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## Administrator's Notes

*by Ralph Gibson, Museums Administrator*

I was born during NASA's Gemini program and was seven years old when Apollo 17, the last lunar Apollo Mission, splashed down on December 19, 1972.

I remember most of the launches, moon walks and splashdowns that were covered. I thought I would grow up in a world where humans physically explored all the planets in our Solar System and beyond. But, of course, that's not what happened. On July 20<sup>th</sup> we'll celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. It happened so long ago that a growing number of people believe that the landings were faked. *How could we have gone to the moon with such primitive technology?*

Of course, they forget we developed the Nuclear Bomb in 1945, the Hydrogen Bomb in 1952, and had been testing and building highly sophisticated missiles, rockets, and planes throughout the 1950s and 1960s. When it came to Apollo, if it didn't exist, we developed the technology needed.

The same can be said of the Transcontinental Railroad. There were engineers who

thought cutting a passage through the Sierras was impossible. Like NASA, if it didn't exist, they developed new techniques and technologies to make it happen.

The Transcontinental Railroad turned 150 years old on May 10. Two months and ten days later, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our first steps on the lunar surface. If you happen to be one of those who thinks we didn't land on the moon, you might as well not believe in the Transcontinental Railroad either.



Construction of Cape Horn section of TCRR

Keeping accurate time on the railroad could mean life or death.

Our archives and collections preserve our County's rich agricultural history—past and present.

Donations today can inform history in the future.

Are you on the Heritage Trail this summer?

## Keeping Time

by Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections

Moving passengers and freight over thousands of miles made accurate time-keeping essential. Timetables governed train arrivals and departures and ensured trains did not collide. Prior to 1883, most towns in the United States had their own local time. On November 18, 1883, railroads began using a standard time system with four time zones: Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific. All clocks were synchronized within each zone.

In 1891, a massive train collision near Cleveland, Ohio killed nine people and the following investigation revealed that the watch of one of the engineers was 4 minutes late. The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad appointed Cleveland jeweler Webster Ball to investigate time keeping issues. Ball developed a system for ensuring that all railroad timepieces were precise. A commission was appointed to adopt a universal set of

timekeeping standards by all railroads. By 1893, the General Railroad Time-piece Standards were in effect. Watches that fit this description became known as railroad watches.

Not all railroad watches were railroad approved and watch requirements differed. The railroad industry referred to the watches as “standard watches,” since they met the railroad’s time service

standards. Conductors were not the only ones required to carry watches. Many railroad regulations required engineers, switch yard controllers, foremen, flagmen, and porters to carry them.

Until the 1970s, when the watch mechanism was replaced with a battery, all watches were mechanical. Actual jewels, or stones, were used in watches to reduce friction and wear in the watch mechanism.

Today, train traffic is controlled by satellite communication and a centralized traffic control system. Wristwatches replaced pocket watches for railroad staff, but pocket watches remain very popular among collectors.



Workmen in front of a locomotive. Location unknown. Watch chains visible on front pockets of three men on the right side of the image. PCM Archives

There are several railroad style watches in our collection. None of them have a provenance indicating they were used by someone working for a railroad company. However, they fit the typical requirements for a railroad watch in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century: they are large size 16 and 18 American made watches with open face dials that include the seconds dial, and a minimum of 15 jewels.

Waltham Watch Company and Elgin Watch Company were both used as early as the 1860s and 1870s as railroad standard watches. The Waltham Company was founded in 1850. Until the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most watches were hand made. The company focused on producing watches at a lower cost using interchangeable parts and became the first to mass-produce watch movements on an assembly line. The company went out of business in 1957. This watch (above) has a dial with Roman numerals. It wasn't until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that Arabic numerals became an official standard in railroad watch design.



Elgin, also known as the Elgin National Watch Company, was founded in 1864

and became one of the biggest watch companies in the United States.



Elgin made many railroad grade watches, including their first watch, the size 18, 15 jewel B.W. Raymond, named after the company's president. Standardized watch sizes allowed customers to purchase internal watch movements separately from the cases and have those fitted later with the design of their choice. The company went out of business in 1964.

The Hampden Watch Company was founded in 1877 in Massachusetts. In 1888 the company relocated to Canton, Ohio, where it introduced the first size 16, 23 jewel movement made in America.



This watch (left) was produced after the merger of The Hampden Watch Company and the

Dueber Watch Case Company in 1923. After the company went out of business in 1927 it sold its machinery to the Soviet Union. Dueber-Hampden watchmakers and other technicians were hired to train Russian workers at a watch factory in Moscow.

Railroad watches became popular with people who did not work on the railroad but appreciated the reliability and accuracy of a well-made watch. This open face railroad style watch with an image of a locomotive, labeled "Century U.S.A.," was made by the Seth Thomas Watch Co. The company was founded in 1853 in Connecticut. They were known for making full-case clocks, as well as tower and street clocks. Between 1884 and 1915 the company manufactured a line of pocket watches.



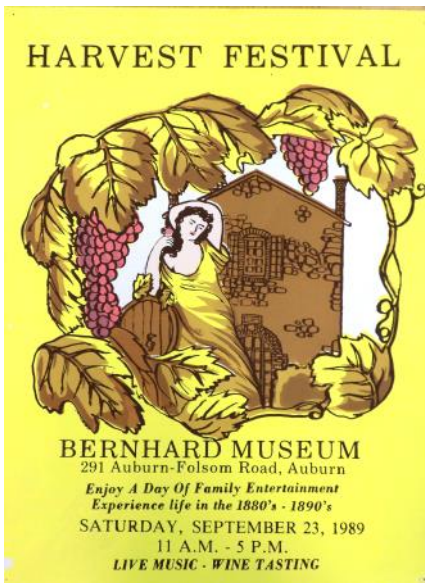
The pocket watches were lower grade watches and most likely not used in railroad service.

# Placer Grown

by Elise McQuaide, Administrative Clerk

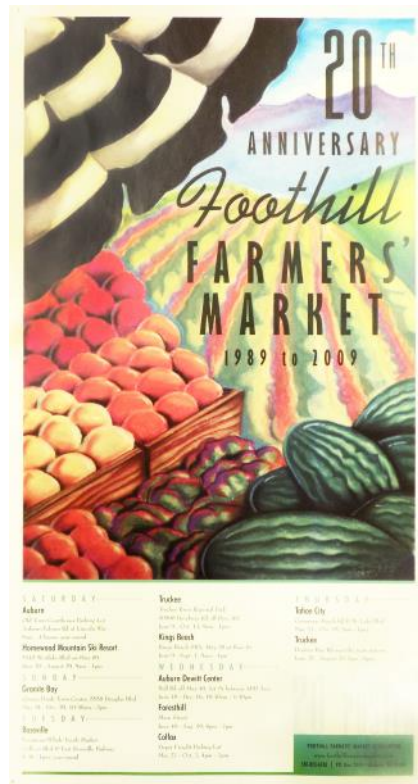
Placer County is home to several festivals and markets focused on the area’s rich agricultural tradition. Many of the posters for these seasonal celebrations have made their way into the museum collections.

This painted poster advertises the Harvest Festival that was once held at the Bernhard Museum. Mr. Bernhard produced wine the first year the family lived on the property, but more than wine, he focused on fruit. Newspaper articles listed the apples, pears, plums, figs, apricots, nectarines, oranges, and peaches that were grown on the property.



This is one of two versions of this design we have and is the most recent to be entered into our collection. No artist is credited on the poster.

Other images celebrating agriculture in Placer County include posters for the Foothill Farmers’ market, several of which feature work by local artist Jan Kapple Klein.



This poster celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the festival (1989-2009). The Foothill Farmers’ market continues to be held today.

Another popular event is the Mountain Mandarin Festival, held every year in November. When the county’s pear crop was destroyed by tree disease in the mid -20<sup>th</sup> century, mandarins became a staple crop. Their popularity continues today, and the Mountain Mandarin Festival

celebrates the local fruit and highlights different orchards through January. Local artists are featured in posters, many recently being done by California artist Larry Hausen.

These vibrant posters are bright and colorful, inviting visitors to look forward to bounty available through the winter.



As the “fruit basket of the nation,” not only does the museum document the history of the county’s farmers, but the constantly growing portfolio of the art celebrating them as well.

## News from Placer County Historical Society

by April McDonald-Loomis, President

April400@wavecable.com (530) 823-2128

The Historical Society is heading into the relatively quiet summer phase. There will not be a general Dinner Meeting until October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please also note the July Board Meeting will take place on the 11th, due to the 4th of July holiday. If anyone has any suggestions for speakers or topics for our meetings, please contact me or any board member.

Art Sommers recently came down from his new place in Oregon and brought with him more of his extensive Placer County Collection. It is hard to describe how important this one man's hobby has been to documenting our county's history. Photos, postcards, and other paper documents – a treasure trove! Another big collection that has come to the Museums through the Historical Society is the Haswell-Birdsall Collection.

The Haswell-Birdsall families have a long history in Placer County. Frederick Birdsall was instrumental in setting up the early water system, and also built the first firehouse that is on El Dorado Street today. He used the top floor for the office of his water company. This is a valuable collection that will be of immense use to researchers.

It is donations from people like these that help make our Archives and Collec-

tions Facility such a unique and valuable repository. Next time you are spring cleaning or looking through the attic, keep the museums in mind.

Remember, what might seem “modern” to you and I are now hitting the “historic” mark! Were the 1960s really that long ago? I checked with Bryanna Ryan, the Supervising Curator and former Archives Curator, for some guidelines. She said there is no specific date. The Archives look for items and photos that specifically relate to Placer County events, people or places. Ryan states that the key question to ask about any artifact is whether it holds any historic or informational value to future generations. Contemporary photos, for example, the erection or removal of a building or a modern-day parade would be considered for preservation.

For photos, the Archives will either accept direct donations, or the images can be scanned and the originals returned to you. If you have items you are unsure about, call the Archives at 530-889-7789 or Collections 530-889-7705.

Nothing much is happening on the Salmon Statue for Central Square; the advocates have withdrawn the original proposal as it didn't fit the space. They

will most likely return to the Historic Design Review Committee with another proposal.

The Society is still lobbying against the statue, not on artistic principle, but rather the fact that salmon have no viable historical significance for the Auburn area. To put this statue in such a conspicuous public space would be misleading to the public. The Central Square, as laid out by the Streetscape Committee several years ago, is meant to feature people and activities that are symbolic of Auburn. The Committee has been very careful in selecting the tiles that grace the Square, making sure they are historically symbolic or significant. This statue does not fit the criteria.

Don't forget to start collecting some “not so valuable/not so historic/not so informative” items for the raffle in December!

April McDonald-Loomis

## Placer County Historical Organizations

### Colfax Area Historical Society

Chris Miller  
(530) 346-8599  
[colfaxhistory.org](http://colfaxhistory.org)

### Donner Summit Historical Society

Bill Oudegeest (209) 606-6859  
[donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

### Foresthill Divide Historical Society

Sandy Simester  
(530) 367-3535  
[foresthillhistory.org](http://foresthillhistory.org)

### Fruitvale School Hall Community Association

Lyndell Grey  
(916) 645-3517

### Golden Drift Historical Society

Sarah Fugate  
(530) 389-2121

### Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard  
(916) 747-1961

### Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Richard Yue  
(530) 346-7121

### Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen  
(916) 645-3800  
[laamca.org](http://laamca.org)

### Lincoln Highway Association

Bob Dieterich  
[bobd@iname.com](mailto:bobd@iname.com)  
[lincolnhighwayassoc.org](http://lincolnhighwayassoc.org)

### Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford  
(916) 663-3871  
[ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html](http://ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html)

### Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Kaitlin Kincade  
(916) 774-5934  
[roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

### The Museum of Sierra Ski History and 1960 Winter Olympics

David C. Antonucci  
(775) 722-3502  
[tahoemuseum.org](http://tahoemuseum.org)

### Native Sons of the Golden West Parlor #59

Dave Allen (530) 878-2878  
[dsallen59@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsallen59@sbcglobal.net)

### Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association

Mario Farinha  
(530) 269-2412

### North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Marnie Carr  
(530) 583-1762  
[northtahoemuseums.org](http://northtahoemuseums.org)

### Old Town Auburn Preservation Society

Lynn Carpenter  
(530) 885-1252

### Placer County Genealogical Society

Toni Rosasco  
(530) 888-8036  
[pcgenes.com](http://pcgenes.com)

### Placer County Historical Society

April McDonald-Loomis  
(530) 823-2128  
[placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

### Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Fran Hanson  
(530) 878-6990

### Rocklin Historical Society

Hank Lohse  
(916) 624-3464  
[rocklinhistory.org](http://rocklinhistory.org)

### Roseville Fire Museum

Jim Giblin (916) 538-1809  
[rosevillefiremueum@gmail.org](mailto:rosevillefiremueum@gmail.org)  
[rosevillefiremuseum.org](http://rosevillefiremuseum.org)

### Roseville Historical Society

Christina Richter  
(916) 773-3003  
[rosevillehistorical.org](http://rosevillehistorical.org)

## July

- 8** 6:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Board Meeting, Parks & Recreation Office, 5460 5th Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-3464
- 9** 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Board Meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 11** 2:00pm Placer County Historical Society Board Meeting, Rose Room, Auburn City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 906-4901
- 15** 6:00pm Forest Hill Divide Historical Society Business Meeting, Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530) 367-3535
- 17** 6:00pm Loomis Basin Historical Society General Meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871
- 25** 7:00pm Placer Genealogical Society Meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library, Auburn. (530) 885-2216

## August

- 6** 9:00am Historical Organization Committee Meeting, Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn.
- 12** 6:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Board Meeting, Parks & Recreation Office, 5460 5th Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-3464
- 13** 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Board Meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 21** 5:30pm Historical Advisory Board Meeting, Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500
- 21** 6:00pm Loomis Basin Historical Society General Meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871
- 22** 7:00pm Placer Genealogical Society Meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library, Auburn. (530) 885-2216

Heritage Trail in July & August**July 6th, 10am-4pm**

Placer County Museum, Gold Country Medical History Museum, The Joss House Museum & Chinese History Center

**July 13th, 10am-4pm**

Maidu Museum & Historic Site, Roseville Telephone Museum, Roseville Historical Society Carnegie Museum

**July 20th**

Wheatland History Museum (10-2pm)  
Lincoln Area Archives Museum (10-4pm)

**July 27th, 8am-12pm**

Fruitvale School

**August 3rd, 10am-4pm**

Colfax Area Heritage Museum, Golden Drift Museum, Donner Summit Historical Society Museum.

**August 10th & 11th, 9:30am**

Donner Summit Hike

**August 17th, 10am-4pm**

Truckee Old Jail Museum, Truckee Railroad Museum

**August 24th, 8am-12pm**

DeWitt History Museum, Placer County Museums Archives and Collections Facility

**August 31st & September 1st, 10am-4pm**

Foresthill Divide Museum



PLACER COUNTY MUSEUMS

101 Maple Street  
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