



Administrator's Notes

2014 July-August Volume 17, Issue 4

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Ralph Gibson

Change is something we have all learned to deal with. Sometimes it isn't pleasant, but we accept it as a fact of life. Sometimes change is good, too. I hope for you, dear reader, that the change I'm about to describe is the latter; we are relocating our Gold Country Museum from the Fairgrounds to the Historic Auburn Depot.

We've been in the fairgrounds since 1947 when preparations were underway for the Gold Discovery Centennial Celebration. It was called the *Placer County Museum* and was run by the Placer County Historical Society. The County assumed control of it in 1948.

It operated as the Placer County Museum until it closed in 1989 for its transformation. The Historic Courthouse project was underway at that time and the new *Placer County Museum* would open on its first floor in 1994. The building in the fairgrounds reopened in 1990 as the Gold Country Museum.

The building itself, though charming, beautiful, and historic, lacks the necessary environmental controls to store ob-

jects for any length of time. It is cooled by evaporative coolers, which significantly raises the humidity and leads to large swings in temperature. This is very damaging to many artifacts. Also, on days when the mercury climbs above 94 degrees, the heat index inside rises to over 100 degrees, which necessitates closing the museum for the safety of our docents and visitors.

The Historic Auburn Depot has a new air conditioning system and is located at 601 Lincoln Way in Downtown Auburn. The location is perfect for expanding exhibits and growing the visitor-ship of the museum. We will still have an indoor panning stream and a mining tunnel to explore, thanks to a \$1,750 donation from the Historical Preservation Foundation of the Native Sons of the Golden West and a \$1,750 donation from Auburn Parlor #59 of the Native Sons of the Golden West. We plan on partially opening this fall with a grand opening in the winter. We will, however, be open for this year's Heritage Trail on August 2nd and 3rd at our new location. Please stop by for a sneak peek!

"At the bottom were the three ghostly figures."
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"In 1879 the constitution of the State of California declared that "Asiatic coollieism is a form of human slavery, and is forever prohibited in the State
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"Ohhh," cooed one eight-year-old, in amazement. "They've been there a very long time!"
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"High school football. Navy service. Husband. Father."
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A Letter from the Editor



Jason Adair

Dear readers, I really can't explain how excited I am to be part of the team that's building the new Gold Country Museum. I've always been a huge fan of the old museum, and getting the chance to take it apart and rebuild it is going to be an amazing ride.

The first thing we did when we started planning was to get all the Gold Country docents together. We asked them which exhibits they loved, which they didn't, and what new exhibits they'd like to have to help tell visitors our story.

SPOILER ALERT: as directed by docent input, the new museum will contain a mining tunnel and indoor gold panning stream. These two exhibits were at the top of everyone's list. At the bottom

were the three ghostly figures.



Our new museum, at 601 Lincoln Way, will be open for Heritage Trail. It won't be anywhere near done, but there will be gold panning. Stop by and strike it rich!

Moving Museums and Mysterious Artifacts

Kasia Woroniecka

Moving a museum might seem like a mammoth undertaking, yet after the recent experience of relocating to a new storage facility we learned to expect the unexpected and move forward.

Any move, whether it involves a large or small collection, tackles different aspects of packing and organizing. In the case of the Gold Country Museum it involves the opening of exhibit cases, moving of all objects and deciding where they fit best – on display or in storage.

The move to a new building gives us a great opportunity to re-

design exhibits and add objects that could not be on display in our old museum. Those include textiles, wooden and leather artifacts that sustain damage when stored or exhibited in environments with incorrect temperature and relative humidity levels.

Some of the objects that could now be displayed because of improved conditions are part of the Chinese collection. These include textiles like clothing, hats or shoes; wooden objects like boxes, wooden scales or a writing desk, and works on paper. One of the most interesting objects in this collection that has not been exhibited

in recent years might not even be Chinese.

According to the donor, who donated it in 1949, it is a Chinese slave collar circa 1850. It is a large metal restraint with a loop attachment and a small locking device. Yet the Chinese did not come to California as slaves, but as free migrants. Could the donor be wrong? Did the collar originate in the slave states or maybe South America?

When slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1807 and in 1865 in the United States, labor intensive industries like cotton

plantations, mines and railway construction were left without cheap manpower. The coolie system followed the abolition of slavery and filled that gap. Yet these indentured laborers were no better off than the slaves they replaced.

Between 1847 and 1874 about 500,000 Chinese indentured or contract laborers were exported to

formerly sold slaves. Once at the plantation they were housed in the same quarters as the former slaves and controlled using metal bars, leg chains, whippings and lockups.

The difference between the coolie trade and the African slave trade is the fact that technically, despite cases of kidnapping and contract fraud, coolies were volun-

Chinese immigration to the United States was almost entirely voluntary, with the exception of the prostitution trade. Working conditions were difficult and laws restricting movement and discouraging settlement were passed. In 1879 the constitution of the State of California declared that “Asiatic coolieism is a form of human



South America to make up for the shortage of slaves. It is possible that the collar originated in Peru or Cuba, where more than 200,000 Chinese were sent. Many others ended up in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Suriname. Eighty percent or more were sent to sugar plantations where their treatment was not much different than that of slaves. They were locked up until they could be auctioned off in the same markets that

tary laborers who were free to return to China after fulfilling their contracts.

The reality was different. They earned very little money and only a small percentage of them ever returned to China. Coolies were often forced to remain in servitude beyond what their contract stipulated. Of the 58,400 Chinese noted in the 1872 Cuban census only 14,046 were “free” men who had completed their contracts.

slavery, and is forever prohibited in the State, and all contracts for coolie labor shall be void.”

We might never know where the collar came from or who used it. Yet, it is part of our growing permanent collection, which with its rare artifacts and unsolved mysteries, is all the more interesting for it.

The Scoop

Beth Rohlfes

The Proof is in the Biscuit Eating

*Dear Bernhard Museum,
Thank you so much for having us.
That was the best field
trip I've ever been on!
Love, Jessica*

Third grader Jessica is not alone in her enthusiasm for the Placer County Museums' Living History Program. She was one of 2,793 students we engaged in the popular field trip to the Bernhard Museum this past school year. In 2014, I entered my first full spring season with some trepidation. As it turns out, "the proof of the pudding (or in this case, biscuits) is in the eating." It was a win-win experience, not to be feared!

It was a wonderful field trip and all of us want to say thank you a 1,000 times to you guys because it was awesome and everyone loved it!

Sincerely, Ari

While the Living History Program is a rock-solid program launched some years back by a qualified group of teachers and museum professionals, it takes a coordinated team effort to ensure its ongoing success. Kudos to this

year's team of 23 seasoned museum docents, 131 school teachers, 1,034 volunteer parents and museum staff who made it all happen.



I am wondering how you know all this? Do you look it up?

Sincerely, Eli

Good question, Eli! Our docents and staff train for eight weeks, practice a lot and keep studying. We learn from official records, photos, artifacts, personal writings, newspapers and other sources that tell us how people lived "back then". And when we don't know the answer to a question, yes, we do look it up.

I appreciate that you volunteered for us.

Sincerely, Evan

The amazing force of parent participation in their children's

learning experience is one of the most beautiful parts of this program. Until this spring, parents were required to attend on-site

training. Now they can prepare by watching new online videos. They love this option for its accessibility and convenience. We love it because parents come prepared. The kids love it because the adults are confident and happy in their role as activity leaders.

Living History is pretty much an automatic win for everyone involved. And humor is a key to much of our adult enjoyment on field trip day. During one Living History tour of the house, students glimpsed a couple of our docents sitting quietly inside dressed in their 19th century attire. "Ohhh," cooed one eight-year-old, in amazement. "They've been there a very long time!"

It was hard making the biscuits, but they were good.

As to the value of the Living History Program, the proof is clearly in the eating of the biscuits.

Placer County Historical Society News

President's Message

Michael Otten,
President

Beam Placer County History Up.

Ralph Gibson's in charge. High school football. Navy service. Husband. Father. Almost always beaming. Yes, pioneer lunar archaeologist Ralph Gibson, 48, has lifted off the launch pad as Placer County's sixth museums administrator.

For his voyage Gibson brings: A childlike wonderment. A sense of adventure to make our rich history more meaningful to those here and those who visit. Professionalism and seriousness in a mild manner. Popularity and enthusiasm. His selection bodes well for the future.

His appointment came with little fanfare. Gibson had been serving as interim administrator since Melanie Barton's retirement last June. On April 11 in a terse memo to County Supervisors and the CEO's office Mary Dietrich, director of facilities services quietly announced Gibson beat out all contenders to replace Barton.

Dietrich said Gibson "brings a wealth of private and public sector experience" as well as several years under Barton as a researcher, designer, curator and manager. As interim leader of the museum staff

and the more than 200 volunteers, Dietrich said Gibson "continued to distinguish himself as a personable, creative and focused manager."

The lunar stuff: July 20 marks the 45th anniversary of the first men to land on the moon. It was



an inquisitive Gibson as a student at New Mexico State University who got the ball rolling to preserve the 1969 Apollo II landing area at Tranquility Base as a World Heritage site.

In 2010, Gibson was part of the team that convinced the California State Historical Resources Commission to take the unprecedented step of placing the 106 or so objects left on the moon by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, on the California Register of Historical Resources. New Mexico and

Hawaii have followed suit with the goal being a World Heritage Site.

Some history: Since 1948, Placer County Museums has grown from a shoestring operation to a million dollar annual enterprise with six museums. Gibson is scrambling to add a 7th Museum by next year at DeWitt to honor the former World War II Army Hospital and State Mental Hospital that served as the county's major employer for more than a generation.

The museums started with the hoopla over the Centennial of James Marshall's and Claude Chana's 1848 gold discoveries, the 49ers and statehood with a feisty May W. Perry, the executive secretary of the Placer County Historical Society.

She and the PCHS convinced the county to take over the Mining and Manufacturing Building at the 22nd Agricultural Fairgrounds as its first museum. Perry was its first curator. Now, Gibson and his crew has taken on the task of moving it from the Gold Country Fairground to the Auburn Southern Pacific Depot on Lincoln Way in time for the Heritage Trail weekend Aug. 2-3. Be part of Gibson's new adventure by participating.

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Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society

Helen Wayland, (530) 346-7040
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

Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society

Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Lincoln Highway Association

Bob Dieterich,
bohd@iname.com or lincolnhwy.org

Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen, (916) 645-3800
laamca.org

Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871
ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html

Roseville Fire Museum

Shari, (916) 538-1809
rosevillefiremuseum.org

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

Golden Drift Historical Society

Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

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

Heritage Trail Time!

Step back in time for a FREE opportunity to visit and explore 20 museums in Placer County during the 7th annual Placer County Heritage Trail Tour of Museums August 2-3, 2014. The tour is informally broken into three geographical sections covering the valley museums of Roseville, Rocklin, Lincoln and Penryn; the Auburn area museums; and the mountain museums of Foresthill,

Colfax, Dutch Flat, Donner Summit, Boreal Mountain Resort and Tahoe City.

The participating museums will be open to the public from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. both days with unique displays, many hands-on demonstrations suitable for the whole family and several docents dressed in authentic clothing narrating stories about the days of old.

The tour guarantees an enjoyable adventure as you encounter the unique personalities and features within each museum.

For more information, visit the Placer County Museum website, www.placer.ca.gov/museums and look for the Heritage Trail information.

Calendar of events

July

3 2:00pm

Placer County Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Room 10, City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 888-7837

8 4:00pm

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

18 6:00pm

The Auburn-Foresthill Bridge Presentation by Donald Anderson Auburn Veterans Hall (530) 889-6500

19 6:00pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis library. (916) 663-3971

21 6:00pm

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

24 7:00pm

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

August

2,3 10:00am

Heritage Trail Weekend! 20 Placer County museums open their doors from 10 to 4 and can't wait for you to come and visit!

11 4:00pm

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

20 6:30pm

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

21 5:30pm

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

28 7:00pm

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

No Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting this month. Check back in the Sept-Oct issue!



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