

# The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

## A Summer Vacation Memory

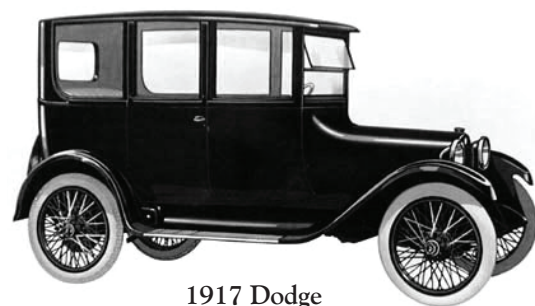
Written by Harvey Hogan Jesser on Saturday, July 17, 1926

Courtesy of his granddaughter, Betsy Baker Webb

W

e, that is, Parepa, Harvey, and the two girls, Lucile and Doris started our summer vacation Saturday morning with the Colbersens and plan to spend most of it in the Yuba and Feather River country. We left Oakland at 3:30 A.M. and caught the 5 o'clock ferry\*; stopped a short while at brother George Jesser's place near Vacaville then headed east via Sacto., Auburn, Grass Valley and Nevada City where we visited with the Colps, (friends of Colbersens). Very warm today. Our next step was Goodyears Bar, a ghost town on the Yuba River located at the foot of Goodyear Creek; elevation here about 3000 feet. The 49ers reported this creek to be so rich in gold bearing gravel that the miners could walk along the banks and pick pea sized nuggets from the stream bed; well Stanley C. and I hiked up the creek for 2 miles but the best we could get was a color or two – just goes to show that some people have all the luck – anyway we stayed here Sat. night Sunday and Monday and caught a few rainbow trout in the river then left Tuesday morning for Gold Lake via Downieville and Sierra City.

Our route followed the north fork of Yuba River, a beautiful, scenic road (though narrow in places) to a few miles above Sierra City – thence a detour or two over the mts. for a hard 10 or 12 miles along the Sierra Buttes, a jagged range with peaks up to nearly 9000 feet. There was still a lot of snow in the canyons on the north side of the mts. We drove by Gold Lake, (elevation 6335 feet), a part of the Feather River system, to our camp to be at Lakes Center; a spot centrally located to the 20 or more lakes and with good camping facilities; so, we set up our tents – then went fishing in nearby Grassy Lake – no luck - - Wed morning, hiked to Long Lake (a mile-long lake at the foot of Mt. Elwell), the water was clear and cold; Stanley C. caught some nice brook trout. We went again in the evening and I got 2 eleven-inch rainbows. On Thursday Stanley and I went to Bear Lake and caught a nice mess of Eastern Brook trout – just to keep the cooks busy. Bill Williams and Hess came in to camp Thursday night from Salmon Lake



1917 Dodge

where they had been for several days. The wind blew hard here Wed. and Thursday; nights cold with frost in the mornings. On Friday we all went to Salmon Lake, a nice 7-mile drive. While Parepa, Lily C. the girls and Stanley Jr. picnicked ashore we men went out in a boat and caught a mess of rainbows; we were just returning the boat that we thought belonged to MR LUSK, but it turned out that it belonged to a MRS THOMPSON who evidently heard that some fishermen were using it; she saw Williams and COLBERSON still in it; while she was nearing the water's edge she fell headlong into a puddle of mud; after clearing her eyes and especially her mouth of most of the dirt, she proceeded to tell WILLIAMS WHAT she thought of him or anyone else who would use a stranger's property without permission.- The argument was pretty much one sided after she could talk without blowing mud, as the boys decided that silence was their best way out. That ended our Salmon Lake fishing trip, so we spread a nice picnick (sic) lunch in one of the Lusk cabins; our mileage from Oakland thus far is 203 miles and 3 cases of tire trouble.

Saturday morning we broke camp for Lake Tahoe via Grey Eagle, Blairsden, Reno and Truckee; a fair dirt road most of the way and paved for 12 miles from Reno to Verdi. A few miles before reaching Reno, we saw what appeared to be auto and wagon tracks, and what looked like water was dried salt and alkali, all that was left of an ancient lake. The surface was smooth as a paved highway, but clouds of white dust followed every traveling auto especially if the cut out

A Summer Vacation Memory - (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

Jan Hamilton, President	Michelle Anderson, Director
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Susan Hopkins, Secretary	Chris Stockdale, Music at the Mine
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If you have any suggestions or comments, feel free to contact any board member or email at [info@sierracountyhistory.org](mailto: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 Spring/Summer 2022

The Kentucky Mine Museum and Park is scheduled to open on May 28, 2022, after a two-season closure due to Covid 19 and the flooding of the museum. All repairs have been performed on the museum floor, the entire room has been repainted, and the collections have been moved back in. Hours of operation will be 10 am.-4 p.m., 7 days a week. It will be exciting to visit the museum to see its new layout of treasures.

On April 1, 2022, our curator, Melissa Brewer, returned to start her work on the Sierra County map restoration and preservation project at the Sierraville School. A description of the map project is included in this issue of the Sierran. SCHS is grateful to Melissa's father-in-law, Joseph Jocks, for building the humidification tanks needed to process the maps. Following completion of the map project, Melissa will concentrate her focus on opening the museum.

The ore trestle at the stamp mill will be temporarily closed for repairs. Stamp mill tours will continue, but the mill will be accessed at a lower level.

We are happy to report that Chris Stockdale will again be producing the concert series "Music at the Mine," with a fantastic lineup of talent.

We have invested in additional training on the video and audio equipment so more members can facilitate the oral history productions. Our list of interviewees is extensive, and we are excited about building our collection.

The Historical Society has been offered the following items to add to our collection:

- Original produce scale from Sierra Country Store by Chris Bock, SCHS member.
- Neat old photo of the Sierra City flat – Larry Breed, Sierra Country Store owner, found it in his attic.
- Old photo of Watt Hughes – Jon Mendlovitz, antiques dealer from San Antonio. He bought it at an estate sale and wants to donate it to us. Watt Hughes was one of the developers of the Young America Mine above Sardine Lake. He built a family home in Sierra City that is now known as Holly House.
- Turner's Dairy ticket booklet, tickets are good for pints and quarts of milk. "If it is from Turner's Dairy, it is pure." Offered by Russell Turner.

If anyone wishes to donate artifacts to the museum, please consider doing so by contacting our Curator, Melissa Brewer at 530-862-1310.

Please join us at the Kentucky Mine Museum and Park this summer!

Jan Hamilton, President  
Sierra County Historical Society



**Doris Jesser with her students**

was left open. There is a lot of sage brush and barren rock in this part of Nevada; that is, from Beckwourth Pass to Reno, but the latter is a fine town with broad, well paved streets; it is situated in a green valley along the Truckee River on the banks of which we had our picnick (sic) lunch in a little park that looked inviting. Reno has a splendid State College, the buildings of which are constructed largely of red brick, as are many of the business structures and homes.

From Reno we followed the Truckee River to Lake Tahoe where we camped for two days at Meeks Bay, then home via Placerville, Sacto. etc. On the way Bill Williams lost the gas tank from his car (a Cleveland) and had to drive back 2 miles to find it.

Among the interesting places we had seen on our trip may be mentioned Grass Valley, an old -time mining center and now a busy city of about 5000; several deep mines in this locality are among the best producers of the State; Nevada City is another old-time center of mining activity – evidence of considerable decadence here but it still claims about 2,000 people. North San Juan and Camptonville were not much to look at but they still have the glories of the past as does Goodyears Bar which once boasted a population of 3,000, including many pick and shovel Chinese miners who followed the original 49ers and now has just 24 people left. Downieville and Sierra City are both quaint historic old towns where much of the exciting history of the early gold mining days was enacted; at the former town (settled by Major Downie) a bridge over the Downie River leads to the back country and mines beyond it; it was at this bridge, (since restored) that the first perhaps only woman in California was hanged. Most of the buildings – brick and wood along the narrow streets appear to have been there since the gold rush days. In Sierra City the original Wells Fargo building, (a two-story brick) is still occupied and apparently in good condition and according to report the old safe used by them in 1850 is also still in use. The Feather River Lakes Basin region is a favorite retreat for birds; robins being especially tame and plentiful, Jays, juncos and white crowned sparrows also were everywhere around, while in the pines and poplars great numbers

of creepers and woodpeckers were seen. We could hear one of the latter hammering away in a dead pine every morning at day break.

We all arrived safely home; the Colbersen's car performed very well and even our old 1917 Dodge looks like it will do at least one more vacation trip.

\*The ferry boat that we took was the Rodeo – Vallejo auto ferry that's on a half hour schedule.

Note from Betsy Baker:

Doris Jesser was my mom; she had turned thirteen a couple months before this story. In 1935, in the midst of the depression, she got her first teaching job in Alleghany. There she met George Baker, who worked in the 16 to 1 mine. They eloped to Reno in April 1936. She had to leave her teaching job because married women were not allowed to continue teaching.

## Cy Rollins, His Life and Times in Sierra County

By Mary Nourse

Cy Rollins has spent most of his life in Sierra County, exploring, building, learning from the land, and sharing his knowledge with others. He arrived in Indian Valley in June of 1939, just before his sixth birthday. His dad was a gold miner who moved the family and their belongings across the Yuba River on a 10-foot square raft to their homesite. Their house was really a 16' by 24' WWI army tent set on a platform that had walls extending up for four feet. Access to their place was via Flying Dutchman, a kind of aerial cable car that was operated hand over hand on a cable that spanned the river. It was the only means the family had to cross the river at that spot, even in bad weather.

Life in Indian Valley was arduous for Cy's family. His dad earned about \$4-\$5 a day working at mining. He would take his findings to John Costa at the grocery store in Downieville where he would garner \$28/oz. Gold was valued at \$32/oz at that time, but Cy pointed out that the merchants had to make a living, too. Cy's mom raised rabbits for food; they didn't have their own chickens because his dad didn't like them. Cy's dad supplemented the family diet by hunting deer and making venison jerky to hold them through the winter. They had goats for meat and milk and Cy's mom canned peaches and apples which they stored in a root cellar. She used a product called Water-Glass to preserve eggs in gallon jars\*. Cy described the substance as gelatinous, about half as thick as Jello, and said it kept the eggs fresh all winter.





Cy Rollins at Goodyears Bar Schoolhouse Museum. He will welcome SCHS members during their annual picnic on September 11, 2022. Details to follow.  
Photo by Scott Mathieson

In 1939, the kids from Indian Valley went to school in Camptonville. Cy remembers that young Frank Pendola told his dad that the two-room school was in danger of closing because of low enrollment. There were only three students, and they needed seven to stay open. Pendola said he would give Cy's dad a job in exchange for sending his children to school there. Cy's family had five kids, and four of them were of school age, so the children were enrolled and they attended Camptonville School for each season which ran from Easter to Thanksgiving. They would walk to the top of Depot Hill where they would be met by a car which would drive them the rest of the way. Cy was in second grade and his oldest brother was in fifth when they started school in Camptonville. The Rollins kids also went to school for a while in Goodyears Bar and had Mrs. Sydney Strand as a teacher. She always had soup on the stove and free canned milk supplied by the government. During World War II, fur was quite valuable, so Cy and his brothers trapped animals in the winter and sold them to pay for the school clothes they bought through the Montgomery Ward catalog. Each boy had about seven trap lines, with which they caught raccoons, foxes, bobcats, ringtail cats, and even skunks. Some days they caught none, but a good day might yield three or four. One time Cy caught seventeen skunks at once that were burrowed in a hollow log. Since he knew skunks are cannibals, after killing the first one, he would sling its carcass into the log to lure the others. In his trapping days, Cy was sprayed many times. His dad wouldn't let him come home smelling of skunk, so he learned a technique to deal with the odor. He always carried matches with him, and he would make a fire of dry willow leaves and stand in the smoke to counteract the

smell. Most of his spare time was spent outside, hunting and trapping, and in winter, sledding and making snowmen and igloos. On inside days he occasionally assembled model airplanes.

Cy described Downieville as thriving during his childhood, and said people would dress in their Sunday best to go pick up their mail. The town had 2 stores and 4 bars, and there was lots of socializing at community potlucks and dances. Once a circus even came to town: "When I was a young fella, the circus come to town, they had a tent and everything down here in the plaza (where the community hall now stands) and they had an elephant. You know, you wouldn't think you'd see an elephant in Downieville, but I've seen an elephant here. It was a regular little circus!" He also talked about an incident that involved an oil drum and some potatoes: "Sy Fischer had the store on the corner where the bar is now. In fact, another little funny story I like to tell about is, in 1939 in the fall, I found a 50-gallon drum full of oil in Indian Valley by the river. My dad took it up to Walt Ellsworth for \$5. So, then my dad come, we had a 1930 Chevy car with the old fenders that come out on it. And my dad came up to Sy Fischer's there and we bought a hundred pounds of potatoes and a case of canned milk. And, on the way home down where the old toll bridge is just below Coyoteville, the potatoes fell off from the fender. We had to go quite a ways in those days {to turn around}, the roads were very narrow and we had to go quite a ways down and we passed a car. And when we got back there, there was about enough potatoes left for one meal. The guy had run off with the potatoes."

Another food-related incident happened when Cy was newly married. "My dad hunted bear quite a bit and we used to eat 'em. You know back in the early days there wasn't many butcher shops here. In fact, I got married in 1957 and I told old John [Cassinelli] the butcher down here when they had the butcher shop down here that I had just gotten married and I would get my meat from him. And he was about half blind and couldn't see very good, so I said, 'Well, John, I'll take 2 pounds of hamburger.' And I took the 2 pounds of hamburger home and looked at it and it was green. The next Saturday I went to the Roseville Auction and bought myself a cow and butchered it." Cy has been raising his own meat ever since.

SOURCES: Oral History Interviews of Cy Rollins

April 30, 2009, Mrs. Perry's class at Downieville School  
June 30, 2021, Mary Nourse at Goodyears Bar Schoolhouse, with Scott Mathieson

## KENTUCKY MINE MUSEUM RENOVATION

If you think of museums as dark, stagnant places, you'll revise that image next time you visit the Kentucky Mine. The hasty removal of exhibits and artifacts, necessitated by last summer's plumbing malfunction, created a classic lemons-to-lemonade scenario. Sierra County hired a contractor to polish the concrete floor, then historical society volunteers stepped up to manage the renovations. It was the perfect time to brighten the walls and reimagine the displays. SCHS members prepped the room, and caretaker Bill Davey painted it, assisted by his wife Brooke and both his son and grandson. Corri Jimenez (our very own architectural historian) and Kentucky Mine Curator Melissa Brewer redesigned exhibit placement, the Sierra County Road Crew helped with the heavy lifting on move-in day, and community members helped redo the cases. We hope you'll stop by this summer to see your favorite old artifacts showcased in a fresh background.



Mary Nourse, Jan Hamilton, Corri Jimenez  
& Pam Owens

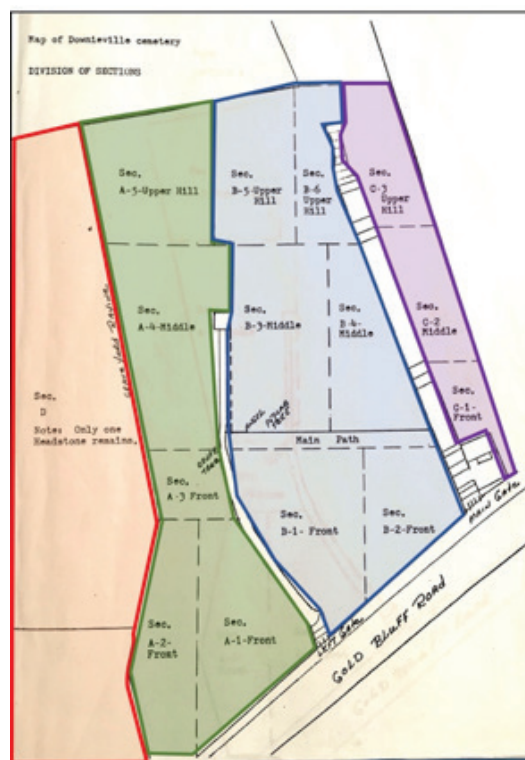


Rich Nourse & Jan Hamilton

## History and Preservation of Downieville Cemetery

By Corri Jimenez

History shapes us... the past influences our present and our future. Cemeteries are cultural landscapes that beautifully tell complex, tangled stories about what cemetery aficionados call "dead spaces." In these serene settings, the deceased "speak" to architectural conservators and inspire them to properly preserve the historic monuments.



Downieville Cemetery Map,  
Provided by Historian Lee Adams

The historic landscape of Downieville Cemetery is divided into four sections, designated as A-D. They run horizontally from Gold Bluff Road up the hill. Section D located west of the ravine, was the pauper's graveyard, and only one headstone still exists there. (See map). The sections are divided by pathways into quadrants. The gravesites in the sections are practically layered on each other, forming a hodge-podge of graves from different periods. Older headstones were typically made of wood,

The symbolism or iconography on headstones can address a person's age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, occupation, religious preference, place of origin, marital status, family relationships, and military service. One unique icon is a beehive connected to the Free Masons. Fraternal groups are represented by initials, such as the "AOUW" (Ancient Order of United Workman), "KSHT-WSST" (Royal Arch Mason in the York Rite Degrees of

Cemetery Preservation - (Cont. on Page 6)



Freemasonry), and the "IOOF" (International Order of Odd Fellows). As common symbol is of a handshake; the distinct sleeves shown indicate that one hand belongs to the deceased, and the other is the hand of God. Another favorite image is of a hand with a pointing index finger. When the finger points up, it indicates the individual has gone to Heaven, but a downward pointing finger represents the maker choosing to take the life of the departed. Harps on headstones appear for individuals of Irish descent, military shields designate veterans, and sleeping lambs mark the deaths of children. Weeping willows, gates, urns, angels, roses, or flowers—are all typical icons on headstones.

The Downieville Cemetery is a "who's who" of the county and the community. One of its early burials was that of Fred Cannon who was stabbed during an altercation with Josefa "Juanita" Segovia on July 5, 1851 (see Sierran, Winter 1970). In the 1980s, former Treasurer/Tax Collector Marian Lavezzola, researched the lives and deaths of about 20 people, including her own family members who owned the St. Charles Hotel. One tale she uncovered was the tragic death of little Johnny Baskin Goodfellow in 1856. During a photo session, the young boy drank cyanide of potassium solution mistaking it for a glass of water. He expired in 16 minutes. Historian/County Supervisor Lee Adams has continued Mrs. Lavezzola's legacy and research of the deceased. He worked on the Sierra County Pioneer Cemetery Historic Survey, and he even does historic graveyard tours at Halloween.

For more about Downieville Cemetery, visit [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). To search a particular person, try <https://cdnc.ucr.edu>. The Sierra County Pioneer Cemetery Historic Survey is a treasure-trove of information and is available for purchase at the Kentucky Mine Museum giftshop. All of the Sierra County Historical Society's Sierran newsletters are online at <https://www.sierracountyhistory.org/newsletter-the-sierran>.



Left: Marble headstone and footstone of James Corcoran with Harp icon; Right: Marble headstone of William Meyer with Hand of God. Photos by Corri Jimenez

### About the Author:



Corri Jimenez is a historic preservation professional with over 20 years' experience. She learned cemetery conservation while living in Maryland, and now shares some of her tips with us: "It is important to be familiar with the historic materials and use what we call in preservation, the 'gentlest means possible.' For example, do not ever use bleach to clean headstones because it is an acid, which will deteriorate stone. It causes it to "sugar," thus degrading it and its engraving. Synthetic brushes are harsh on headstones, so always use soft, natural bristle brushes. Cathedral Stone Product's "D2" is a biological solution that removes stains, moss, and lichen. When cleaning, always have a lot of water available and do it in the summer so the stone dries completely. When resetting a headstone, always use stainless-steel pins. Iron pins rust when water touches them, causing the stone to spall. Repairing stones is a complex process, so I recommend you consult a professional architectural conservator for advice in choosing proper repairing techniques and products since you want to avoid causing future damage to the headstone."

If you want to learn more about cemetery preservation, you have a rare opportunity to learn from an expert. On Monday June 20, architectural conservator Jon Appell will be offering a workshop at the Downieville Cemetery from 9:00 to 3:00 as part of his 48-state tour. We are fortunate that our local cemetery was chosen to represent California. This FREE event is sponsored by the Sierra County Historical Society. You will learn to properly clean and reset headstones. Pick up a brush and join us! For more information, see [www.48statetour.com](http://www.48statetour.com).

*"I believe that in each of us there is a small  
piece of history...  
Together we write the book of time."*

*-Svetlana Alexievich*



Downieville Cemetery,  
Monday June 20<sup>th</sup>  
9am to 3pm

Come to the Cemetery! Learn hands-on skills to preserve headstones with Cemetery Conservator, Jonathan Appell

Sponsored by the Sierra County Historical Society and the 48StateTour ([www.48statetour.com](http://www.48statetour.com)).  
For more information on this event, contact Corri Jimenez ([corri.jimenez@yahoo.com](mailto:corri.jimenez@yahoo.com)).



## SUMMERFEST AT THE MINE 2022

The Kentucky Mine opening on Memorial Day weekend will be followed a few weeks later by the grand-opening celebration, Summerfest. This annual community event will be held on Sunday, June 12th from Noon to 4:00 PM, hosted by Sierra County Historical Society and the Music at the Mine concert series.

Non-stop entertainment will feature illusions by a strolling magician and face painting by a professional make-up artist. Authors will be on site to sign their books related to Sierra County's history, and docent-led mine tours will be offered at 1, 2, and 3 PM. This fun-filled afternoon is free except for BBQ burger/ hotdog meals. (Adults \$10/Kids \$5).

The climax of the afternoon will take place in the amphitheater where Josh Logan, the aforementioned magician will stun and amaze the crowd. Next, One-Eyed Reilly will take the stage to perform a lively concert of classic Irish tunes and up-tempo contemporary folk-rock songs with a Celtic flair. An ice cream sundae bar, fresh popcorn and lemonade will be available for concert goers. Summerfest is supported by Sierra City's business commu-

nity and underwritten by a generous grant from Sierra County Arts Council. Everyone is welcome to attend: locals, tourists, "tweeners" and whoever else might be in the area.



### Kentucky Mine Amphitheater

Sierra City, CA

Saturday, June 25th • 7:00 PM

**The GOLDEN CADILLACS w/ Dust in My Coffee**

• Guitar driven Rock n' Twang •

Saturday, July 9th • 7:00 PM

**ACHILLES WHEEL w/ guest Kyle Ledson (solo)**

• Psychedelic Rock & Americana Roots •

Saturday, July 23th • 7:00 PM

**RED DIRT RUCKUS w/ Half Glass Honky Tonk (feat. JONNY MOJO)**

• A Raucous & Joyous Musical Stew •

Saturday, August 13th • 7:00 PM

**86 PROOF w/Caltucky**

• Boot Stompin', Barn Burnin', Rock n Grass •

Saturday, August 27th • 7:00 PM

**THE GOOD BAD w/ Kyle Ledson & the Broken Compass**

• Progressive Bluegrass and Beyond •



Tickets \$30.00 • Students / \$15.00 • Kids 10 and under FREE

On-Line tickets available at [www.sierracountyhistory.org](http://www.sierracountyhistory.org)

Information / Questions / Concerns

Call Chris Stockdale: (530) 277-6408 / [cstockrook@gmail.com](mailto:cstockrook@gmail.com)

## CHECK OUT OUR SUMMER ACTIVITIES

## SCHS OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

# The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

THE SIERRAN

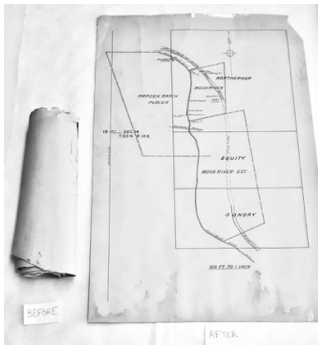
Spring -Summer 2022

## Preservation of Historical Maps

By Melissa Brewer

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Sierra County Historical Society recently collaborated with Sierra County to relocate and preserve a collection of the county's historical maps. The process involved relocating the maps from the courthouse in Downieville to the county's archival room at Sierraville School. The county purchased specialized materials for the project, and in April, SCHS curator Melissa Brewer used a humidification process to flatten and properly store these important documents. The result is 800 properly preserved maps that are safely stored for future use. Some of these include maps from court cases in the 1900s.



A map shown before and after the flattening process

## VIRGA

Reviewed by Mary Nourse

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f you like historical fiction and love Sierra County as much as I do, then have I got a book for you! Ned Purdom's debut novel VIRGA is the saga of A.P. Chapman, one of the first settlers of Sierra Valley. Dissatisfied with his dead-end job as a warehouse clerk in Connecticut, Chapman saw the California Gold Rush as a means to improve his family's lot. In 1849 he bade farewell to his young wife Carrie and their two small boys, promising he would "be back soon enough and we'll be together forever." It was actually twelve long years before the family was reunited for good. While A.P. sought his fortune in California, Carrie singlehandedly raised the children and cared for her aging parents. Chapman soon became disillusioned with the tenuous life of a prospector and threw his heart and soul into ranching. Virga is a long-distance love story chock-full of Sierra County history that I think you'll enjoy. Ned Purdom will join fellow authors Bud Buczkowske, and Laura Thomas for book-signings at the Kentucky Mine Summerfest on June 12, noon-4:00.