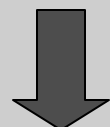


# THE PLACER

## A Voice of History

July-Aug. 2010  
Volume 13, Issue 4

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### Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

The Heritage Trail event on August 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> is gaining momentum. At times we feel like we're on a runaway train. Fortunately, the brakes will be applied on August 9<sup>th</sup>! All the museums are FREE and open from 10:00 to 4:00 on this weekend. This year the tour looks to be better than ever with most museums offering new and fun activities. You will be able to enjoy delicious snacks along the way including Indian fry bread, fresh baked cookies, churned ice cream, and shortcake cooked on a wood burning stove. Don't forget to pick up your Get Up & Go card at the first museum you visit. After having it stamped at four different museums you will be eligible to win one of three grand prizes. Activities include Indian games and crafts, sack races and 19<sup>th</sup> century games, gold panning, historic town tours, granite splitting demonstrations and much more.

You won't want to miss this 3<sup>rd</sup> annual event, so plan to attend now. This is a terrific opportunity to invite friends and relatives to tour the county museums. Make it a *Family Tradition*. Bus tours are available on both days. For the

most up to date information go to [theheritagetrail.blogspot.com](http://theheritagetrail.blogspot.com) or call 530-889-6500.

We want to thank this year's sponsors including the County of Placer, SureWest, Capital Public Radio, and the Native Sons of the Golden West, Auburn Parlor #59.



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## Hobos and Tramps

Ralph Gibson

Hobos and tramps rode the rails decades before the Great Depression. In fact, the term “hobo” may have originated just after the Civil War. But once the Great Depression hit, the number of hobos and tramps increased dramatically. In 1936, there were an estimated four million hobos and tramps, 250,000 of them teenagers.

The railroad brought many hobos through Placer County. Of note was Charlie Fox who rode the rails from the late 1920s into the mid 1930s. Several times, Charlie either embarked from Sacramento or Roseville to head to Reno or other points east. He wrote of his accounts in his 1989 autobiography *Tales of an American Hobo*. In his book Charlie made it clear that hobos, tramps and bums were quite different:

*There are distinct differences between hobos, tramps, and bums which, due to the limited knowledge and experience of the average person, are unknown.*

*The hobo was a wanderer and homeless vagabond who rode trains whenever possible. The hobo was the forerunner of the migratory workers. The*

*hobo would take most any available work in order to pay his way. The hobo was largely averse to panhandling or mooching and would always offer to work for whatever he was forced to mooch when he was broke.*

*The true tramp didn't ride trains. They walked the highways and byways. They were less prone to work for what they got than was a true hobo. They usually had some kind of a gimmick such as peddling lead pencils, thread, buttons, soap, shoe strings, and so on from house to house. I have seen tramp palm readers, fortunetellers and tramp preachers who would preach you a one-hour sermon for a meal and fifty cents. Those dudes looked the part and knew the Bible by heart. All of them carried a Bible under their arm or in their hand wherever they went. The bum is quite another story, for the true bum is usually a town drunk who seldom if ever gets outside his hometown during his lifetime.*

Charlie goes on to write that most hobos began their journey as tramps, but bums never improved. Of course, all three were lumped into the term “transient” by government officials, law enforcement, and newspapers. Placer County

newspapers followed this dictum in the 1920s and 1930s. The *Auburn Journal* reported on January 4, 1934 that Auburn residents were asked to send transients to Sacramento where the federal government had established shelters – the first clue that transient populations had become a problem in the county. Soon after, on January 13, 1934, the *Auburn Journal* reported that the Board of Supervisors received a note from the government that stressed “stringent restrictions on the use of railroads as a means of free transportation.” The notice requested that warnings be placed at all transient shelters, rail yards and depots.

With the number of homeless and unemployed skyrocketing during the Great Depression, the federal government established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which later became the Works Progress Administration, to help alleviate unemployment levels by creating new unskilled jobs in state and local governments. The Bureau of Transient Affairs was also established to try to track the masses that were adrift without the anchor of a home. For those on the road, life was difficult and dangerous. In *Tales of an American Hobo*, Charlie Fox wrote:

*The key word in the life of any hobo or tramp*

*was survival, for this concept was an integral part of every hour of every day of life on the road. Those who didn't learn the art of survival usually wound up dead or maimed for life.*

*Getting on or off of a moving train was a very dangerous undertaking if you didn't know the right way to do it! Always get on or off the front end of a car. Front means the way the train was going. If you tried to grab or get off the back end of a car and lost your balance or your hold on the grab iron you would most likely fall between the cars and get cut up like hamburger.*

An important part of survival for the hobo or tramp was knowledge. New hobos learned how to hop onto trains or where to get food and shelter from other experienced hobos. Information was a vital resource on the road, so hobos and tramps created written symbols to relate intelligence.

The following symbol means "dangerous drinking water":



This symbol means "kind woman, tell pitiful story":



Aside from symbolism, hobos and tramps also created their own jargon. A "black snake" was a train loaded with coal cars; a "cannonball" was a fast freight train; and "jungle" refers to a hobo camp. Hobos and tramps lived mostly in the shadows of their fellow citizens, coming into the light only when they needed work, a little money, food and shelter. It was a harsh existence, but one that many former wanderers reflected warmly upon. Today, people still ride the rails in an attempt to escape the daily grind of their lives or to connect with those adventurers of the past. Charlie Fox concluded in his book:

*The day of the hobo is gone, perhaps forever. It is logical to assume that a new breed of tramp will evolve out of all this confusion, and when this happens I hope they conduct themselves as well as the old-timers did. Good principles, good morals, and integrity will get you by wherever you go, even though you are flat broke and ragged.*














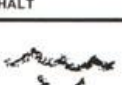







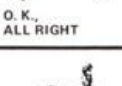




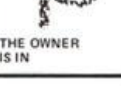
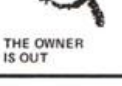

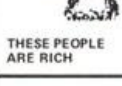

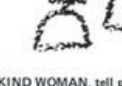
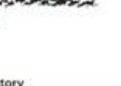















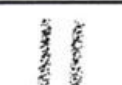
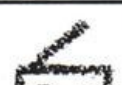





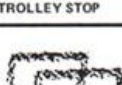




*I would not recommend a life on the road as a panacea for all your worldly problems, but I will say this, if you are a good person at heart and conduct yourself properly, this life will be conducive to achieving a state of mental peace that is seldom possible in the ranks of conventional society.*

I don't recommend life on the rails, at least the hobo method of doing so, but I do think a temporary change of scenery is a good thing. We all need adventure; wandering was an important part of our ancestor's lives; perhaps it's in our DNA. It's why Columbus and Magellan made their famous voyages; it's why we leapt off the planet to explore space and the moon; and it's probably why a 16 year old girl recently had the undeniable urge to sail around the world. Most of us are moored in our homes and communities for long stretches of time. Hobos and tramps pulled up their anchors, opened their sails, and let the wind take them where it was blowing.





# More Hobo Symbols

 NO USE GOING THIS DIRECTION	 THIS WAY	 OR 	 GOOD ROAD to FOLLOW	 ROAD SPOILED, full of other hobos	
 DOUBTFUL	 HALT	 THIS IS THE PLACE	 DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOOD	 THIS COMMUNITY indifferent to hobos	 NOTHING to be GAINED HERE
 YOU CAN CAMP HERE	 FRESH WATER, SAFE CAMPSITE	 DANGEROUS DRINKING WATER	 O. K., ALL RIGHT	 GOOD PLACE for a HANDOUT	 ILL-TEMPERED MAN LIVES HERE
 OR 	 THE OWNER IS IN	 THE OWNER IS OUT	 A GENTLEMAN LIVES HERE	 THESE PEOPLE ARE RICH	
 KIND LADY LIVES HERE	 KIND WOMAN, tell pitiful story	 OR 	 FOOD HERE if you WORK	 RELIGIOUS TALK gets FREE MEAL	
 IF YOU ARE SICK, they'll care for you	 DOCTOR HERE, WON'T CHARGE	 FREE TELEPHONE	 ALCOHOL IN THIS TOWN	 OR  YOU CAN SLEEP in HAYLOFT	
 KEEP QUIET	 HOLD YOUR TONGUE	 BARKING DOG HERE	 VICIOUS DOG HERE	 BEWARE of FOUR DOGS	 EASY MARK, SUCKER
 THE SKY is the LIMIT	 TROLLEY STOP	 GOOD PLACE to CATCH a TRAIN	 THIS IS NOT A SAFE PLACE	 MAN with a GUN LIVES HERE	 BE PREPARED to DEFEND YOURSELF
 DISHONEST PERSON LIVES HERE	 COWARDS, will give, to get rid of you	 YOU'LL BE CURSED OUT	 A BEATING AWAITS YOU HERE	 POLICE HERE FROWN on HOBOS	 AUTHORITIES HERE ARE ALERT
 THERE ARE THIEVES ABOUT	 CRIME COMMITTED, not safe for strangers	 JUDGE LIVES HERE	 COURTHOUSE; PRECINCT STATION	 OFFICER of LAW LIVES HERE	 JAIL



## Museums Intelligence

### Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

It will be a busy summer for the museums. We have the Heritage Trail event on August 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, we will install two new exhibits, manage three Community Education programs, and we are actively recruiting new volunteers for this fall's training classes.

The first exhibit we are working on is an exhibit that will showcase examples of Flapper gowns in our collection as well as fashion accessories. Just who were the Flappers? How were they different than the previous generation of women? Learn the answers to these questions when the exhibit opens in late August! The second exhibit is a Pate Case in the Courthouse hallway where examples of American Indian Cradleboards will be displayed.

We have put out the press release and propped up the signs at the Bernhard Museum calling for volunteers. If you know of anyone who might be interested in volunteering for the museums, please either share their contact information with us or have them call the main office (530-889-6500). We hope to have a large class once again!

### Community Education Program: *The Life of the Notorious Joaquin Murrieta*

Like most of the colorful characters of our past, the life of Joaquin Murrieta is wrapped in legend and lore, making it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Was he the worst bandito to terrorize the gold fields? Or was he, as some believe, a kind of Robin Hood who stole from the rich and gave to the poor? Was he a murderer who was justifiably killed by lawmen? Or was he the inspiration for the fictional character Zorro? If you'd like to learn more about this fascinating character from California's history, please join us on July 10, 2010 upstairs in the Bernhard Museum Winery at 10:00 a.m. for the Placer County Museums Community Education Program: *The Life of the Notorious Joaquin Murrieta*. Alton Pryor, who has written several books and articles on California history, will share the facts and tell some of the stories surrounding this important figure of our past. Mr. Pryor will have a number of his books available for sale after the program.

The Bernhard Museum Winery is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road in Auburn.

### Community Education Program: *Campfire Storytelling*

Campfire stories are fun! Do you remember sitting around a campfire listening to a great story? Whether it's the long, embarrassing story your dad told about your first bicycle accident or the ghost story your uncle told that kept you up all night, stories have been, and continue to be, an important form of communication. For thousands

of years, stories have been told to impart information, teach valuable life lessons, and enhance one's understanding of their culture. If you would like to learn more about the history of storytelling and to hear a few good ol' yarns, please join us on July 31<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 pm on the Bernhard Museum grounds for *Campfire Storytelling*. This Placer County Museums Community Education program is FREE! No ghost stories will be told, so parents are encouraged to bring their children. You may either sit on the grass or you can bring your own blanket or lawn chair to sit on. And yes, we will roast marshmallows and make S'mores!

The Bernhard Museum is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road.

### Community Education Program: *Preserving Figs ~ A 100 Year Old Placer County Recipe*

Please join us on August 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 a.m. upstairs in the Bernhard Winery for this free Placer County Museums Community Education Program. Joanne Neft will not only share her vintage local recipe for preserving figs, but will also demonstrate several dishes that utilize figs, including grilled figs with proscutto. Joanne is the author of *Placer County Real Food: Recipes and Menus for Every Week of the Year*. Her book will be available for purchase after the program. The Bernhard Museum is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road.

For more information about any of these programs, please contact: 530-889-6500.

## Placer County Historical Society News



### President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

A century ago, about the time the Placer County Historical Society had its start, the United States opened the Immigration Station on Angel Island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. For 30 years officials processed an estimated one million persons, mostly Chinese, through what is popularly known as the "Ellis Island of the West."

Your society is joining with the Joss House Museum Association for a second of those so-called "Yue-Otten" miss it trips. Details are still being worked out but the plan is to go on Saturday, Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>. We will travel to Tiburon, take the Ferry to the Island for a tour, box lunch, and return home via China Camp. If interested please call me at (530) 888-7837 or email at [otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net) or Richard Yue at (530) 346-7121 or [richardyue@peoplepc.com](mailto:richardyue@peoplepc.com).

Did you or a relative or friend come through the Immigration Station between 1910 and 1940 or work on the Island? Please share your story.

During World War II, Japanese and German POWs were held there. It was used as a transit station by American soldiers returning from the Pacific and in the 50s and 60s served as a Nike missile base. It became a State Park in 1954 and today is a memorable place to visit.

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Gold made Auburn and Placer County. As Auburn City Historian Loreley Hodkin repeatedly tries to remind folks, the county seat is the

earliest Gold Rush town around that is not part of a park.

One of our spirited members, Richard "Dick" Johnson, is busy ferreting out some of the Gold Rush Day celebrations of the past in the hopes of creating a booklet and a special exhibit.

You can help! We are looking for photographs, memorabilia, clippings, oral histories, any scrap of information and insight we can find. If you can help, please contact me.

A reported 12,000 people crowded Old Auburn on Oct. 1, 1924, for a Gold Rush celebration parade during the city's first gold show some 76 years after Claude Chana first hit pay dirt. "Vehicles were parked half way to Newcastle," recalled one old timer. A special train from Sacramento carried more than 500. The Orleans Hotel was the headquarters with the lower floor converted into a gambling casino. Prohibition didn't stop them from setting up an impromptu saloon on a back street, the late Bill Wilson once reported. City Marshal Chester Gwynn in true Old West fashion sternly warned that City Ordinance No. 86 forbidding shooting in the city would be strictly enforced. Maidu Indian Chief Jim Dick directed a series of native dances. The Whiskerino Club came into being and participated in similar events in various years through 1960.

There were parades with parade queens, Helldorado, a burro race from the Freeman Hotel to Old Auburn and back to Central Square and a Pony Express ride from Ophir to Auburn. One year, as the story goes, the notorious Jack Santo was all set to play the role of "Rattlesnake Dick" until officials learned of his record. Santo was executed in San Quentin's gas chamber in the 1950s.

Who knows, Dick Johnson's enthusiasm over his project, the fact that the price of gold these days is at record levels and the Placer County Museum has a memorable half a million plus gold collection may rekindle a revival of those old fun times.

The late Bob Jetter in fairly recent years had supervised popular one-day gold shows with gold panning demonstrations. "The intrigue about this special metal is always there," said Jetter. And, if you don't already know, you can learn more at the Gold Country Museum in the Gold Country Fairgrounds.

--Michael Otten, [otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

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### Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*Addah Owens, Vice President*

**When:** October 7, 2010

**Time:** 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

**Where:** Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

**Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Stuffed Pork Loin, Roasted Seasonal Vegetables, Green Salad, Rolls and Cobbler Dessert

**Mail Check to:** PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603.

**Program:** Gary Noy, Director, Center for Sierra Nevada Studies at Sierra Community College and Rick Heide, publisher of many books and recipient of the prestigious

American Book Award will present a program on the literature of the Sierra Nevada placed in a historical context, featuring readings from their anthology of Sierra Nevada writing. Selections from the dawn of recorded history until today will be presented including Chief Winnemucca, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, John Muir, Ansel Adams, Robert Louis Stevenson and many more.

## **Placer County Historical Organizations**

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Colfax Area Historical Society  
Ed & Nilda Duffek,  
(530) 305-3209

[www.colfaxhistory.org](http://www.colfaxhistory.org)

Donner Summit Historical Society  
Margie Powell, (530) 432-4015  
[www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org)

Foresthill Divide Historical Society  
Merilee Reed, (530) 367-2430  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Fruitvale School Hall  
Community Association  
Lyndell Grey, (916) 645-3517

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

Historical Advisory Board  
George Lay, (530) 878-1927

Joss House Museum and  
Chinese History Center  
Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

Lincoln Area Archives Museum  
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3470

Lincoln Highway Association  
Norman Root, (916) 483-8669  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)

Loomis Basin Historical Society  
Dot Shiro, (916) 663-3892  
[www.ppgn.com](http://www.ppgn.com)

Maidu Museum & Historic Site  
Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299  
[www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59  
Tom Potts, (916) 412-3910

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association  
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society  
Donna Howell, (530) 885-2891

Placer County Genealogical Society  
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Placer County Historical Society  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Placer County Museums Docent Guild  
Sandi Tribe, (530) 887-9143

Rocklin Historical Society  
Barbara Chapman,  
(916) 415-0153  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Roseville Historical Society  
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

### **Hobo Jargon**

**Barnacle** – A fellow who sticks to one job for more than a year.

**Ghost Story** – A plausible tale told to the housewife to get food or money.

**Nose Bag** – A lunch handed out in a paper sack.

**Paul Bunyan** – A chronic, but none the less interesting, liar.

**Red Ball** – A fast train transporting fruit, good for long rides.

**Town Clown** – A town's policeman.

**Wood Butcher** – A hobo who can do odd repair jobs.

**Zook** – A worn out prostitute

## Calendar of Events

### July

- July 10<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am** Community Education Program: *The Life of the Notorious Joaquin Murrieta* on the second floor of the Bernhard Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- July 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact: 530-367-3535.
- July 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact: 916-652-7844.
- July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.
- July 31<sup>st</sup>, 8:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Campfire Storytelling* on the Bernhard Museum Grounds. Contact: 530-889-6500.

### August

- Aug. 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>** The Heritage Trail! Event runs from 10:00 to 4:00 pm. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact: 916-652-7844.
- Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>, 10:00 am** Community Education program: *Preserving Figs ~ A 100 Year Old Placer County Recipe* on the second floor of the Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Aug. 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.