

# The Sierran

— A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society —

## A LITTLE HISTORY ON THE SURVIVAL OF SIERRA COUNTY'S HISTORIC MAPS

By Tim Beals



Justice of the Peace and later Superior Court Judge Henry Neville pictured with legal secretary Ruth Rutishauser in front of Sierra County's law books circa 1923. Photo courtesy of Sierra County Courts.

The Sierra County Courthouse attic in 1973 was an open attic, with steel I-beam trusses clearly defining the interior, and it was laced with blown-in insulation and asbestos-wrapped steam pipes for heat to the offices. A narrow deck was in place on the east side of the attic where paint and all sorts of supplies were stored, and that was about it. Probation Officer Bud Hafey occupied basement office B-2 of the courthouse after Air Pollution and Civil Defense Coordinator Earl Withycombe tendered his resignation. County Clerk-Recorder-Auditor Georgie Peterman utilized the first floor of the courthouse today occupied by the clerk-recorder and the road department accounting staff. Prior to the jail renovation, Georgie's office (now Heather Foster's) also extended toward the jail where

there was additional office space. The then Sierra County Assessor Bill Bishop and County Treasurer-Tax Collector Marian Lavezzola used the remaining first floor of the courthouse. This space is now occupied by information services, auditor-treasurer-tax collector, and sheriff's offices. The present assessor's office was occupied by Superintendent of Schools Clarence Bateman and his staff.

In late 1973 shelves were constructed along a portion of the east wall of the attic to accommodate boxes of files from the clerk-auditor-recorder. Plant maintenance supplies were relocated to the basement boiler room area, and anyone going into the attic for files would exit with a dry

## 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
Corri Jimenez, Vice-President	Christie Brzyszc, Alternate Director
Susan Hopkins, Secretary	Chris Stockdale, Music at the Mine
Bill Copren, Treasurer	Gerald Gates, Webmaster
Scott Mathieson, Membership	Melissa Brewer, Museum Curator
James Connolly, Director	Mary Nourse, <i>Sierran</i> Editor & Events Coordinator
Susie Schoensee, Director	Joanie Engel, <i>Sierran</i> Copy Editor and Assistant to the Curator

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

Votes were cast for Sierra County Historical Society (SCHS) board members, and resulted in re-election of Bill Copren, Susan Hopkins, Corri Jimenez and Michelle Anderson. Christie Brzyszc was elected to the alternate position.

Before the Kentucky Mine Museum opening, curator Melissa Brewer worked at Sierraville School to flatten and house 800 of the county's maps. They still need to be archived and other maps that were too large to flatten need to be housed. We are hoping that we can enlist the services of an intern to complete this project.

At the Kentucky Mine Museum and Park, the museum was reassembled and we opened to the public on Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend after our two-season closure. Joanie Engel returned to assist Melissa for the season. She not only provided us with excellent tours, but in her free time, helped Melissa in completing displays and working on other projects around the park. We had 2,354 visitors this year; 1,102 of those went on tours. Sales amounted to \$16,821.

On June 20, 2022, Corri Jimenez organized a full-day workshop at the Downieville Cemetery, demonstrating skills to preserve headstones, with cemetery conservator, Jonathan Appell, from Connecticut. He was doing a 48-state tour, with this being his only stop in California. Twenty-five people attended, five of whom have interests in cemetery districts throughout the county. Several traveled here from much farther away.

This summer, Chris Stockdale once again organized a very successful Music at the Mines concert series, made possible by the use of the amphitheater at the Sierra County Historical Society and County of Sierra's Kentucky Mine Park.

Matt Heilmann, videographer, conducted a training session for five people on the new video equipment. With this training, a renewed commitment was made to schedule oral history interviews.

With a presence at the Sierraville School, SCHS participated in the Art+Ag Trail in late September. We made contact with a large number of people, sold inventory from the museum store, explained the process used to flatten the maps, and displayed some of the county maps that had been restored.

Sierra County Visitors Bureau invited SCHS to participate in the second annual Downieville Halloween History Tour. We helped with a history about the Downieville Grocery Store and led a historical highlighting of the lives and deaths of 30 souls in the Downieville Cemetery.

Several members of the board attended a community meeting on November 3 at the 1852 Downieville Methodist Church for input about preserving the historic building, since the Methodist Church officials will not be using the church in the future due to the lack of congregation members. There were 46 people in attendance and many ideas were shared, which the pastor will report back to the bishop and cabinet.

We also had a presence at the First Annual North Yuba River Day on November 5, 2022 in Downieville. The event was a production of Sierra County Arts Council in partnership with the San Francisco State Sierra Nevada Field Campus, celebrating the North Yuba River.

As a reminder, the time to renew your membership to SCHS has arrived and we would appreciate your contribution in the envelope provided with this publication.

Happy Holidays,  
Jan Hamilton, SCHS President



SCHS secretary Susan Hopkins quilting at the Art+Ag event.  
*Photo by BJ Jordan*



Jan Hamilton and Lee Adams at Downieville Cemetery.  
*Photo by Corri Jimenez*

cough as the dust was terrible. This condition went on until 1974 when Fred Rixey was hired to build a plank walkway and a small office at the extreme south end of the attic to house the probation office. There had been an ongoing debate about whether the community services function should be in the probation office or in the sheriff's department, and the solution was to create a new workspace to house both community services and probation. Probation Officer Bud Hafey and Community Services Officer Cecil Bailey occupied the new space. Cecil eventually quit to become a deputy sheriff. I believe he was hired by Sheriff Sam Doyle or possibly by Turk Johnson.

During renovation, the door to the attic was relocated to the stairway landing, allowing easier access into the courts. "Walking the plank" (from the entrance door at the stairway all the way to the south wall of the attic to access probation) was a real treat. It was long and dusty, had no handrails, and was like a suspension bridge bouncing up and down. Local kids were found a few times in the attic bouncing up and down on the "plank." When District Attorney Ben Barton retired, the board of supervisors decided to separate the county's legal offices and hired their first county counsel. Fred Rixey was again employed to expand the offices at the south end of the attic, this time to accommodate a new county counsel and secretary. Glen Durfee was the first county counsel, and he moved to the newly constructed offices within weeks of accepting the offer of employment. His wife Sarah Schidler donated secretarial duties while the county advertised for a full-time secretary for him.

The small section of shelves that were constructed became a "store-all" for just about everything imaginable. Most prominently stored were rolls and rolls of maps, file boxes, law library books, assessor's books, treasurer's books, some of the deed books, some of the large official records books, and court records. Not only was this a fire-trap, but the records were stored in such a manner that one would have to wade through an inch of dust and all sorts of papers to find things. The decision was made to construct a more

permanent wood floor in the attic. This led to expansion of the cramped offices that already housed probation and county counsel. Keep in mind that welfare and other social service departments, headed by former Social Services Directors Bud Thomason and then Connie Bennett, were in the current probation offices. Mental health and behavioral health departments were not yet in existence. There was discussion (more like rumors) about moving social services to the attic and relocating probation to the social services office space.

In preparation for the construction of the floor (again Fred Rixey Construction was hired) and to expand office space for probation, community service, and county counsel offices the attic had to be cleaned out. I was new in the planning department at the time; the public works director was Bob Wartburg, and the county engineer was John O'Dell. One morning, a road department dump truck had been driving around the backside of the courthouse and hauling off debris and "trash." I wandered over to see what was going on and observed law library books, boxes of files, and maps being tossed out of a second floor opening into the back of the road department dump truck. The materials were destined to be taken to the burn disposal pit at Ramshorn and ultimately burned at the transfer station. I threw a fit and asked the operator, Howard Main, to stop. I jumped into the back of the truck to find historic maps, old law library books, and records being loaded for hauling off as garbage. The large assessor books, treasurer-tax collector books, and lots of maps were staged on a ledge on the second floor, about to be dumped into the back of the truck. I appealed to Bob Wartburg and Georgie Peterman, and they agreed to stop further loading and disposal. This was a complicated situation because there was a lot of political infighting between two courthouse "camps," and I found myself in the middle of that contentious situation in trying to save the records. After a few meaningful discussions with both "camps," all agreed to stop and allow us to restore and retain the records. Most of them were returned to the attic in which they had previously been stored. That area was isolated from the pending



construction, and they were put under lock and key. I have no way of knowing what records were lost, but to my best recollection, only one truck-load of material was dumped. Right after I was able to stop the disposal process that had been underway, I drove the county car, an old '64 Plymouth called the "Grey Ghost" and went to the burn pit at Ramshorn. I found that the load which had been dumped was all but lost. I retrieved a few maps from the embers, but not much could be salvaged since ongoing burn pits were fairly efficient and productive in their day. But the good news is that a lot of records were salvaged and protected. What you see available now in various county offices is the result of catching this unfortunate process of disposal in its early stage. It also reflects the commitment over the years by several department managers to take control of and protect the books, maps, historic records, and other material (brands, awards, etc.) that comprise Sierra County history. And yes, Heather Foster and Laura Marshall, ...you were not even born at that time, and Bill Copren was somewhere in the woods logging, but you all were destined to be in the position to protect and preserve these records for future generations. That is my story. Please don't refer to me as ancient...just old!

#### About the author:

Tim Beals is Sierra County's Director of Public Works, Roads, and Transportation as well as Director of Planning and Building. He has worked for the county since 1973 and probably wears more hats than anyone else you can name. As you can tell from this article, he has a passion for preserving our precious heritage and isn't shy about acting on his instincts.

## Downieville's Waterous Hand Pumper Restoration

By Corri Jimenez

If this 1895 Waterous hand pumper could talk, it would have one heck of a story to tell in its over 100 years! The Waterous Company is a fire pump manu-



The Waterous Hand Pumper in Downieville.  
*Photo from National Park Service, Historic American Building Survey, 1934.*

facturer established in 1886 in St. Paul, Minnesota. Originally, this piece of equipment was associated with the Downieville Volunteer Fire Department, established in 1860. The department was made up of a chief engineer, president, first & second lieutenants, secretary-treasurer, and a committee of three representatives from the two hose companies in town—Mountain Torrent No. 1, located at Main Street and Nevada and the Cataract Hose Company No. 2, where the present firehouse garage stands near the Downieville Community Hall. Each of these companies had 32-35 firemen as volunteers and had a "hand hose cart and 125 feet of hose." The volunteer fire district held annual balls to raise funds to purchase the equipment that is still in use to this day.

The Downieville Volunteer Fire Department (DVFD) quenched its first fire in 1860 when the Catholic Church burned where the current belltower stands in the plaza. The town saw a major fire loss on February 21, 1864, when a fire broke out at H.A. Fordham's butcher shop and within minutes engulfed the four-story International Hotel and Downieville's Chinatown, home to 1,000 Chinese. The Mountain Messenger reported that not a wooden structure escaped in the business portion of the place, except three fire-proofed buildings including the 1853 Craycroft building and J.W. Brown hardware store.

In 1960, the hand pumper was moved out of Downieville and was obtained by William Anderson of the Ponderosa Ranch, where it was a stage prop for the TV series Bonanza (1959-1972). While it was located in Dayton, Nevada, where Anderson lived, it was displayed at a brothel. In 2021, Duke Klement, who was tracking its history, obtained it from a buyer in Calgary, Canada, and it has finally come back to



California. Duke is currently restoring the historic pumper with authentic materials and by next year plans to have it ready to be pulled by draft horses. Whether it is simply being transported to its next destination or on show at parades and events, this magnificent old pumper is sure to steal the show.



1895 Hand Pumper once used by Downieville's volunteer fire department.

*Photo by Duke Klement.*

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

Part 2-Continued from The Sierran, Spring/Summer 2022  
By Mary Nourse

**B**y his own admission, Cy “worked on pretty near every house in Downieville at one time or another. I was a builder and carpenter here in town.” As a teenager, he helped build the Downieville Community Hall, and as an adult replaced rotten foundations under numerous structures, including the Methodist Church. According to Cy, Downieville had a tremendous rat problem at one time, and while redoing structures he encountered rat droppings as deep as four feet inside of walls. In an interview with Downieville School students in 2007, Cy shared bits of his vast knowledge about local structures. The kids were hoping to squeeze ghost stories from him, but he debunked some of their theories explaining away mysterious noises as bats in attics. He also told some of the kids about the histories of their own houses, along with a lesson about the flumes used by the placer miners. “A flume is a box that they box the river into. It has a bottom and it has two sides and they put the whole river into a flume, a ditch like, only it's made of wood. And

they ran it all the way from Downieville to Goodyears Bar and below. There was ditches that went from Ramshorn pretty near to Indian Valley that had flumes. But in the winter, the river would get so high, it would tear them back out and they'd either have to rebuild them or, or maybe they already mined that section that's so that they could get into the bottom of the river. They had Chinese pumps that pumped that water out, so that they could get down and mine the gravel. It didn't beat the lumber up too much; there was a lot of this lumber around at that time that they built a lot of these houses out of. It was plank construction. There was no studs in, it was just boards that they put up and then they put boards the other way. The boards, some of them, were anywhere from 18 to 24 inches wide.”

Cy also constructed new houses; his first was a small 20' by 12' cottage in Ramshorn that cost just \$325. Besides working on private residences, Cy was deeply involved with community structures. He was instrumental in the creation of the Kentucky Mine Museum and Park in Sierra City in the 1970's. He put a new foundation under the stamp mill and installed a sprinkler system for fire suppression. He got all 10 stamps running, as well as the 6' Pelton wheel. He opened the adit so that visitors could walk a fair distance into the mine, worked on the park's water system, built a replica of a miner's cabin with hand-split cedar shakes, and constructed the 250-person amphitheater.

Cy never liked gold mining, but his carpentry skills were called upon in 1958 to build a log house as part of a display featuring Sierra County's gold collection at the Pomona County Fair. He was also asked to transport the valuable nuggets to southern California. So, with the gold packed in powder boxes in the bed of a 1950 Air Force truck, he and his wife Dianne set out at 4:00 a.m. to make the trip. They east headed toward Reno, but ran out of gas near Sierraville. (Cy recalls that in those days teen boys at home were inclined to syphon gas from other people's vehicles.) He was able to get 5 gallons, but that wasn't enough to get to Reno;

Cy Rollins - (Cont. on Pg 6) —

a kind highway contractor gave him enough fuel to make it. Then, when they were traveling south on Highway 395 they encountered a sandstorm. Fortunately, Cy and Dianne made it safely to Pomona with their precious cargo.

In the 1970's, before Downieville High School had a woodshop, Cy taught a carpentry class for students through the Regional Occupation Program (ROP). He and his dozen or so students "went around and built things for people." They rebuilt chicken houses, sheetrocked rooms in the basement of the courthouse, and fenced the Goodyears Bar Cemetery. On rainy days they worked at the old Goodyears Bar schoolhouse, making sawhorses or having team competitions in properly laying out building plots. Three of Cy's students went on to become contractors.

Cy has a passion for local history, culture, flora, and fauna. His collection of mining, Native American, and Chinese artifacts are prominently displayed at the Goodyears Bar Schoolhouse, built in 1862 and dedicated as a museum in 2004.

\*Water-Glass is a sodium silicate solution that supposedly sealed the pores in the egg shells to stop them going bad.

**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

## Sierra County Historical Society Picnic

By Mary Nourse



CHS held its annual picnic on September 11 in Goodyears Bar, despite threats of extreme heat, smoke, and nasty gnats. A pleasant breeze blew in just in time to mitigate those issues, so our members and guests were able to socialize in comfort on the grounds of Mark and Tammy Helms' St. Charles Hotel. After a delicious catered lunch, Mark led a tour of the 1864 hotel, which replaced the original 1852 building. Then it was on to the schoolhouse museum to view Cy Rollins' tremendous artifact collection and Wells Witmer's amazing scale-model gold mill. Local history authors Ned Purdom (Virga) and Shirley Dickard (Heart Wood) were on hand to sell and sign their books. A trip to the local cemetery rounded out the day. Visitors meandered amongst the graves, and Corri Jimenez demonstrated proper cleaning of headstones. Attendees of the event declared the entire day a resounding success and look forward to visiting another Sierra County historic site next year.



Ned Purdom and Cy Rollins at the Goodyears Bar Schoolhouse Museum.

*Photo by Mary Nourse.*



## Bud Buczkowske 1927-2022

“As long as my name is spoken, I will be walking among you.” So began Remember Me, Remember Me, Bud Buczkowske’s sixth pictorial history book based on photos, notes and letters of early Sierra County pioneers. Bud had a “storied” career in every sense of the word. He once told of a Chinese proverb which says, “If you sit in one place long enough the whole world will pass you by.” That happened for him while sitting on his front deck in Alleghany where he lived with his first wife Joe-Ann for twenty-five years. He said that just in taking the time to say hello, he met many descendants of those who once lived and graced our towns. Then this prolific writer went on to record their stories in books.

Bud’s own story is an impressive one. He began writing in the 1960s and published numerous math and history books. He was a teacher and a playwright. His play about the heavyweight boxing champion Ezzard Charles, AKA the “Cincinnati Cobra,” premiered in Downieville at the Yuba Theater. After moving to Portola with his second wife and editor, Ann, he developed Charles’ life story as a one-act play/one-man show called “The Quiet Champion.”

A fun detail about Bud’s own life is that he was accepted as a member of the Lakota Sioux tribe in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The translation of his Native American given name is “He who travels with a good heart.” This goodhearted man served as president of Sierra County Historical Society from 2004-2011. During his tenure he was a regular contributor to the Sierran, he increased the size of the board of directors, and he helped save the Kiern-Lagomarsino cabin from the bulldozer. Bud is sorely missed, but we speak his name often and so are reassured that he still walks among us.



*Photo Courtesy of Sierra County Arts Council*



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED