

THE PLACER

A Voice of History

May-June 2011
Volume 14, Issue 3

In this Issue



1. Administrator's Notes
2. Bloomer Cut
3. Bloomer Cut
4. Museums Intelligence
5. PCHS News
6. Historical Organizations/Artifact Highlight
7. Calendar of Events

Melanie Barton, Museums Admin.
Placer County Museums Division
101 Maple St.
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-6500
mbarton@placer.ca.gov

Michael Otten, President
Placer County Historical Society
PO Box 5643
Auburn, CA 95604
www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Editor and Staff Writer:
Ralph Gibson
(530) 889-6502
rgibson@placer.ca.gov
www.placer.ca.gov/museum

Administrator's Notes

Melanie Barton

On April 17th we celebrated the many contributions made by volunteers for the Placer County Museums. Over 100 people attended the 9th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner which was held at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Museum volunteers are the heart of this organization. With their help we provide a variety of services including visitor services in six museums, processing research requests, teaching school children about life in the 1890s, demonstrating blacksmithing, assisting with the recruitment and training of new volunteers, and promoting local history to all those who are interested. We appreciate every volunteer and value every hour given. This past year 181 Museum volunteers "worked" 14,810.5 hours. What an amazing group you are!

Every year we select one or two volunteers to receive the Outstanding Achievement Award. This year April McDonald and Jo Ann Greene were selected for this honor. April is a long time volunteer at the Archives & Research Center. She routinely takes on research requests from the public and staff and has endeavored to organize the

volumes of information stored at the Archives by creating a number of indexes. This past year she created indexes for Deeds Book A; The Chronology of Auburn, Vol. 1 and 2; news articles written by WHH Fellows in the 1916-18 era called "Looking Backwards" from the *Placer Republican*; the complete collection of Placer County marriage Affidavits 1854-1958; May Perry Scrapbook Collection; and the Placer County Historical Society Mel Locher Photo Collection. She also created a data base for our research files, local history books, and periodical collection. April volunteered 622 hours last year, the most of any volunteer!

Jo Ann Greene is a docent at the Placer County and Gold Country Museums in Auburn. She has taken the initiative to consider the entire visitor experience at the Placer County Museums. She provides excellent and personal customer service to visitors and goes the extra mile by ensuring that all docents and staff have the proper materials and resources at the PCM available to hand out during their shifts. Jo Ann understands that giving great service means paying attention to each individual and does her best to meet their needs. She is careful to listen to what information visitors inquire

about and sees to it that the Treasury is stocked with appropriate resource materials. Her efforts improve everyone's ability to provide great customer service. And, she does all this in a modest and friendly way! Jo Ann averages 27.5 hours per month.

Please join me in recognizing April and Jo Ann for Outstanding Achievement!

The Heritage Trail is just around the corner. Be sure to mark your calendar for August 6th & 7th.



Bloomer Cut

Ralph Gibson

On July 1, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Pacific Railroad Act. This act established the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad and provided each funds in the form of bonds and land grants to construct the Transcontinental Railroad.

On January 8, 1863, Governor Leland Stanford participated in a ground breaking ceremony for the Central Pacific Railroad in Sacramento. Just over a year later, in February of 1864, construction of the railroad reached the first obstacle in the Sierra Foothills on the western

side of Auburn. The route of the railroad, which was carefully mapped and designed by engineer Theodore Judah, called for a massive cut through a cemented gravel hill near Bloomer Ranch.

On February 22, 1864, workers began the dangerous and exhausting job of cutting a wedge through a tough, rocky hill. The following is an article from the February 27, 1864 edition of the *Placer Herald*:

On last Monday work was commenced by the contractor, with a force of some thirty men, on the deep through cut on the Pacific Railroad, one mile southwest of Auburn. The point is known as Bloomer Gap. The cut will be about one thousand feet long, and the deepest cutting sixty-two feet, and the amount of material to be removed nearly 40,000 cubic yards. The material is found to be boulders embedded in cement, and of course difficult of excavation. It is proposed, however, whenever sufficient face is obtained on the bank, to try the mining plan of bank blasting, which will expedite the work materially.

Workers did use the blasting technique to good effect, but this method was quite dangerous. On April 15, 1864, one of the black powder charges failed to explode. Two workers (a Frenchman and a Portuguese) and their supervisor Mr. Strobridge used tools, possibly crowbars, to remove the powder

when it suddenly exploded. All three were injured. The Portuguese worker was the most severely wounded and died of his wounds a few days later. Mr. Strobridge lost his left eye and the Frenchman survived with just minor injuries.

Who worked on Bloomer Cut is still being debated by historians. Some believe the Chinese were responsible for a large amount of the work at Bloomer Cut, while others point to payroll records that seem to indicate that if any Chinese worked on it, they did so in the last few weeks of its construction. The contribution of the Chinese laborers to the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad over the Sierra Nevada Mountains is significant and well documented. But there are too many gaps in payroll records and not enough concrete evidence to say for sure whether or not they worked on Bloomer Cut.

Even the total number of workers was debated and argued during its construction as the following *Placer Herald* article from July 30, 1864 indicates:

Incorrect. – The statement of the Sacramento Union, that there are 300 men at work on the Pacific Railroad, at the Bloomer Hill cut, is incorrect. The number does not exceed forty; and that is all that can be worked to advantage. The whole number of men now at work on the road, – upon the grading and culverts, above Newcastle,

are not more than sixty. We do not see what is to be gained in the Union claiming a large force at work, when the contrary is the fact. The frequent loose statements in connection with this road, is beginning to convince people that there is a vast amount of humbug indulged in.

By early May of 1865, the track through Bloomer Cut had been laid. The first train to reach Auburn arrived on May 13th. The work was done, but it was not forgotten. Some hailed it as “the Eighth Wonder of the World” and it was seen as an engineering marvel. It remains today largely unchanged from its original condition in 1865 and its eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places is unquestioned.

But its days may be numbered. In 2011, a draft Environmental Impact Report for a planned subdivision in the Baltimore Ravine area (where Bloomer Cut is located) was accepted by the Auburn City Council. The design of the subdivision calls for a bridge to span the cut. Though this would weaken the historic integrity of the site, the design of the bridge itself is cause for even more concern.

The footings for the bridge span a much wider gap than the cut itself. Union Pacific engineers approved the design of the bridge based on proposed plans by the railroad to widen the cut to make room for a second track, thus erasing Bloomer Cut from the face of the earth.



Bloomer Cut c. 1870s



Bloomer Cut c. 2011



Museums Intelligence

Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

On April 17th, we held our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in Foresthill. It was a fun night with great food and though several volunteers were recognized for their achievements, we want each volunteer to know their time and effort is appreciated. This year is going by very fast. May is upon us and soon it will be summer. Living History, which has been going very well, will end the second week of June and then we prepare for the Heritage Trail, which will be on August 6th & 7th from 10:00 to 4:00 pm. If we blink, it will be September. So don't blink, there's a slot of history to take in.

This year marks several significant anniversaries in our history. One of which, the 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage in California, is highlighted with a small exhibit in the Placer County Museum. On Saturday, October 1st, we will hold a rally for Women's Suffrage on the Courthouse grounds in Auburn. Details for this event are still being worked out, so look for more information in the August-

September issue of *The Placer*.

This year also marks the sesquicentennial of the start of the Civil War. A number of men from Placer County volunteered to fight on the side of the Union by joining regiments in Massachusetts and in Pennsylvania and also by volunteering to fight in New Mexico. Research might uncover a Placer County man or two who joined the fight on the side of the Confederates. If you have any information about Placer County men who fought in the Civil War, please call me at: 530-889-6502.

Community Education program: **Archaeological Field Methods**

Learn the methods archaeologists use to uncover our past! Join us at the Bernhard Museum Complex on May 14th at 1:00 pm where you can help us sift through soil for artifacts, excavate a small test pit, and work in the lab where artifacts will be catalogued. Tahoe National Forest archaeologist Nolan Smith will lead the excavation. All the historic artifacts recovered will be accessioned into the Placer County Museums' collection and will be displayed in a future exhibit. This FREE Community Education program is kid-friendly, so bring the whole family!

Community Education program: **Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kid's Games**

It's almost summer! Help us kick off our favorite season with a fun romp through history! Join us at the Bernhard Museum for the next Community Education Program: *Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kids Games*. Bring your family on Saturday, June 18th anytime between 12:00 and 3:00. We will have period games, Living History crafts, kid-friendly tours of the Bernhard House, and hand-cranked ice cream.

Take a step back in time with your whole family for a taste of yesteryear's summertime fun! This program is FREE! The Bernhard Museum is located at 291 Auburn-Folsom Road in Auburn.

For more information, please call 530-889-6500.



Docent Joyce Silva serving ice cream during last year's *Jump into Summer*.

Placer County Historical Society News



President's Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

I hope you can make it to the June 2nd membership dinner meeting. We will be voting on our first update to the articles of incorporation.

Although it appears the PCHS goes back more than a century, it wasn't until August 1920 that a group of civic leaders got around to officially incorporating. Maybe it was due to a little prodding by Frank C. Jordan, the longest serving Secretary of State in California history, who once commuted to work from his Auburn home.

The incorporators, meeting in the City Trustees room in the downstairs portion of the Auburn Public Library, decided it was high time to get official about preserving the early pioneer days of the county. Although many of the "objects" (purposes) of the society have changed over time, particularly since the advent of the county Museums Division, there is one particularly troublesome clause: "That the term of the incorporation shall be 50 years." One would think that our time was up back in 1970.

No one gave that 50-year clause much notice until recently. The Secretary of State still lists us as a valid nonprofit corporation up to date on all its filings (thanks to PCHS treasurer Al Stoll).

After attending a workshop earlier this year, an attorney specializing in corporate law advised it is something we should take care of. Al and I then began the task of basically putting together new, simpler articles of incorporation. In the process, Al attended a later seminar on non-profits and asked some clarifying questions we encountered in redrafting the amendments to meet our needs and still follow the basic boilerplate language suggested in the Secretary of State's sample language. After going back and forth a few times, this proposal is what we agreed to and recommend be adopted. Your board of directors earlier this month was to meet and consider the proposal to be voted on at the membership meeting, two necessary requirements.

On March 31st, the Auburn Public Library, the first Carnegie Library in Placer County, became the 22nd listing from Placer County on the National Register of Historic Places.

The others: the Lincoln and Roseville Carnegie Libraries, Colfax Freight Depot, Colfax Passenger Depot, Dutch Flat Historic District, El Toyon (the home of Col. Walter Davis), the Fiddymont Ranch in Roseville, the Griffith House in Penryn, the Griffith Quarry in Penryn, the Haman House in Roseville, the Lake Tahoe Dam in Tahoe City, the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail, the Mountain Quarries Bridge, the Newcastle Portuguese Hall, the Old Auburn Historic District, the

Outlet Gates and Gatekeeper's Cabin in Tahoe City, the Stevens Trail in Colfax, the Strap Ravine and Nisenan Maidu Indian site in Roseville, the Summit at Soda Springs, the Watson Log Cabin in Tahoe City and the Women's Club of Lincoln.

At last count, California has 2,483 properties out of more than 80,000 nationwide listed on the National Register. Here's the count for nearby counties: El Dorado, 18; Nevada, 23; Sierra, 8; Sacramento, 90, Yolo, 24. California has 136 National Historic Landmarks out of 2,430 nationwide, none in Placer County. Nearby are Coloma, Donner Camp, the Old Sacramento District, Sutter's Fort, the Leland Stanford home, the Pony Express Terminal, the Locke Historic District, the Folsom Power House, the Big Four House and the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Fir in Rio Vista.

Placer County Historical Society Elected Board for 2011-12:

Michael Otten, President; George Lay, 1st Vice President; Addah Owens, 2nd Vice President (programs); Bonnie Parodi, Secretary; Al Stoll, Treasurer. Board members: Karen Bleuel, Jean Allender, John Knox, Sherri Schackner, Walt Wilson, Penny Watson, Karri Samson. Appointed board members: Barbara Burdick, membership; Barbara Van Riper, books; Betty Samson, oral history/ dinner reservations.

The first planning meeting will be held May 24 for a special ceremony recognizing the centennial of the completion of the Mt. Quarries Bridge and railroad line to Camp Flint in Auburn next year. On April 16, new plaques were rededicated recognizing the bridge's 2004 listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Some dirty rotten scoundrel(s) stole the old ones last year. Of course, some may recognize the bridge by its nickname: "No Hands Bridge."

On May 19th, David Allen will become the first to be installed as grand president of the Native Sons of the Golden West from Auburn Parlor #59. The NSGW's 134th Grand Parlor runs from May 15-19 at the South Lake Tahoe Embassy Suites.

--Michael Otten,
otten@ssctv.net

**Placer County Historical
Society Dinner Meeting**
Addah Owens, Vice President

When: June 2, 2011

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30

Program

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

Cost: \$14 per person

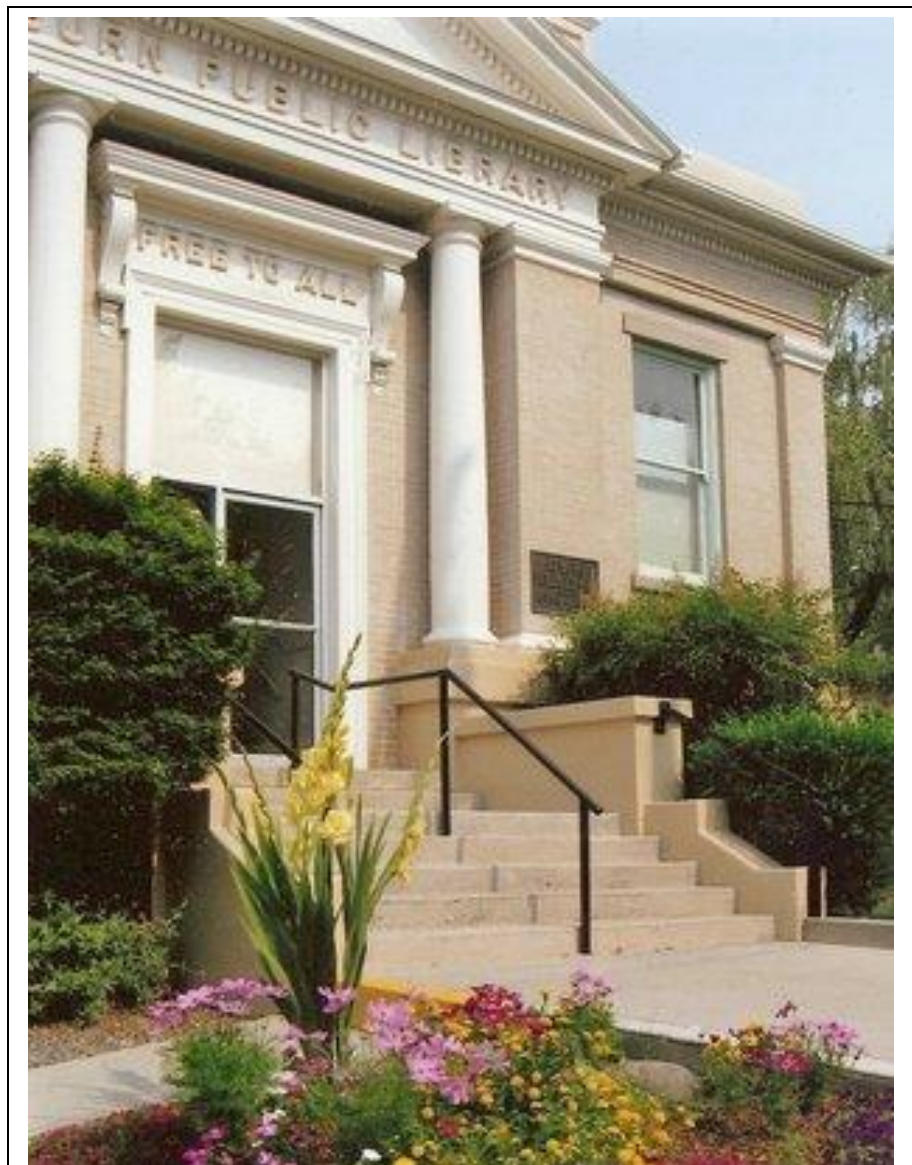
Menu: Barbecued Ribs, Toms
Award Winning Beans, Potato
Salad, Rolls & Dessert.

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

Program: Dale Johnson,
retired PG&E Sierra Division
Manager will present a program

about the Central California
Electric Company (a subsidiary
of the South Yuba Water Co.).
This company built the historic
Newcastle plant in 1896, the
Auburn plant in 1898 and the
Alta plant in 1902 to deliver
electric power to Sacramento –
in competition with the earlier
and larger Folsom plant.

Since retiring Mr. Johnson has
been studying the history of
water and electrical
development in the Yuba-Bear
River Basin.



Auburn Carnegie Library

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Ed & Nilda Duffek,
(530) 305-3209
www.colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society
Margie Powell, (530) 432-4015
www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society
Donna Coffman,
(530) 367-3437
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

Loomis Basin Historical Society
Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871
<http://www.ppgn.com/loomishistory.html>

Maidu Museum & Historic Site
Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299
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
Ross Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Placer County Genealogical Society
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216
www.pcgenes.com

Placer County Historical Society
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837
www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

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

Rocklin Historical Society
Barbara Chapman,
(916) 415-0153
www.rocklinhistory.org

Roseville Historical Society
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003
www.rosevillehistorical.org

Artifact Highlight

Kasia Woroniecka

The pictured non-sweating railroad lantern was made by the Adams & Westlake (Adlake) Company around 1910. It was donated by the Golden Drift Historical Society. It has one large red lens, one large blue lens and two green lenses. Adlake was founded in 1857 in Chicago, Illinois. Within 45 years, it became one of the largest suppliers of equipment to the transportation industry in the world. By eliminating the sweating created by moisture and the changes in temperature and wind pressure, the lenses were dry and ready for signaling at all times.



To communicate with a lantern, the railroad worker would swing the lantern in various ways according to what message he wanted to send. Hooking up and rearranging railroad cars took a lot of coordination and proper communication. The red lantern was generally used to signal STOP. The blue lantern was used for marking equipment that wasn't to be moved. The green (sometimes amber or yellow) lantern was used as a tower signal for "proceed with caution".

Calendar of Events

May

- May 10th, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- May 14th, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Archaeological Field Methods* by Nolan Smith.
Bernhard Museum. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- May 16th, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum.
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- May 16th, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street.
Contact: 916-624-3464.
- May 18th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.
Contact: 916-652-7844.
- May 26th, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.

June

- June 2nd, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.
Contact: 530-885-5074.
- June 14th, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- June 15th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.
Contact: 916-652-7844.
- June 15th, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery.
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- June 18th, 12:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kid's Games*.
Bernhard Museum. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- June 20th, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall.
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- June 23rd, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.