

# The Sierran

✦ A Publication of the Sierra County Historical Society ✦

## “Early Schools in Sierraville”

Written by Horace (Harry) G. Adams and Contributed by His Nephew

*A Note from Contributor, Gary Adams:*

*The following story was extracted from the Sierraville “Pony Express” section of the 1937 “Echo” Yearbook of the Sierra Valley Joint Union High School District and typed exactly as originally written. My Grandfather, William Albert Adams was the author’s brother. Will and Harry’s parents, John Charles and Mary (Miller) Adams settled in the valley in 1863. The names shown in brackets were added by me for clarification.*

**M**y brother, Will, [William Albert Adams] and I started to school in Sierraville in 1879. My sister [Lydia (Adams) Newman] was much older and was practically through school at that time. We lived a little over two miles from school and either walked, skated, or skied as there were no busses, bicycles, autos nor airplanes. There were no telephones, electric lights, photographs or radios. There was in the neighborhood of 120 going to school from little ones, learning their A B C’s to young men and women. It was no unusual sight to see some of the boys with mustaches. We were taught ten grades ranging from A B C’s to philosophy, book-keeping, algebra, and even telegraphy. There were no janitors. The boys took care of the school house. Every student had a slate in conjunction with a copy book and all the other books. A student could get a certificate to teach by passing an examination at Downieville. There were quite a number who passed. There were also some very bright business men who got their education here. Two in particular stand out, the late Fred Blinman and H.E. Quigley who became County Auditor and was classed as one of the best in Superior California. My first nine years, Mr. E. L.

Case was my teacher.

He was a stickler for discipline and he certainly had it. I had but four teacher in all: Mr. Case, Mr. Power, Mr. Spinks, and Miss Mettie Myers. Miss Myers was also a school mate. Another school mate taught in Sierraville. She taught music also and I took music from her. Mr. Spinks afterwards come back and was one of our first High School teachers. The school I started to was built in 1875. In 1888 the school was so crowded that a new school house was built for grammar grades. It stood close to the north east corner of the fence running east and west. This school was burned in 1893. The old school house was then raised and as much more added to it with a basement under it. It was used as a primary and grammar school until the attendance was small enough for one school teacher. It was used then as a joint High and Grammar School. In 1929, that school burned, we then erected our present modern school. My three children went to this school. Aileen never went to high school. John had other ideas. Mabel graduated in 1927, and I hope some of my grandchildren will attend this school. I was grammar school trustee off and on for fifteen years. I was trustee clerk of the board in 1926. We had to have a teacher. I got several applications with their pictures, among them Paul Roscoe’s. Paul’s picture was taken on a horse. It was a good picture of the horse.



# ➤ 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](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 & INSITUATION .....	\$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 Mahtieson, Membership Chair  
PO Box 260, Sierra City, CA 96125

## President's Message Spring/Summer 2023

The Kentucky Mine and Museum opened for the season on May 27, 2023 and will remain open every day until Labor Day. Our hours are from 10 am to 4 pm, with fascinating guided tours at 11 am and 2 pm.

The Historical Society is once again sponsoring the Music at the Mine series, produced by Chris Stockdale. The schedule is included in this issue, and I encourage you to take part in a visit to the mine for an evening of entertainment.

Summerfest at the Kentucky Mine is set for Sunday, June 11, noon to 4:00 pm. There will be a BBQ, entertainment, book signings by guest authors, as well as mine tours at 1:00, 2:00 and 3:00.

Sierra County has just received an award of the National Scenic Byway Grant for the repair of the Kentucky Mine trestle and portal project. Until this project is completed, the trestle must remain closed which necessitates rerouting the tour entering into the stamp mill. Visitors and docents will be thrilled to have it repaired, so the natural flow of the workings and the processing of the ore through the stamp mill may once again be fully experienced.

Our Board voted to sponsor Musica Sierra's pursuit of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places of the Catholic Church/School in Loyalton. The funds will be provided for preparation of the historical context argument in support of this project.



*Loyalton School/  
Catholic Church  
building built in  
1879.  
Mary Nourse Photo*

The Historical Society voted to sponsor the Sierra County Land Trust's grant application for the California Creative Corps Grant of which the main purpose is to pay local artists for their work. We will assist with historic research support.

Our annual picnic has been set for Sunday, September 24, 2023 at 1:00 pm. This year's event will be at Lucy Blake's Lemon Canyon Ranch in Sierraville.

The Oral History project is humming along. During the winter, Mary Nourse and I interviewed Don Costa about his family, his exploits as a kid growing up in Downieville, and his experiences with gold mining. Fran

Burgard and Mary have been transcribing current and older recordings. Fran completed the second part of the Cy Rollins interview in which he discusses numerous artifacts in the Goodyears Bar Museum. Mary just finished the text of a videotape of Margaret Lambert, done in Mary's classroom at Downieville High School in 1983 when Mrs. Lambert was ninety. The OH Committee plans to make this gem and others accessible on the internet.

We are recruiting volunteers to assist with all areas in support of our efforts. This year, we have scheduled a training day on Saturday, June 3 at the Kentucky Mine Museum for potential docents and desk/gift shop staff.

Due to the deterioration of the Kentucky Mine sign, Bill Davey, our caretaker, designed and built a fantastic replacement. Thank you, Bill, for an excellent job!



*Sign Created by Bill Davey  
Mary Nourse Photo*

Jan Hamilton, President  
Sierra County Historical Society



I am on my fourth term as High School trustee and have not missed very many of the high school events. This seems to be a catching climate as Miss Christensen and various other teachers can testify. My wife [Annie Dora (Hansen) Adams] and brother's wife [Tina Garfielda (Fowler) Adams] also fell victims to the climate as they were both teachers.

I could ramble on for sometime, but I know that "Chrissy" will use her blue pencil on this any way. From an old "Hayseed"—H.G. Adams

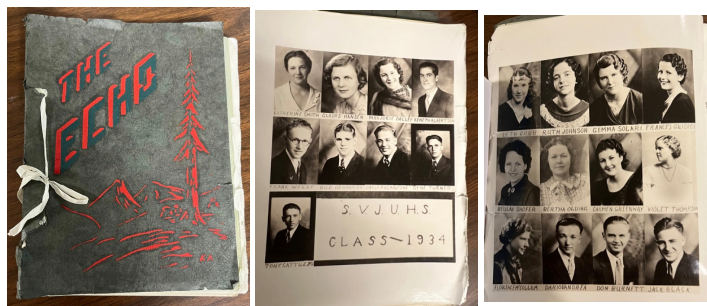
## ECHOS From the PAST

By Mary Nourse

*"The wondrous sound is echoed on forever."*

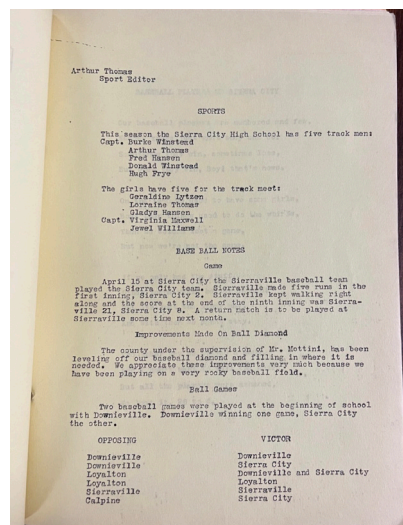
This lofty sentiment by poet John Keble appeared on the title page of the 1934 Sierra Valley Echo, and still today the words of students echo through the pages of their yearbooks. During my tenure as advisor for the Downieville High School Echo in the 1980s, I thought it odd that Loyalton's yearbook shared the same name. Now, decades later, I get it. The Echo was once a county-wide endeavor, a collaboration by five schools: Loyalton, Sierraville, Forest, Sierra City, and Downieville. The yearbook dates back to the 1920s. In 1935 "Echo Staff" was listed as one of the activities for seniors. It must have been quite a feat to gather photos, artwork and copy from all the schools and produce such a comprehensive publication. The books were done on typewriters and the photos were pasted individually onto each page. Not only did the Echo feature the usual team pictures, individual headshots, song dedications, lists of accomplishments, and horoscopes found in high school annuals, but it also included some exceptional essays recounting local history. According to Gary Adams, whose father grew up in Sierraville, the Echo in Sierra Valley included only two schools in 1939: Sierraville and Loyalton. Today, the Echos are scattered around the county, housed in schools, libraries, and the Loyalton Museum. They are precious resources that capture snapshots of the local culture one year at a time. Let's take a peek at a couple of those years.

## 1934 ECHO CONTENT



*The 1934 Echo had a paper cover, tied with a silk ribbon.*

The content of the 1934 yearbook was a rich compilation of essays, poetry, jokes, book reports and original stories. One student analyzed the character of Madame DeFarge from *A Tale of Two Cities*, and another wrote a full-page essay entitled *Calculating the Wave Length of a Tuning Fork*. There was a history of Sierra City, lots of sports coverage, and essays in Spanish, French, and Italian.



## BASEBALL PLAYERS OF SIERRA CITY

Our baseball players are numbered and few,  
 Nobody knows just what they can do.  
 Sometimes they win, sometimes lose,  
 But when they win, Boy! That's news.  
 On the team we used to have some girls,  
 Boy! Then things used to do the whirls,  
 Then we seldom lost a game,  
 But now we're not the same.  
 If we only had the stuff,  
 Other teams would holler enough!  
 But it's just the other way,  
 And with them we can't stay.  
 The other day we played a game,  
 And I don't want to tell the score,  
 But all the players were ashamed,  
 We lost it, 28 to 40.

Another student poem addressed the issues faced by adolescent girls.

### EDUCATION OF A COED

She learned to love,  
 She learned to hate.  
 She learned a car  
 Could carry eight  
 She learned to smoke,  
 And learned to tell  
 Wood alcohol  
 By taste or smell.  
 She learned to coax,  
 She learned to tease,  
 She learned a new way of cooking cheese.  
 She learned to neck.  
 And break a date  
 She's ready now to graduate.

The Sierra City students dealt with the reality of attending a tiny high school with grace and humor:

### FRESHMAN CLASS

Freshman President.....Donald Winstead  
 Freshman Class Roll.....Donald Winstead  
 Freshman Editor.....Donald Winstead

"The one and only Freshman has been struggling along to keep up the pace with the sophomores, who are not far ahead of him. This Freshman is known as Don Winstead, who started school here in "26." He graduated from the Alleghany Grammar School in 1933. Finally, he has ended up in Sierra City and is the smartest one of his class."

In Forest a student chronicled a memorable class picnic:

### AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT

The Forest High School planned to go to Gold Lake for a picnic. All of the students, including the teachers, started in a large truck. We thought we had selected an efficient driver, but later he proved untrustworthy. Nearing Downieville, by Cannon Point, another large truck was coming

very fast towards us. Unfortunately, we were on the wrong side of the road and going at a fast rate of speed. We crashed! Glass and hub caps flew in every direction. Everyone was frightened and screamed loudly. As soon as possible the drivers stopped and began arguing about who was in the wrong. A traffic officer soon learned about the accident and rushed to the scene. He blamed our driver, naturally, and sent him to jail, charged with reckless driving. No one got hurt seriously, just a few slight scratches from flying glass. Upon reaching Downieville, we found a nice spot and ate our lunch. The traffic cop got us a driver whom we could trust and he drove us home. Even though we had an accident, all arrived home tired but happy.

By Lois Davies

### ON RITES OF PASSAGE

The 1934 Sierra Valley Echo also talked about the struggles and persistence of the graduating students:

"In September of 1930, nine unsophisticated, frightened rose buds matriculated in the S. V. J. U. H. S. at Loyaltown, as freshmen. They were; Frances Guidici, Beulah Shofer, Florence McCollum, Beth Cobb, Violet Thompson (nee Nelson), Ruth Johnson, Jack Black, Dario D'Andrea and Clarence Shelton. As has always been the custom, a few of the upper class-men tried to mistreat us. But it was not long before the "Freshies" had proven that they couldn't be out classed. At the initiation we proved our sportsmanship and it was not long before they regarded us with equal consideration...And now having grown into large rose-buds, we hope to someday blossom into full blown roses. We regret that the time has come when we must leave these halls and go forth to fight the hard battles of life which are in store for us."

In contrast to the hard-won status of the seniors was the angst of that year's freshman class expressed by vice-president Barbara Terwilliger:

"Yes, we are going places, trying to make this old school a bigger and, better one. Right now, we're licking our lips and gloating over next year's Frosh.

Echos ... (Cont. on Pg 5) ➡



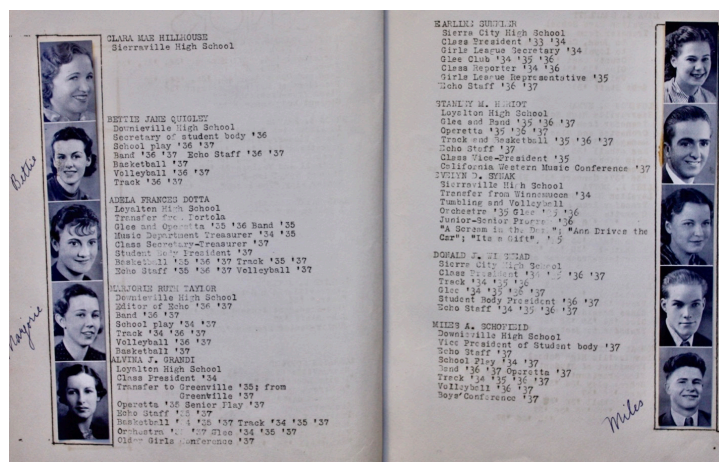
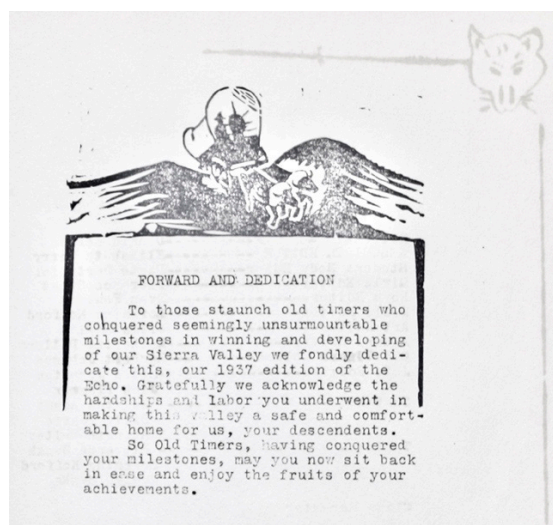
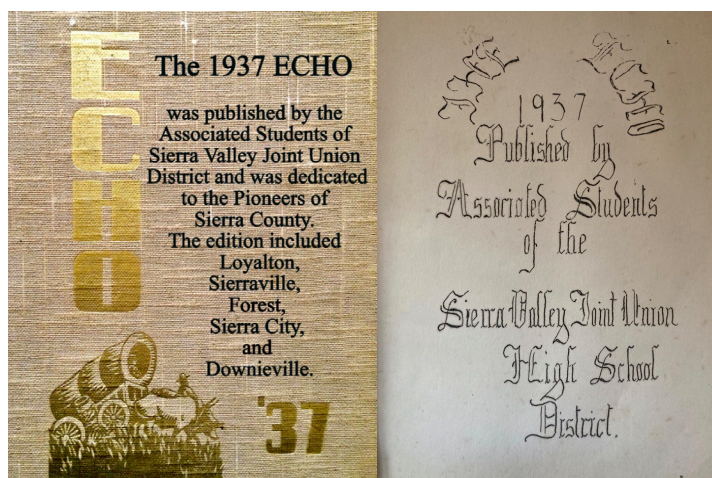
I know we shouldn't, but after all, revenge is sweet.

Fortunately, none of our students have left us this year and our class is bravely carrying on. We must admit we haven't been badly persecuted after the first few months, and now we are treated very well. We haven't had any class business to speak of this term, but soon we promise a meeting in which we will think up means of torture for the next high school students."

The rite of passage for incoming underclassmen was apparent all over the county. The independent Downieville Echo included a social section that reported on the freshman initiation in 1939: "The girls were made to wear boxes covered to represent Life-Bouy soap and the boys, much to their disgust, were compelled to curl, and put ribbons in their hair, and wear short skirts." It continued: "One evening in September, we took them downtown in front of the St. Charles Hotel, where they performed, not only for the high school, but for the whole town as well. One of the most unpleasant of these performances was the onion race. The participants crawled on their hands and knees and rolled a peeled onion along the street to a certain point with their noses. There were red noses and a free flow of tears when this race finally came to an end. The winner was Robert Jarvis." The freshmen included: Betty Lavezzola, Wilma Mottini, Patricia Quinn, Mary Jean Rixey, Bert Elliott, Billy Westcott, Robert Jarvis, and Reynold Mottini."

By the time I was hired as a fulltime teacher at DHS in 1983, the customary freshman initiation had been extended to new faculty hires as well. The students were allowed to decide how the inductees dressed, so I was assigned a Tinkerbell costume and my very attractive colleague was designated as a cavewoman. No onions were involved in our initiations, but we were required to push raw eggs up the school hill with our noses.

## 1937 ECHO CONTENT



*The 1937 class pages featured students from all the Sierra County High Schools.*

Echos ... (Cont. Next Issue)



## Kentucky Mine Amphitheater

Sierra City, CA

**Saturday, June 24th • 7:00 PM**

**Broken Compass Bluegrass (feat. Kyle Ledson) w/ 86 Proof**

• Progressive Bluegrass & Beyond •

**Saturday, July 8th • 7:30 PM**

**MUMBO GUMBO**

• 30th Anniversary Party •

**Saturday, July 22nd • 7:30 PM**

**Boot Juice**

• Rockin' Americana / Cosmic Rock n' Roll •

**Saturday, August 12th • 7:30 PM**

**The Island of Black & White**

• Dynamic Mash-up of Rock, Blues, Funk & Reggae •

**Saturday, August 26th • 7:00 PM**

**Merrygold w/ Juliet Gobert**

• Whiskey Soaked Americana / Angelic Female Vocalists •



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Information / Questions / Concerns

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## THE LEMMON FAMILY

*By Bill Copren*

**W**illiam C. and Benjamin F. Lemmon arrived in Sierra County early in 1850 and 1851, respectively. They quickly gave up gold mining and moved to Sierra Valley following A. P. Chapman. W.C. and B.F. Lemmon built the first house in the Sierraville area in Randolph. They established a ranch there reaching east to what was to become Lemon (sic) Canyon. Quickly they established their headquarters at the mouth of the canyon where it opens up into Sierra Valley.

John Q. Lemmon, a younger brother, joined the 4th Michigan Calvary Regiment of the Second Calvary Division to fight in the Civil War. John fought the battles leading up to the capture of Atlanta, Georgia and eventually followed Sherman in his march through Georgia. John was captured during 1864 and spent the last year of the war in the deadly Southern prisons of Andersonville, Georgia and Florence, South Carolina.

John left the east and arrived in Sierraville at the Lemmon Ranch shortly after the war. He weighed 95 pounds, having been starved in prison for a year. While recovering from the trauma of the war he became involved in the study of botany and began the discovery of numerous new western plants that had not been identified. His studies eventually led to his marriage with Sarah Plummer and their combined study of native plants in California, Arizona and New Mexico.

## New Owners of Native Daughters' Hall

*By Karen Galan*

**T**he Native Daughters' Hall, located at 318 Commercial Street, Downieville has been gifted to the Sierra County Arts Council, the building's fourth owner since 1864. After their first meeting spot burned, the Odd Fellows Organization had the hall constructed. In addition to the upstairs meeting space, the lower level housed a kitchen, two bathrooms and an area capable of holding dinners/luncheons. In 1952 two organizations, the Native Sons of the Golden West (Parlor #92) and Native Daughters of the Golden West (Naomi

Parlor #36), purchased the hall which they each used for their respective meetings. Occasionally, the two parlors joined together to hold social gatherings. Then in 1964, the Native Sons sold their half-ownership to the Native Daughters. In addition to their monthly meetings the Native Daughters held two annual fundraisers that were open to community members – the springtime Mad Hatter Tea and an ice cream social in late summer. For several years the Golden Rays Senior group used the lower level for their meetings. Then in the late 1990's, Sierra County contracted to house the local public library in that space. The library will remain there under the new ownership.

With interest in Native Daughters declining and upkeep becoming more difficult, the sisters of Naomi Parlor felt that it was time to donate the building to an active organization that would not only have the capability to maintain it, but also to be able to use it for more events to benefit the community. To quote the Arts' Council Executive Director, B. J. Jordan, "The hall will add to the cultural assets of Sierra County and be put to use for a variety of public cultural events." The lovely, historical building will be officially known as the North Yuba River Hall. Since members of Naomi Parlor #36 have voted to close the parlor permanently, in addition to gifting their building to the Arts Council, they have also transferred their responsibility for maintaining the Downieville Museum to local Native Sons, Parlor #92.



*Native Daughter members, Earlene Folsom and Karen Galan hand over the keys to Sierra County Arts Council board member, Feather Ortiz and Executive Director B. J. Jordan.*

*Photo by Rudy Jackson*

# The Sierran

Sierra County Historical Society

P.O. Box 260

Sierra City, California 96125

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



## **CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!!!**

### **TRAINING DAY AT THE KENTUCKY MINE**

Learn to give stamp mill tours or  
to run the museum/gift shop.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 3**

Docent Training: 12:00-4:00

Museum Training: 12:00-1:30

Call (530) 862-1310 to sign up.

For more information, contact SCHS Museum Curator,  
Melissa Brewer at [museum@sierracountyhistory.org](mailto:museum@sierracountyhistory.org)