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Administrator's Notes

by *Ralph Gibson*

After Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II, and many of her young men and women lined up to volunteer in the armed forces. Those who were too young waited impatiently until their 18th birthday to sign-up, but there were some who couldn't wait. In a time when records were kept on aging paper in overstuffed filing cabinets, sneaking through the system was a lot easier.

Mildred Kellerman was 17 in 1943, but she wanted to join the Army as a nurse.

She knew her doctor was unable to locate her birth record, so she convinced him she was born a year earlier and got him to sign a note to that fact. She took the note to the recruiting station nearest her Arizona home and enlisted. The Army accepted her doctor's note, and she was sent to Georgia for basic training and nursing school.

After her training, Mildred got her first duty assignment: The DeWitt General Hospital in Auburn, California. She trav-

eled by train from Georgia to Auburn and reported for duty. Mildred's story is one of many that will be highlighted at the new DeWitt History Museum, but it won't be interpreted through text and photographs. Mildred herself will tell you her story. In 2009, Mildred Kellerman was interviewed on camera as part of the Veteran's History Project for the Library of Congress. Her oral history is fascinating. She describes her train ride from Georgia and her first impressions

of Auburn during the war years. She weaves a story of duty, comedy and tragedy while a nurse at the DeWitt



1945 nursing class at DeWitt Hospital.

March is Women's History Month, and in April we celebrate volunteers. In this issue

of *The Placer*, we'll highlight both – sometimes in the same article. If you have any questions about our two big museum projects (the Gold Rush Museum and the new DeWitt History Museum), please don't hesitate to stop by my office in the historic Courthouse.

Edna Hollenbeck's Pickle Castor

by *Kasia Woroniecka*
Curator of Collections

You won't find a lot of pickle castors on dinner tables these days, but they were a very popular serving accessory during the Victorian Period. Both the jars and their frames came in a wide array of colors and designs. They often mirrored elements of other decorative arts, incorporating scrolls, shells, birds, vines, borders and floral elements, as well as matching tongs and figural lid finials.

This beautiful castor with a clear, pressed glass jar and ornate metal frame is currently on display at the Bernhard Museum. It was made by Simpson, Hall, Miller & Co. The company was formed in 1866 in Wallingford, Connecticut. It made plated goods, and in 1899 became part of the International Silver Co. In the space of a few years, the company bought a number of smaller silver companies, becoming a large industrial corporation worth \$20,000,000. Located in Meriden, Connecticut, the International Silver Co. was a major producer of silver products in the United States. Although the popularity of pickle castors gradually faded, the 1900 Sears Roebuck catalog still offered a number of designs for about \$2.00.



Edna Hollenbeck
 (wearing awesome
 cat eye glasses!)

The donor of the Bernhard Museum's pickle castor is as interesting as the object she donated to Placer County Museums in 1961. Edna Hollenbeck was born west of Chico in 1889. She arrived in Auburn in 1926 ready to start a new life after divorce, and she quickly became very involved in the community.



Simpson, Hall, Miller and Co. pickle castor. Currently on display at the Bernhard Museum.

Ellen worked on the development of the 20th Agricultural District and was the director of the Auburn Recreational District for many years. Because of her

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efforts, James Field in the Auburn Recreation Park received electric lighting in 1939. She worked with the



Edna Hollenbeck (first on the left) at the Placer County Museum in the Fairgrounds circa mid 1950's.

Rotary Club to give the community its first gymnasium. She also was involved in the California Chamber of Commerce and lobbied the state legislature for a four-lane Interstate 80.

According to her son, Bill Durham, Edna was “involved in so many clubs and activities, there were some days when she didn’t know how she was going to fit everything in.” As if all this work was not enough for Edna, she was also the owner of the historic Auburn Hotel and ran it until 1942. In its long history as a town institution, the hotel went through tough economic times, fires and a number of ownership changes before it was refurbished and converted into offices known today as the Auburn Promenade. Edna Hollenbeck died in 1969, 43 years after arriving in Auburn and supporting many worthy causes.

Was that Black Bart at the Freeman Hotel?

by Michael Otten
Immediate Past President, PCHS

We now can add Black Bart to the list of illustrious names of folks who stayed at the Freeman Hotel in Auburn. Or can we?

The long gone, once block-size Freeman Hotel is No. 26 on the Downtown Auburn Walking Tour map produced by City Historian April McDonald-Loomis and PCHS Board Member John Knox. It was located across the street from what is now the Gold Rush Museum at



Vintage photo of Auburn's Freeman Hotel purchased recently by PCHS for the Placer County Archives.

601 Lincoln Way. The hotel was likely Placer County's most popu-

lar watering hole and place to stay at the end of the 19th Century.

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Thus Museum Director Ralph Gibson's eyes lit up when he spotted an 1894 Freeman Hotel register on eBay. The PCHS ended up buying this treasure for the Archives, where some speculated it may have once been stored.

Like little kids at Christmas time, we opened the box containing the ledger and a vintage photo of the hotel showing people milling around and carriages waiting to offer a lift to the next train passengers.



Black Bart's signature on the August 26, 1894, Freeman Hotel guest register, part of the PCHS acquisition.

Musty and water stained, the ledger includes names of guests from August 12 to October 10, 1894. A number of Placer County's movers and shakers of the era signed in, along with many Central Pacific Railroad employees, folks working on a wire bridge, and others from near and far. Some were in the gold mining and lumber businesses. The ledger came with built-in blotters that contained black and red colored advertising to keep the flourished signatures from smearing too much.

One regular guest, William T. Lautenshlager of Rocklin, carried his own purple ink pad to stamp his name each time he stayed. Foresthill

was then two words according to the guests from that town. The ledger provides such insights into the time period that Bryanna Ryan, the new County Archivist, wondered aloud whether we need a volunteer to index

all the names to help researchers and genealogists of the future.

As we progressed through the ledger, the name "Black Bart" jumped out—in August and in September, 1894! It couldn't be, I laughed. I quizzed Gibson, who confirmed that the legendary Wells Fargo holdup man only used the name in his stagecoach robberies, gaining international notoriety as Black Bart the Po8 from a poem he left at one of the 28 or so holdups attributed to him in the 1870s-1880s. This was obviously not the famed gentleman bandit, who served four years in San Quentin under the name

of Charles E. Colton and disappeared shortly after his release in 1888.

The penmanship of Black Bart of Sacramento markedly differs (differs from that of the original outlaw. This 1894 jokester may never be known.

Nor the full story of Black Bart.

The real story here is the acquisition of the hotel registry for the Archives. The Mississippi seller said he found it in a Las Vegas shop a decade ago. The ledger is just one of many items the Placer County Historical Society is involved in acquiring for posterity, from photos to letters to old safes, early family diaries, etc. Have something of interest? Let's talk.

You can reach me at otten@ssctv.net or 530 888-7837.

I hope to have something soon on www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org about other accounts of local connections to the legendary Black Bart.

The Placer County Museums is on Twitter!
You can find us @PlacerMuseums.



The Scoop: Unraveling the Mystery of History

by Beth Rohlfes

Editor and Staff Writer

Everyone loves a good mystery, and a historian likes nothing better than to play detective. So declared April Loomis-McDonald as she and Carol Cramer spoke to docents about Auburn's first female immigrants at the Placer County Museums Docent Guild *Lunch & Learn* event in February. How the two Gold Rush women—Nancy McCormick and Eliza Elliott Gibson—rose to the challenges of their day to become successful business owners was fascinating. Equally intriguing to me, however, was how the presenters investigated their subjects.

Woven into both presentations were details of their search for information and how it unveiled new and frequently unexpected gems along the way. While reviewing a probate file, John Knox (a frequent research “partner in crime” with April and Carol) inadvertently came across Nancy McCormick’s husband’s name in an adjacent file. This uncovered a plethora of information about Nancy, including her maiden name, her second marriage and descriptions of her multiple homesteads.

Both April and Carol admitted distinctively different approaches

to research. April is a consummate researcher, currently historian for the City of Auburn and volunteer at the County Archives. She dedicates 40 hours a week to archival work. Her mutual efforts with John Knox contribute valuable support to our archives, museums and anyone curious about the history of Placer County. April and John committed one year to research the life of Nancy McCormick.

Carol Cramer is first and foremost an educator. The retired elementary teacher savors information that adds interest and accuracy to stories she shares through her museum volunteerism. But she is a self-described “armchair researcher.” She partners her educator skills with the dedicated and ongoing research skills of April and John. She instigates collaboration that helps enhance what we share through museum programs like the annual Cemetery Tour or the Saturday morning walking tours



Carol Cramer tells docents about her findings at the *Lunch & Learn* event.



History sleuths, April Loomis-McDonald and Carol Cramer.

of Old Auburn.

Carol’s research on Eliza Elliott Gibson was more a process of discovery, stretching over 10 years. In another unexpected find—again by John Knox—a digital newspaper file from the *Marysville Daily Herald* revealed an 1851 court transcript of Eliza Elliott’s testimony to a crime. Elliott introduced herself as a native of Ireland who arrived in San Francisco on the ship *Victoria* from Sydney, Australia, on February 22, 1850; and was in Auburn 9 days later.

So we lunched (thanks to Carole McCarthy!) and we learned—what?

Well, I now know more about two women in local history. But even more useful, April and Carol’s personal experiences taught me how different our research paths can be and how teamwork can expand exponentially the possibilities of discovery.

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society,
Chris Miller (530) 346-8599
colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society,
Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859
donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society,
Sandy Simester, (530) 367-3535
foresthillhistory.org

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

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

Historical Advisory Board,
Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

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

Lincoln Highway Association,
Bob Dieterich bobd@iname.com,
<https://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/>

Lincoln Area Archives Museum,
Elizabeth Jansen, (916) 645-3800
laamca.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society,
Karen Clifford (916) 663-3871

Maidu Museum & Historic Site,
Mark Murphy (916) 774-5934
roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum

The Museum of Sierra Ski History and 1960 Winter Olympics,
David C. Antonucci (775) 722-3502
<http://tahoemuseum.org/>

Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59 Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878 dsallen59@sbcglobal.net

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association, Mario Farinha (530) 269-2412

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society,
Rebecca Phipps, (530) 583-1762
northtahoemuseums.org

Placer County Historical Society,
Walt Wilson, (530) 878-6640
placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Museums Docent Guild, Tom Innes, (530) 888-8969

Rocklin Historical Society,
Kathie Nippert, (916) 624-2355
rocklinhistory.org

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

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society, Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Placer County Genealogical Society,
Toni Rosasco, (530) 888-8036
pcgenes.com

Roseville Fire Museum,
Jim Giblin, (916) 538-1809
rosevillefiremuseum@gmail.com
rosevillefiremuseum.org

Roseville Public Library,
Christopher Webber (916) 774-5239
www.roseville.ca.us/library

PCHS Dinner Meeting

By Addah Owens, Vice President

When: April 7, 2016

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

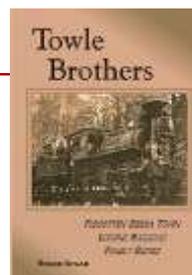
Where: Auburn Veterans Hall, 100 East St, Auburn

Cost: \$15 per person

Menu: Baked ham, scalloped potatoes, seasonal vegetables, salad, rolls and dessert

Program: **Program:** Roger Staab, author of *Towle Brothers*, will

relate how the three Towle brothers came to California to seek their fortunes and ended up becoming prominent contributors to the economic growth of both Placer and Nevada Counties. Allen, George and Edwin Towle found their fortunes not in Sierra gold, but in logging and lumber. They are perhaps best known for building a narrow gauge logging railroad, but their involvement in the area's



development goes far beyond that venture. And the creative contributions of their descendants and extended family continue to benefit the state today.

Books will be available for purchase.

Mail Check to: PCHS
c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Rd, Auburn, CA 95603
RSVP to Betty at (530) 885-5074

DO NOT BRING ALCOHOL. County directives prohibit it, and, we can't get liability coverage.

Calendar of Events

March

3 2:00pm

Placer County Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Room 10, Auburn City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 878-6640

8 4:00pm

Roseville Historical Society meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln St., Roseville (916) 773-3003

14 6:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting, Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-2355

16 6:00pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting, Loomis library. (916) 663-3871

19 7:00pm

Colfax Area Historical Society. Dr. Rod Moser, director of Gold Country Medical History Museum in Auburn will be the speaker. Colfax Depot. (530) 346-8599

21 6:00pm

Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530) 367-3535

24 7:00pm

Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library. (866) 894-2076

April

7 6:30pm

Placer County Historical Society dinner meeting, Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East Street, Auburn. (530) 878-6640

11 6:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting, Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-2355

12 4:00pm

Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum. 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003

20 5:30pm

Historical Advisory Board Meeting, Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500

20 6:00pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871

28 7:00pm

Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library. (866) 894-2076

Volunteers Needed

Placer County Historical Society needs a volunteer to handle reservations for dinner meetings and to make reminder calls. Contact president, Walt Wilson, at 878-6640 or 863-8224.

Colfax Area Historical Society needs volunteers to staff its museum in the historic railroad depot in Colfax, open daily, 9:00-3:00. Greet visitors, give directions, sell items, discuss artifacts, etc. Call 530-346-8599 for a tour to see if this suits you.

Congratulations!

Kudos to the Maidu Museum & Historic Site for winning one of six **Superintendent's Awards** for Excellence in Museum Education **2016!** Sponsored by the California Association of Museums and the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the awards recognize outstanding achievements in California museum programs that serve K-12 students and/or educators.

Placer County Museums
101 Maple Street
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March—April 2016

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