

Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

March 2011

Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“If there comes a little thaw,
Still the air is chill and raw,
Here and there a patch of snow,
Dirtier than the ground below,
Dribbles down a marshy flood;
Ankle-deep you stick in mud
In the meadows while you sing,
“This is Spring.”

Christopher Pearce Cranch (1815-1892)

It becomes a race against time, trying to get all the things done needed to open the doors of the museum for the year. Suddenly, we have four new toilets installed and ready to serve. Thanks to our crew of handy men (and some onlookers), in one day the porcelain thrones stand by, ready for inspection!

The cleaning of the museum, inside and out, was performed by a lot of dedicated people.

At our February general meeting, a lot of folks committed themselves to be committee chair people. I can remember having to beg people to simply “sit” the museum, and yet, a dozen people stepped forward to work making our year a success. What a great group of people!

As soon as the weather turns warm enough for me to be creative, without my old bones hurting, we will start building the new props for our displays! It's hard for me to get enthused while it's so cold outside...or...inside...if no heat is available.

I'm already getting “antsy” about planting a vegetable garden, but not to worry. There are some things you can plant very early, but, March is too, too early! So, I will just sit by the fire and watch the weather!

Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

Did you hear that shot off in the distance? I believe that was the starting gun and the HSDV is off and running for the 2011 season! The Docents took an early lead because of cleaning and opening the museum, but that won't last. By December all members of the Society will be in a dead heat when the finish line is reached! They *all* will be big winners! The goal is something way better than a plaque or a trophy and all members aspire to win it, and do...every year! The real prize is the satisfaction of spreading and expanding awareness of the history of Dayton! Every year more folks, especially locals, discover the rich and unique history of our town, Dayton, Nevada, and that has come about through the “over the top” efforts of all of the members of the Historical Society of Dayton Valley!

The Docents are frequently the most visible members of the Society and each of you should be very proud of that. We are seen at the museum, at the Ghost Walk, in the School Education Program, all public events, and that is something to be very proud of. None of that could happen without the hard and tireless work of all Society members. Some are “way” better organizing, promoting, researching, whatever it takes to make the Society work. One special example [that] comes to mind is the website! Another, of course, is photos, DVDs. Who sets up all those shade canopies? Who creates all those flyers? How does the Society get publicity in print? Who hauls off all the leftovers from the rummage sale? How did those new toilets get installed in the museum? Enjoyed that Christmas Party? How did that happen? How did

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the filming of "The Misfits" become the theme of last year's Dayton Valley Days? And the 150th Anniversary of Lyon County, this year's theme? Room tax? The Scrapbooks? A second Railroad Jamboree? (Call me: 246-3527, I can name names!) "We" could go on for a long time! Be active! Stay a part of a winning TEAM! DAYTON needs you! (Picture Uncle Sam pointing his finger at...YOU!)

A new year and new opportunities! Thanks to all of you. It was a hoot working with you last year, and 2011 will be even more fun...and productive! Don't miss out!

Early Lyon County

By Laura Tennant

Dayton, Mound House and Silver City: Core communities in early Lyon County

Before Nevada obtained statehood October 31, 1864, portions of today's Lyon County were in Utah Territory, established by Congress in 1850. Later in 1861, Congress reorganized this area's geographic boundaries, creating Nevada Territory.

In November 1861, the Nevada Territorial Legislature divided the Territory into nine counties, including Churchill, Douglas, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lake (changed to Roop, 1862), Lyon, Ormsby Storey and Washoe.

Due to silver and gold discoveries, Dayton, Mound House and Silver City were the core communities.

Thompson and West's History of Nevada, 1881, says the county was named for General Nathaniel Lyon who was killed in the Civil War. Others believe the county's namesake is Robert Lyon, a hero of the Pyramid Lake Indian War, 1860. No one is certain but the most accepted source name is Nathaniel Lyon.

- **Dayton named county seat**

When Lyon organized, Dayton was named county seat. Parts of southern Lyon were in Esmeralda County, including Yerington. General

elections were September 3, 1862 for the offices of senator, assemblyman, county commissioners, district attorney, sheriff, county clerk, treasurer, assessor, recorder, school superintendent, surveyor, public administrator and collector.

- **Toll bridge, gaslight and water companies**

The County Commissioners appropriated \$10,000 to build a "free" bridge across the Carson River if the public would "subscribe" additional funds to complete it, but the decision was rescinded at the next meeting. Legislators later authorized Bolivar Roberts to construct a toll bridge across the Carson River at Dayton.

Located near today's bridge, the tollhouse was built midway in the river. Floodwaters destroyed it in the late 1800s.

A toll bridge was also approved and built near the Franklin Mill in the Carson River Canyon between Carson [City] and Dayton. "Finally, a vast project for inland navigation was conceived," said Thompson and West, adding: "This project was nothing less than an attempt to improve the Carson River, Carson Lake, Humboldt River and Humboldt Lake to make a continuous line of navigation from Dayton to Humboldt City." A charter drafted for the project was never formalized.

By special act of the Legislature, 1862, the Dayton Gaslight Company organized under the management of M.W. Starling, William Hayden, James H. Jacqua and associates but the plan fizzled. "Kerosene and candles continued to illuminate the burg," wrote historian/resident Fannie Hazlett.

- **Coal discovered in El Dorado Cañon south of Dayton**

The largest known coal discovery in Lyon was 25 miles south of Dayton in El Dorado Cañon (historical spelling) in 1861. Mining districts formed and regulations were established with 40 acre claims permitted, each to be surveyed, treated as real property.

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The coal was considered better quality than lignite found near Walker Lake or Washoe Valley. Several hundred tons were marketed. "It was remarkably free from sulfur and if found in more sufficient quantities, would have been valuable," said Thompson & West.

In 1876, the Nevada State geologist reported the exploration of coal in El Dorado was extensive with more than \$200,000 spent. Shafts were dug to 600 feet and more. Speculations were so high that the Legislature permitted a charter for a railroad.

- **El Dorado Cañon crime**

The Lyon County Sentinel reported on November 18, 1865:

"In jail: Augustus Sharp arrested by Deputy Sheriff Jenness for cruelly beating an old man named Wagner with a club in El Dorado Cañon. Wagner and Sharp had their problems. Sharp was unable to cope with the old man in a fair contest so he sneaked up behind and beat him in a shocking manner. Sharp will have a trial as soon as Wagner is able to attend in Dayton Justice Court."

Closing notes

By Bob Wallace

First, my thanks to Patrick Neylan for keying in and forwarding to me Ruby McFarland's input for this month's newsletter. We were on the road for 16 days, including major stops in Sacramento, Huntington Beach and Riverside, CA; and four nights in Tempe, AZ.

Second, that Sacramento visit allowed time for visiting the California State Railroad Museum and Library to view several Carson & Colorado Railroad items stored in the library and accessible to people with an interest in historical information. In some instances, one must call ahead to request specific items that may be stored in their offsite storage facility.

This year marks 130 years since the Carson & Colorado Railroad began service to and through

Dayton, so a map of the Dayton station was requested to look at, with track and structures detailed on that map, although this specific map came from the Southern Pacific era in the early 1900s. That map was copied and is being sent to us for inclusion in the Dayton railroad collection.

While searching the Internet some time ago, a location said to be on the Carson & Colorado Railroad was noted, that being Sand Mound. More searching on the Internet for this location came up empty, so it was most interesting to find a C&C surveyor's map detailing how and where the line would be constructed, that drawing terminating at a location named as Sand Mound, adjacent to the southeast corner of Walker Lake. My guess is that this was a temporary location for the survey crew, as employee timetables for the C&C covering the area from Mound House to Hawthorne do not reference it, but do include a number of other stations along the right of way.

Add to this listing of former C&C papers the employee Time Table Number 7, dated effective January 1, 1882, at 7:45 A.M., with H.M. Yerington named as Gen'l Supt., W.H. Crisler, Master Transportation, and R.J. Laws as Asst. Supt.

Copies made by the California State Railroad Museum Library were to be mailed when completed; upon their arrival they will be placed in the museum for all to view. The paperwork named here merely scratches the surface of what the CSRM Library has available in its collection.

The second annual Depot Jamboree is being put together by a committee currently, with plans for what should be an interesting weekend for folks in and around Dayton. The purpose of the weekend event is to help raise funding to refurbish "our" Dayton Depot, making it appear again as it did in 1881 when the Carson & Colorado Railroad opened its doors for business. Mark your calendar for April 30 and May 1 and help us celebrate 130 years since the first C&C depot along the main line between Mound House and Hawthorne was put to work. This is the only C&C depot still standing in Nevada, so deserves special attention from local residents and will eventually serve as a welcome center to Old Town Dayton one day.