

Inside this issue:

Administrator's Notes	
Colonel Walter Scott Davis	
Artist Highlight: Diane Bell	
Placer County Historical Society President's Message	
Historical Organizations	6
Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting	6
Calendar of Events	

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Administrators Notes

By Ralph Gibson

As some of you may have heard, we changed the name of the Gold Country Museum to The Gold Rush Museum. We are building a new museum in the historic Auburn Depot and we thought this fresh start deserved a fresh name. If any of you had the opportunity to walk

through the old Gold Country Museum

before we closed you may recognize some of the displays in our new museum once they are installed. We are keeping some the same, making changes to

others, and will add brand new exhibits as well. We wanted to cover all aspects of the Gold Rush and our old museum had some glaring omissions.

One new exhibit will interpret the effects of the Gold Rush on local American Indians, both the Maidu and the Washoe. This exhibit will help us address a significant curriculum standard for many grade levels.

Another new exhibit will focus on the issue of slavery. California was admitted to the Union as a Free State as part of the 1850 Compromise. Though no Slave State was added to the Union as part of the compromise, the South received

something they had wanted for a very long time; the Fugitive Slave Act. Further, some southern men immigrated to California with their slaves in tow. Though their numbers were never that great, they were here in Placer County.

We will also have an exhibit interpreting



and performances throughout the 1850s in the Auburn area. Knox discovered that famous thespian Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes Booth, performed in Auburn in 1856.

This Gold Rush Museum has endured many delays and it has become a trial of patience for us all. But we still hope to have a soft opening later in the spring with a grand opening in the summer. Be sure to check our Facebook page for updates.

facebook.com/placercountymuseums You can also follow us on Twitter (@placermuseums) where we will regularly tweet photos of our progress.

"Affected by the horrors of war Walter wrote his mother from Camp Winfield Scott in Pennsylvania on April 19, 1862" page 2 "It is better to be in debt than be a murderer." page 3 "The City of Rocklin owns Big Gun now." page 4

"Our toothpaste tube shaped county wasn't created until 1851" page 5 "Baked Ham, Scalloped Potatoes, Seasonable Vegetables, Salad, Rolls, Desert."

Colonel Walter Scott Davis

By Kasia Woro-





Two artifacts from our collection, a soldier's cape and a kepi, are part of the Civil War exhibit now on display in the Treasury at the historic courthouse in Auburn. They belonged to Colonel Davis -Who was he? And what was his experience in the war?

Walter Scott Davis was born on July 15, 1837 in Milton, MA. He graduated from Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall college preparatory school in 1854. He enlisted in the Union Army on August 10, 1861 as a Second Lieutenant. He was 24 years old. He was commissioned into F Company, 22nd Infantry Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers.still, and what makes it look moreThe 22nd Massachusetts was orga-
nized by Senator Henry Wil-
son (future Vice-President during
the Ulysses Grant administration)sad is to see the trees in full bloon
and the season passing for the see
to be sown." (...) Before you re-
ceive this I think the great battle
will have commenced, probably it
Wilson's Regiment." The regiment
saw its first action during the Siege
of Yorktown in April 1862.

Affected by the horrors of war Walter wrote his mother from Camp Winfield Scott in Pennsylvania on April 19, 1862:

"O Mother, you know nothing of the sufferings of these people about here. The agriculture is at a stand-

sad is to see the trees in full bloom and the season passing for the seed to be sown." (...) Before you receive this I think the great battle will have commenced, probably it will be the largest ever fought on this continent and whoever lives to see it ended will have a sad story to tell. Do not be anxious dear Mother about me, if I fall it will be in good and glorious cause and there will be no one suffering for bread on account of it. The time (although it be a hundred years) is not far distant when we shall all meet in heaven. I am proud to fight on the same field that Washington

and our forefathers fought on. I should not want to live in this country if it was not free and if all at home feel the same why should I not be willing to lose my life that they should be happy."

Walter Davis was promoted to First Lieutenant on June 28, 1862. He was wounded on July 1, 1862 at the battle of Malvern Hill near Richmond, VA. Also known as the Battle of Poindexter's Farm, it involved over fifty thousand soldiers from each side, hundreds of pieces of artillery and three gunboats. The battle was part of the Peninsula Campaign's Seven Days Battles. Walter wrote his mother on July 6, 1862:

"It would be impossible for me to give you full accounts of all that I have been through with. Pen cannot describe the scenes I have been eye witness to and wish if it could it would be wrong for me to relate them to the loved ones at home. You have troubles enough of your own and I will not burden you with more." (...) I was slightly wounded by a shell, but that is not worth speaking of, when I was surrounded by danger for eight days. I have had many a narrow escapes but I am still safe, thanks God."

Walter Davis was promoted to Captain on October 18, 1862. He was appointed aide de camp to General J. H. Martindale and aide de camp to General James Barnes in 1862. He wrote his mother from camp near Falmouth, VA on November 26, 1862:

"It seems to me impossible for the people at home (in the north) to realize the extent in which this unhallowed rebellion is steeping our country in blood and draping our households in mourning. It may be that all our sufferings are blessing in disguise intended by the Father of Mercies for our ultimate good."

As the war raged on Walter wrote in an undated latter:

"I am now commencing my third winter in the service; how little we at first supposed the war would last so long, but I can see the advantages now that at first little supposed would be advantages. Thousands upon thousands of men are just getting their eyes opened; they wonder why this institution of slavery has been allowed to live so long when they and just such men before them have done all in their power to support it. This war is costing us an immense sum of money, but what is that. It is better to be in debt than be a murderer."

Walter Davis was promoted to Major in 1864 "for gallant services at the battle of Jericho Ford, VA" and became a Lieutenant Colonel in September 1864 "for gallant services at the battle of Peebles's Farm, VA."

Feeling optimistic Walter wrote his father on September 27, 1864:

"We all feel now that the war is nearly at an end and I am as certain of success as I am that I shall die."

He would have to wait seven more months before the war ended in May of 1865.

After the war Walter Davis was involved in wholesale leather and wool business. He married Ellen S. R. Larkin of Boston in 1871. They moved to California in 1875 and for the next four years grew oranges in Anaheim. They lost their entire crop after a bad freeze and decided to move the family to Auburn in 1879. Ellen went ahead of the family and purchased 20 acres with a hard finished house in Auburn. They finished the shingle style home in 1889 and called it El Toyon. Walter also bought the Mammoth Bar Mine near the American River confluence and the mine proved a success. Walter Scott Davis died of heart failure in 1908 in Auburn. He was cremated and buried at the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA.

Artist Highlight: Diane Bell

By Gary Day

Rocklin artist Diane Bell creates contemporary works flavored currently with the memories and artifacts of her family's granite mining history. Bell lives on Winding Lane, combinin close to several long-abandoned metal and quarry pits, most of them in weedy she said.

work is mixed media and I am currently exploring work in encaustic and cold wax with oil. I've created assemblage pieces by combining the wax with rusted metal and other found material." she said. Bell named one of her new pieces "Message from a Quarryman" in memory of her dad.

"My art has evolved from years of studying with inspirational teachers at Chouinard Art Institute





fields near Downtown Rocklin. She works with materials gleaned from the landscape: pieces of quarry shed roofing and siding, rusty metal and other scraps of an industry that slowly died here during the twentieth century. "I like to contemplate the mystery and history of the metal and old wood which I pick up from around the abandoned granite quarry sites near my home." she said. "I combine paint, bees wax, wire and nails to create assemblage pieces that can be hung on the wall."

Bell said that she loves sorting through her collection of found materials, adding and removing things, nailing and painting and just experimenting. "Most of my Bell is the granddaughter of Matt Ruhkala who emigrated from Finland in 1889 and established the Union Granite Company which controlled four of Rocklin's 62 quarries during the twentieth century. One of the four is now under the westbound lanes of highway 80. Bell's father Ben Ruhkala was one of four brothers among Matt's eleven children who operated the Capital Quarry, now called Big Gun, from 1933 until 1977.

The City of Rocklin owns Big Gun now. The property is off limits but a spectacular view is available from the second floor exterior stairwell of the Rocklin City Office building. in Los Angeles and several northern Californian colleges and workshops around the country." she said. Her work is in collections throughout the United States and also in Finland, India and France.

Bell will be on hand to display several pieces of her work on February 28 and March 1, from 1 pm until 4 pm both days, at the Rocklin History Museum, 3895 Rocklin Road. Admission is free.

Website: dianeruhkalabell.com

Placer County Historical Society News President's Message

By Michael Otten

Yeah, I know the days of a twobit meal and the nickel beer with an all-you- can-eat buffet are among the stories from the so-called good old days.

So, as your president, it is my duty to inform you that the cost of dinners will be \$15 starting April 2 with our annual meeting and election of officers. The tab is still a bargain when you consider the price increases at stores and restaurants.

Also, if you have prepaid, or made a reservation and cancel after the Sunday prior to the dinner, you will be responsible for payment. The caterer must be paid based on the count we have as of the Sunday prior to the dinner. The Society tries to keep the costs down to break-even. The costs include set up, clean up and various incidentals, including providing dinner for the speaker and guest.

Our membership chair Barbara Burdick reminds me you can save on postage to pay your dues at the April 2 meeting for the coming year. Our dues, the foundation of any organization, are still as low as \$10 a year. They keep us going in carrying out our mission of supporting and preserving local history.

Who was Placer County's first sheriff?

If you said John Pole, Robert B. Buchanan or Samuel C. Astin, you're right.

When California became a state in 1850, there was no Placer County. Our toothpaste tube shaped county wasn't created until 1851, being carved out of two of the state's original counties: Sutter and Yuba.



Pole was Yuba's first elected sheriff and Buchanan was Sutter's first. Placer's first officially elected sheriff was Samuel C. Astin (1851-55). I understand that Buchanan's middle name was Bloomer. Could that be the source of the name "Bloomer" Cut on the Central Pacific Railroad route through Auburn?

To get a feel for what an early sheriff looked like, visit the sheriff's office of Elmer Gum in the historic Placer County Courthouse, where our program vice president, Addah Owens, serves as a historically-dressed docent at the Placer County Museum.

Addah is arranging for a special program on the history of the sheriff's office for our April 2 dinner. So make sure you reserve a seat by calling 885-5074. Auburn City Historian April McDonald is busy working on reprinting and updating a children's coloring book of historic area buildings. The plan is to give these free to visitors at our museums during the Heritage Trail Aug. 15-16 and to make them available at the Placer County Visitors' Bureau (California Welcome Center).

Thus we are looking for cosponsors and advertisers to help defray the cost of printing. If you can help please contact the City Historian or myself. Be a colorful part of history.

For as little as \$10 you can join or provide a gift membership in the society. See the application at <u>placercountyhistoricalsociety.org</u>

--otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Historical Organizations

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

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

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, <u>bobd@iname.com</u> 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 Barbara Chapman, (916) 415-0153 <u>rocklinhistory.org</u>

Roseville Historical Society Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003 <u>rosevillehistorical.org</u>

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

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

Placer County Historical Dinner Meeting*

By Addah Owens, Vice President

When: April 2nd

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

Where: Auburn Veterans Hall 100 East St, Auburn

Cost: \$15 per person

Menu: Baked Ham, Scalloped Potatoes, Seasonable Vegetables,

Salad, Rolls, Desert.

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

Program: To be announced on the blog. Check in at: avoiceofhistory.blogspot.com

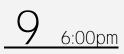
DO NOT BRING ALCOHOL. County directives prohibit it and we can't get liability coverage. According to a new board resolution, beginning with the April meeting the cost for dinners will be \$15. Note: if you send a check or have otherwise agreed to attend and cancel after the Sunday prior to the dinner you will be responsible for payment. The caterer must be paid after the count is called in.

Calendar of events

March



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



Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting at Old St. 6:00pm Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916) 415-0153

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

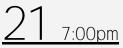
O 6:00pm

4:00pm

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

6:30am

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



Colfax Area Historical Society meeting. Michael Kent Murphy's presentation about the Colfax Hotel. At the Colfax Rail Depot.

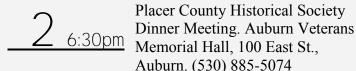
Sunday Speaker Series. Bill Mar-22 2:00pm Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 ble nuclear power expert/historian. Front St., Rocklin. (916) 409-9642

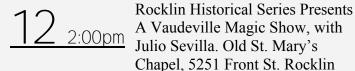
7:00pm

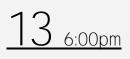
Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, in the Beecher Room, at the Auburn Library. (530) 885-2216

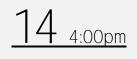


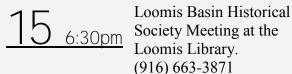
April

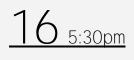












Historical Advisory Board Meeting at the Auburn Depot at 601 Lincoln Way in Auburn. (530) 889-6500

Rocklin Historical Society Board

of Directors Meeting at Old St.

Street, Rocklin. (916) 415-0153

Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.

Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front

Roseville Historical Society

557 Lincoln Street, Roseville.

(916) 773-3003



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

Hello gentle readers. I just wanted to drop in here for a minute and let you know that anyone who wants to put museum or historical society related events in the hard copy version of The Placer's calendar should email me the details. It's going to be on a first come first served basis since we do have a limited amount of space. My email is jadair@placer.ca.gov

There are no such space restrictions on the internet, so we can always fit your events there.

Placer County Museums 101 Maple Street Auburn, CA 95603

