Crow" in June 1849 on the ship *Architect* (Farris & Smith, *History of Plumas, Lassen, and Sierra Counties*, 1882:421). Downie reflected:

Eight of the boys started below for provisions, taking all the mules with them, and promising to return in a few days. Jim Crow went with the party. None of them came back with the necessary commissary stores. The only one who returned was Jim Crow, and he came back in the spring with a number of Kanakas and about five hundred white men, whom he was leading to the diggings at the Forks, supposing that the Downie party was frozen or starved to death.

It is believed that "Jim Crow" was a pseudo-name given to him by Downie and other whites due to the color of his skin. It should be noted that *Kanaka* too is a derogatory term. The name "Jim Crow" has been around since the 1830s as a racist depiction of an African-American, and was popularized by Thomas D. Rice in the song, "Jump Jim Crow." One of the first newspaper references to "Jim Crow" was in the *Sierra Citizen* on June 3, 1854. It reported, "A large party of Kanakas, under the direction of one Jim Crow, had discovered very rich diggings somewhere between the South and Middle Forks of the Yuba." The article calls him the "redoubtable Jim Crow" and local folklore credited his ingenuity in mining gold nuggets from the digestion system of a 14-pound trout.

Community of Crow City

Downie referred to "Jim Crow" as the leader of Crow City, a community of over forty white men who had a "perfect organization" with laws and extended to the "Kanakas the same rights that they enjoyed" (Downie 1893:90-91). His reminiscences on Crow City are:

Many of those who had come there, enticed by the rumors of great riches, were loth (sic) to leave. They had an idea that the Kanakas were only waiting for the white people to vacate, and then they would plunge into the very richest places. Altogether there prevailed, at that time, a singular superstition in regard to black or colored men. They were looked upon as "mascots," and it was a common belief that they had luck in seeking for gold. . . But my experience with Jim Crow was such as to shake my faith in the race, and I made my way back, perfectly satisfied to leave them behind (Downie 1893:92).

Historian Katie Willmarth Green wrote in *Like a Leaf Upon the Current Cast* that these diggings were on the convergence of Jim Crow Creek and San Juan Creek and at the time, a “rowdy group of about a hundred miners descended on the camp and demanded to share in the riches”. (Green, 2004:127). Green observes the demographic of Crow City was not African American, but Irish. One of its earliest miners was Irish-born John W. Mackay, one of the Big Four of Virginia City’s Comstock Mining District, who started his mining career in Crow City diggings in the 1850s. She dedicates a chapter to the Irish families who mined the diggings into the 1950s. She states that during its heyday of the 1920s to the 1930s, there were over 20 claims up this canyon. These included such mines as the Arizona, Old Ironsides, and Eaglebird.



Outbuilding on Crow City Road (Photo by C. Jimenez).

African American residents of Downieville—1852 to 1880

In the first county census in 1852, there were 135 people recorded in the small hamlet of Downieville. One 30-year-old African-American man named Stevens from Maryland was recorded working as a washerman.

Seven years later, the 1860 U.S. Federal Census recorded a total of 1,296 residents in Downieville and over 1,600 “dwellings” in town. There were twenty-two African-Americans, identified as “Colored (Black)” in Downieville; none were from the Sandwich Islands, now Hawaii, nor named “Crow.” The census, however, is interesting on a demographics-level. It recorded four women, predominantly wives or daughters, and eighteen men working as laborers or barbers; five were children under 18 years of age. In the era of slavery, three adults were from free-slave states, such as New York and Ohio; twelve were from slave states including Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. They had likely escaped the hardship of slavery.

By 1870, the population had slipped and there were just 704 residents in Downieville: 25 were African-American working as barbers, general laborers, or even keeping boarding houses. In total, half were children under 18 years of age. One man, D. Brown, who worked as a “general laborer”, had a recorded wealth of \$6,000; the equivalent of \$127,681 in 2021. By the 1880 census, there were 608 residents calling Downieville home and only four were black.

Cemeteries of Sierra Valley (Part 2)

By Corri Jimenez

Sierra Valley has cemeteries located both in Sierra and southern Plumas Counties. The valley, known geologically as Lake Beckwourth, is an ancient closed lake basin. A “closed basin” is a natural lake with no outlets. Small islands, identified as “mounds,” rise from the valley floor. Early residents established burial grounds that hug the hillsides and feature scenic views that provide serenity for the living.

Mountain View Cemetery

The Mountain View Cemetery has over 780 graves and is one of the largest cemeteries in the valley. It was also known as “Roop County Cemetery” from 1850-1870 when state and county lines were somewhat ambiguous, and Roop was associated both with Lassen County and Washoe County, Nevada.

Located on the southwestern corner of Hill Street in Loyalton, the Mountain View Cemetery is set on a hill overlooking the Loyalton mill site. A looped drive passes through the grounds, and most of the older headstones are located in the northeastern section. Some more contemporary graves are in the southern end of the cemetery, and older plots are found in the northern section.

The earliest gravesite at Mountain View is of Coonie McGrath (1862-1863), a 1-year-old child born to T.H. and Clara McGrath. Many of Sierra County’s pioneers are interred in the grounds including Rev. T.L. Crandall (1847-1903) a member the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a fraternal organization of Union soldiers, sailors and marines who served in the American Civil War. Another plot holds the remains of prominent citizen Dr. D.G. Webber (1809-

1883) who was a gold miner, a building contractor, a horse breeder, a school superintendent, a rancher, a physician, a philanthropist, and the owner of the Webber Lake Hotel.

Sierraville Cemetery

Sierraville Cemetery is located on one of the mounds that protrudes from the Sierra Valley floor. Located off West Willow Street on Cemetery Road, it was established in the early 1860s. According to the cemetery district caretaker Kim McKinney, fires burned through it in the 1920s and 1930s. There are over 550 graves in Sierraville Cemetery, and some of the valley's early settlers have plots in this hallowed ground. Prominent families represented include the Lemmon, Nichols, and Strang families.

This cemetery has headstones inscribed with some of the most unique epitaphs of all the cemeteries in the valley. A favorite of mine is the inscription on John P. Gula's (1924-2013) headstone. His epitaph, reads "Measure Twice, Cut Once." Also noteworthy is the epitaph of environmentalist Steve Benner (1934-2011) which reads, "He spoke for the land." Benner worked for the Sierra County Public Works Department as a draftsman, and as a founder of the Sierra County Conservation Club, he fought against Disney Corporation when it sought to put a ski resort on Independence Lake's Mt. Lola.

A handful of weathered wooden headstones still stand on the cemetery grounds as well as a number of markers that attest to tragic family histories. J.C. & M.E Adams' headstone records the loss of five children: Alameda, Clifton, Alva, Lowren, and Edgar who perished between January 1869 and December 1872.

Sattley Cemetery

Sattley Cemetery perches on a hill off Westside Road overlooking the community. There are over 70 graves in this small cemetery that has plots dedicated to the Burrelle, Church, Copren, Hamlin, McElroy, McNair, and Turner families. Myrick Turner was the first to be interred in the cemetery in 1859, and Sattley's postmaster Lois Marylin Purdy Rhodes (1923-1988) is among familiar citizens at rest there. Former Sierraville School teacher, Georgene Copren (1906-1997) has an endearing epitaph that reads, "And gladly would she learn and gladly teach."

Summers Family Cemetery

Located on private property north of Calpine, the Summers Family Cemetery includes six graves with small granite headstones near a larger obelisk-style headstone marked, "FATHER" and "MOTHER". Sierra Valley folklore provides two conflicting accounts of the demise of the Summers family. In one version the family perished in a fire that destroyed their farm; in the other they died of botulism. These theories bear further investigation because the family members died at different times and were buried separately.



Summers Family Cemetery, looking west (Photo by C. Jimenez).

In 1874, John S. "Jack" (b. 1832) and his wife Elizabeth Anne homesteaded on a ranch where he raised cattle a few hundred feet from the cemetery. The couple had 12 children: James E. (1857-1899), William D. (1861-1938), John A. (1864-1943), Ida Belle (1866-1942), Samuel L. (1869-1942), Thomas (1872-1952), and Dora Elvira (1874-1960). Five of the children George, Charles F. (b. 1859), Edward (b. 1873), Emma (b. 1877), and Henry (b. 1880) died young and their graves are marked. John Summers died in 1905, and his wife Elizabeth died in 1911. They were the last to be buried in the cemetery.

Other Sierra Valley Cemeteries on the County's Border

There are two culturally significant cemeteries in the Plumas County section of Sierra Valley where some Sierra County residents are buried. One is the Vinton Cemetery linked to the Swiss-Italian immigrants, and the second is the Sharkey-Irish Cemetery. The Old Irish Cemetery, also known as the Westside Cemetery or Sharkey Cemetery, is located off Westside Road or Sierra County A23 on a hillside overlooking the valley. There are about twenty grave plots in the cemetery for the Farley, Giblins, and Sharkey families. Turners, Keefes, and Freemans were also longtime residents of Sattley. By the 1870s, Irish were settling the area

around France Ranch, near Marble Hot Springs Road. A Catholic church was built about 1½-miles from the cemetery in 1874. For more on this cemetery, check out the Sierran, May 11, 1970, vol. 2, No. 1.

Cemeteries Part 2 - (Cont. on Page 8) —

Attn. Members & Guests!
**SIERRA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2021 PICNIC**

Sunday, Sept. 12 at Noon
Tin Cup Diggins Park
Downieville



*Afternoon Field
Trips:*


Downieville Museum
Goodyears Bar Museum
Helms' St. Charles Inn

SIGN UP FOR
FREE LUNCH
BY Sept. 3

mnourse46@gmail.com

530-414-5161

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Cemeteries Part 2 - (Cont. from Page 6) 



Swiss-Italian marker in the Vinton Cemetery

(Photo by C. Jimenez).

Best known as the Swiss-Italian Cemetery, the Vinton Cemetery is located off Highway 70 in the Chilcoot-Vinton community. The cemetery, which is parched and free of vegetation, is comprised of tight rectangular plots full of family names associated with Plumas and Sierra counties. Genascis, Dottas, Pasquettis, Ramellis, Grandis, Maddelenas, and Fillipinis are just some of prominent families in the cemetery. Of the over 370 deceased in the Vinton Cemetery, more than 80% are Italians from Switzerland.

The headstones have oval porcelain portraits of the deceased on the front, which is a unique defining detail. Some headstones have an interesting bas-relief design of a wheat basket and, on the back, what might be the stonemason's signature.



The Pensa headstone and bas-relief on obelisk

(Photo by C. Jimenez and J. Kennedy).

Sierra Valley's Swiss-Italian immigrants were from the Ticino district of Switzerland and were a major workforce in the dairy industry in the early 1900s into the 1930s.