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Administrator's Notes

Ralph Gibson

Although I have yet to hand out candy to little goblins, witches, or superheroes, this issue of *The Placer* is for the holidays. This year, the Bernhard Museum will be decorated for Victorian Christmas by November 26th and we'll also have touches of a Gold Rush Christmas at the Gold Country Museum. For those of you who have never made it to either of these museums during the holidays, it is something special and goes well beyond decorations.

At the Bernhard, visitors will learn about Victorian Christmas traditions such as what went into plum pudding, how the trees were decorated, and what songs the Victorians loved to sing during the season.

At the Gold Country Museum, the subtle splashes of Christmas decorations certainly make visitors feel the holidays

have arrived, but we also display three accounts of Christmas day in 1849. Each are from published diaries. One recounts life in a cabin for two miners in Auburn on Christmas morning of 1849; another on the hard trail to California; and the last being from a man on his way to California by clipper ship. Each journal entry gives a unique



glimpse into the lives of men who risked it all to come to California during the Gold Rush.

I hope each of you has a wonderful holiday season!

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"I didn't want to put "new and improved" on the masthead, because that would be gauche, but please feel free to refer to it that way." page 2

"Much like with wooden objects, there is no need to "feed" leather - it is already dead." page 2

"Roast Beef & Turkey, Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Green Bean Casserole, Green Salad, Rolls, Apple Crisp." page 6

"Some think she was a maid or possibly a horse or dog." page 5

A Letter from the New Editor



Jason Adair

Dear Readers, it's time for a sea change here at *The Placer*. After two fantastic years, Kasia has stepped down so that she may

focus more on the museum collection and less on keeping the contributing writers on time.

As you've probably noticed, I've freshened up the look of the news-

letter. (I didn't want to put "new and improved" on the masthead, because that would be gauche, but feel free to refer to it that way.) I've also changed the look of the online version. If you weren't aware that we even had an online version, you can check it out for yourselves at: **avoiceofhistory.blogspot.com**.

Another change I'd like to facilitate is the ability for readers to submit history related articles about their museums, historical societies, personal collections, etc. Hopefully this

will lead to more and better coverage of history that would otherwise go by unnoticed. So, send your submissions, and photos, to our main office or you can email them to me directly at jadair@placer.ca.gov.

The final change I want to point out is that Ralph has been ~~fired~~ relieved of the Museums Intelligence column which will now be written by Beth Rohlfes. Also, the name of the column has been changed to, *The Scoop*.

The Care of Leather and Skin Objects

Kasia Woroniecka

Some of the most versatile and durable objects found in museum collections are made of leather. Cowhide, for example, is used in making shoe soles, trunks or belts; calf skin in the making of upholstery, shoes and book bindings; deer skin in the making of parchment and gloves; and sheep skin in the making of suede leathers.

Museum maintenance objectives are different from those of objects used in everyday life. Leather upholstery, shoes or purses were developed with active use in mind. Museums, on the other hand, strive to preserve their objects in a condition as close

as possible to the original and unaltered state.

There are many leather cleaners, moisturizers and dressings to keep leather objects supple, pliable, and resilient. The use of leather dressings in museum collections is very limited, and generally the only time they are used is when flexibility is required, such as the opening and closing of a leather bound book. Conservators sometimes use dressings or lubricants to reshape objects that have been deformed or otherwise damaged. The use of lubricants should be avoided unless necessary. They can attract dust and mold and act as a seal to repel moisture, caus-

ing the leather to dry out. Much like with wooden objects, there is no need to "feed" leather - it is already dead. Renaissance Wax can be used to improve the appearance of the surface. Other lubricants will darken the leather. Do not treat leather in a way that it has not been treated with in the past, as it can cause damage



Fireman's leather hat used in Michigan Bluff in the 1860's.

like discoloration or possible disfigurement. Stiff leather objects should not be softened by any treatment. When broken they can be glued together, but professional treatment is recommended.

Storing leather objects in consistent temperature and humidity is very important. Stable, cool and dry conditions are usually the best. Avoid storing leather items near sources of heat or in strong light. Heat can cause excessive drying and shrinkage, which can lead to warping, cracking and tears. Three-dimensional objects like leather shoes should be stuffed with unbuffered, acid free tissue paper to retain their shape. Heavy objects should be



White leather wedding slippers c. 1917

stored flat, preferably on acid-free trays that make moving without flexing and handling possible. Objects with straps or handles should not be stored hanging by those attachments. Exposure to high relative humidity or high temperature is especially dangerous if you have a collection of leather bound books. These conditions are ideal for red rot, which causes the leather to become darker

and powdery, finally causing it to deteriorate. Leather book bindings made between 1850- 1900 are especially susceptible.

Collections of Native American artifacts often contain objects made of rawhide or buckskin, such as drums, shields, moccasins and coats. Rawhide is animal skin that has not gone through any leather treating process but simply dried. Buckskin is semi-tanned leather that had all the flesh removed from the skin and dried after oil and fat emulsion has been rubbed into it. Both rawhide and buckskin are very susceptible to changes in temperature and relative humidity and should be stored at temperatures below 75F with 45%-55% relative humidity.

Good housekeeping and maintenance are important when storing



Rawhide drum made by Berenice Pate and painted by Gloria Enos Bradley c. 1950.

leather, skin and fur objects as they are susceptible to mold growth, insect and rodent attacks. The larvae of some common pests like cloth moths

and carpet beetles can destroy objects in a matter of days. For that reason they should be monitored every few months in spaces with good air circulation.

If you discover mold on your object, seal it in a plastic bag to make sure that the spores are not transferred to other objects before you move to an area where you can clean it. Mold can disfigure and stain objects so time is of the essence. If the object is wet, allow it to dry partially. Use a vacuum cleaner to remove any growth, making sure that there are no loose pieces or decorations or that the nozzle does not touch the surface causing smears or stains. Vacuuming removes the surface growth, but because the spores remain in the leather the surface can be treated with isopropyl alcohol. Test the area first, since alcohol can cause discoloration. To make sure that the object retains its shape while drying, stuff it with crumpled acid-free tissue paper.

*When in doubt, consult
a conservator!*



The Scoop

Beth Rohlfes

Contemporary theories of museums and how they engage people are hugely different from what they were 30 or even 15 years ago. In a seminar a few years back, I was struck by a speaker's comment that museums could no longer get away with just "showing dead things in glass cases." Well, we've come a long way from that! But what are we doing here in Placer County to keep up with our fast-evolving world and your ever-changing needs and expectations?

First let me dispel some fear. Those of you who've been around long enough to remember rather enjoying those dead things in glass cases, never fear. Historical artifacts and the stories behind them are still at the heart of the museum experience. Our goal is not to get rid of them, but to improve our connection to them, and to show that the real facts of history are often stranger than fiction and more interesting than the latest crop of reality television shows.

One way we're looking to maximize the museum experience is by

expanding the definition of what space a traditional museum is supposed to occupy. To this end, we actively engage the smart phone and computer-prone through Facebook, blogs and other web-based experiences. While this virtually fills every inch of the planet that has cell phone reception, we're also bringing small exhibits to non-traditional spaces outside our mu-



seum walls.

Our first in a series of off-site exhibits is currently at "the Domes" in Auburn. Stop in to see a showcase of antique cameras paired with historic photos of life in Placer County. A second display, at the Community Development Resource Agency (CDRA) office in Tahoe City, will feature vintage ski equipment and photo-

graphs marking the early development of winter sports in Placer County. And one more coming in November to the hallways of the Placer County Finance and Administration Building will contain vintage vignettes of offices past.

This doesn't mean we're not adding new artifacts to our collection.

Frank Ordaz's painting

"Welcome to Auburn," a heart-warming portrait of museum docent Chris Francee, is now part of our permanent collection and is on display at the Placer County Courthouse. Generously donated by Ordaz, the painting won first place in a recent show at the Auburn City Hall. Thanks to Mike Holmes and Randall Fee for contributing the frame.

So, don't pass over our traditional museum sites. Look again, then look closer at what's really happening inside our museum walls. You will find much more than dead things in glass cases, and hopefully, a story or two that you'll want to think about again and then share.

Placer County Historical Society News

Presidents Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

History Sleuths: Who's Caroline?

*Whoever she is,
Whatever she is,
What secrets lay
Buried with thee?
Mystery woman?
Mystery beast?
Old Auburn Cemetery
Visitors do inquire.
Researchers await a clue.
Help! Please do.*

Much ado is being made over Caroline's final resting place. She was the hit of the Oct. 20 Community Education Program, "Historical Haunts: A Tour of Notable Plots." Auburn City Historian April McDonald says Caroline's gravestone "represents the biggest mystery of all."

The marker reads; "This stone is placed by Col. Clayton Hale, U.S. Army, in memory of his faithful servant and devoted friend: Caroline who died in Auburn Dec. 21, 1889." Some think she was a maid or possibly a horse or dog.

The photo above is posted on the lunchroom bulletin board at the Archives and Research Center,

11526 Ave., in the old Dewitt Center.



McDonald says many have tried to solve the mystery. Melinda and James Landrith, who have done extensive research on area cemeteries, "tried in vain to find out who Caroline was?"

Have a clue? Contact the Archives and Research Center at (530) 889-7789 or dpoulsen@placer.ca.gov.

McDonald says that what researchers know so far about Col. Hale is that he never lived in Auburn. He was a younger brother of James Ellery Hale, a lawyer in Pennsylvania who came to California in the 1849 gold rush. James made quite a name for himself here as lawyer, judge, state senator and a member of the 1879 state Constitutional Convention among other things. James died in 1895 and is buried here. Clayton

died in 1896 in Iowa.

Avid researcher John Knox scoured death, cemetery and monument maker records as well as newspapers of the period. He found no mention of Col. Hale visiting his brother here at the time of Caroline's death, though Hale did purchase the plot. Some photos and information on the grave site are available through Glenda Ragan's Old Auburn Cemetery link on findagrave.com, and in Gus Thomson's *Media Watch* in the Auburn Journal.

Gus Thomson marks 25 years as a star Auburn Journal reporter next month. The Placer County Historical Society honored Gus and his wife, Karen, at the September dinner meeting. After a quarter century of Thomson making and noting local history like no other, we felt it was time for a framed recognition. The reporter says he loves the area's rich history. Not only did he major in history, two of his children are following in his footsteps.

From his pen and pad days Thomson has broadened his skills to digital reporting on the Gold Country Media websites. His video of the Sept. 20 rededication ceremony of

Continued from page 5



the Virginiatown plaque can be found at the Auburn Journal online.

The original State Historical Landmark 400 was stolen in 2012. It was probably the biggest gathering at the site of the former ghost town since 1952 when some 100 showed up for the original dedication.

otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

When: Thursday December 5th

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

Where: Veterans Memorial Hall,
100 East St., Auburn, CA

Cost: \$14 per person

Menu: Roast Beef & Turkey,
Mashed Potatoes & Gravy, Green
Bean Casserole, Green Salad,
Rolls, Apple Crisp

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

Program: Richard Harley & T.J. Meekins will tell the story of the Golden State's transformation from a sleepy colonial outpost to a pivotal player in the upheaval that almost destroyed the United States. The duo use art, maps, and photos to trace the political and military history of California from the Mexican era to the War Between the States.

We will also be having our annual "drawing" with tickets on sale during the evening.

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Helen Wayland, (530) 346-7040
colfaxhistory.org

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

Roseville Fire Museum
Shari Tasler, (916) 538-1809

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

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

Lincoln Highway Association
Bob Dieterich,
bobd@iname.com or lincolnhwy.org

Lincoln Area Archives Museum
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3800

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

Lincoln Area Archives Museum
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3800

Loomis Basin Historical Society
Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871
ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html

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

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

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-911

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

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

Rocklin Historical Society
Jean Sippola, (916) 652-1034
rocklinhistory.org

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

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society
Javier Rodriguez, (530) 583-1762
northtahoemuseums.org

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

Calendar of events

November

7 6:30pm Placer County Historical Society Board Meeting at City Hall, Rm. 10, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530)885-5074

12 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society meeting at Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln St., Roseville. (916)773-3003

18 6:00pm Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, at the Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530)367-3535

18 7:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916)624-3464

20 6:30pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis library. (916)663-3871

22 6:30pm Community Education Program: *The Transcontinental Railroad from Sacramento to Donner Summit*. Film and Presentation at the Bernhard Museum Winery. (530)889-6500

28 7:00pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, in the Beecher Room, at the Auburn Library. (530)885-2216

December

5 6:30pm Placer County Historical Society Christmas Dinner at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn. (530)885-5074

10 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916)773-3003

14 & 21 5:00pm Community Education program: *Old Town Country Christmas* at the Historic Courthouse, 101 Maple Street, Auburn. (530)889-6500

16 7:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916)624-3464

18 5:30pm Historical Advisory Board Meeting at the Bernhard Museum Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530)889-6500

18 6:30pm Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. (916)663-3871

26 7:00pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. (530)885-2216

Artifact Highlight

Powder horns were often made of cow or ox horns, but the one in our collection is made of embossed leather with a brass opening. The design shows a deer surrounded by

oak leaves. Powder horns were used before the invention of the modern cartridge. They carried the black powder propellant necessary to load and fire the firearm.



Placer County Museums

101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603

