

Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

April 2011

Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“One never knows what each day is going to bring. The important thing is to be open and ready for it.”

Henry Moore, British sculptor (1898-1986)

Wanted! Docents to man the museum one day a month. It doesn't have to be a docent, it can be a general membership person who is interested in keeping the museum open. We have such a unique museum in as much that we are all volunteers. Most all the other museums in the area have paid employees because the museum is a county- or state-operated facility. We don't have that luxury as we are self-supporting and depend on volunteers to keep our programs interesting and the museum open. So please be one of those who want to keep the museum open. Remember, it's only one day a month.

I frankly don't know what we would do without Ron Rowe. Don't mention a project to do because the next time you look, he has it done! The museum had a leak that caused a puddle at the front door. I told the general membership. He called me Sunday to tell me not to worry, he had it fixed. He had to climb up on that slippery metal roof to put a cap over the old oil stove chimney. And he doesn't confine his generosity to the Historical Society. Any person who needs help because of age or illness need only to ask Ron. Heaven has a special place for folks like him. Both he and his wife Sharon are always on the lookout for people who need help.

Well, the whole membership is gearing up for a very busy season. The Jamboree seems well organized and on its way. I'm sure Tom and Bob

can use help; the last time I heard they needed a hot dog chef. How hard could that be? I'm sure everyone is going to have a great time.

Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

In the last year I have discovered eBay. For me this was major! I have two Cadillacs with 8-track [tape] players. I have no cell phone. Having received a computer from my brother as a Christmas present several years ago I have entered the 20th century. Still working on the 21st! I have no idea about Facebook, Twitter, whatever! Not ready to go there yet. I do pay bills, certainly register cars (I have 18), and buy gifts, books and collectibles online, which brings me back to eBay.

I was amazed at what was available on eBay pertaining to St. Mary in the Mountains and Virginia City. I began buying historic postcards. Prices vary widely. Mine photos demand higher prices. Some come up for bid from different sellers at way different starting prices. Photos of St. Mary's from different eras come up often, but at way different prices. You need to know what you are looking at. Dayton photos are rare as hen's teeth, but do come up. The good news is that our museum has all of them ... so far!

All of this led me to suggesting that the Society purchase an 1878 “Lyon County Times” newspaper which is now at the museum awaiting accession, as well as another four copies of the same newspaper purchased by the Society. All of this adds to the collections at the museum, and the history of “Dayton.” The Docent meeting today [March 23] stressed the need to “catch up” on accession procedures to bring the museum up to

- Continued on Page 2 -

date and to make way for additional acquisitions.

My “surfing” of eBay today looking for Nevada items, Dayton or VC specific, turned up some major and surprising photos of mines and mills, listed as being in Virginia City. I am fairly knowledgeable about our area so sent an email asking if these sites could not possibly be located around Virginia City, Montana. The response from the vendor was: “they came from a government archive, and with most things paid for by taxpayers, there could be mistakes.” They, I guess, have no interest in making any corrections! Those photos were not from Nevada.

Ergo, buyer beware! eBay is great! You can find astounding and remarkable things! Just be sure about what you are looking for! Do your research and do not pay more than what you want to donate to your Society! Just kidding! Let us know if you find something unique, or have any questions pertaining to authenticity. The Society will help you. Laura Tennant is our Historian. Contact Laura or the Society.

[Patrick Neylan can be reached via telephone at: 246-3527, or via email: virginiacitypat@sbcglobal.net -Editor]

For the love of Gold:

Chinese water ditch and river wood drives

By Laura Tennant

The year was 1857, mines panning placer gold in Gold Cañon needed a year-around water source – Gold Creek usually went dry during the summer. Edward Rose and others hired Chinese laborers out of California to dig a water ditch from the Carson River to Gold Cañon.

Said the *Sacramento Union*, July 1, 1857: “About 150 Chinese arrived in Gold Cañon from El Dorado County (California), with a view of engaging in extensive mining operations. Their purpose is cutting a ditch from the Carson River to Gold Cañon and were making good wages.” The same story is repeated in the *Union* on August 8, 1857.

Also, reported in the *Hutchings' California Magazine*, a visitor to Gold Cañon in September 1857 wrote: “At this place we found about twenty American miners and some forty or fifty Chinese, and from the man who kept the little trading post here we learned that the diggings prospected well, and that a company of men were about conducting water in by a ditch four or five miles long.”

When the ditch was completed, the proprietors were surprised to see the outlet was higher than its head. The ditch was redug to repair the problem.

Nevada's first major construction project, the ditch began at the mouth of the Carson River where it enters Dayton to the west, crossed U.S. Highway 50E and ran along the edge of the hills on the north side of the roadway, above River Street to Gold Cañon where water was collected in a reservoir.

The ditch also provided water for milling operations on River Street, including the Birdsall and Douglass Mills.

The reservoir served as the Dayton town water supply until the 1970s. The ditch is still visible on the north side of U.S. Highway 50E from the bottom of Dayton Hill to River Street.

Carson River wood drive

In 1865, wood burned in mills and around Dayton totaled 1,800 cords a day. The nearby mountains were denuded. The remaining source of wood was the Sierra Nevada. Annually, thousands of cords of wood were floated down the Carson River to Dayton – much of it was loaded on wagons to be hauled to Silver City, Gold Hill or Virginia City. In the 1870s, the wood drive was a profitable business.

Dredging for gold

East of *Our Park*, J.H. Rae, Sr. operated the first floating dredge on the Carson River to recover gold and mercury lost in milling operations. A vacuum dredge, used to suck up sand, failed to work so another type of bucket system was added.

- Continued on Page 3 -

Rocks battered the buckets. A larger boat was built with a clam-shell dredge and concentrators installed. Efforts proved futile.

Chinese hand-dug water ditch

The water ditch hand-dug by Chinese laborers in 1857 can still be seen on the north side of U.S. Highway 50E from the bottom of Dayton Hill to *Our Park* at the entrance into downtown Dayton. The ditch carried water into a reservoir and to Gold Cañon to provide miners to pan the quartz gold there.

(See photos with descriptions at Dayton Kiosk near *Our Park* on River Street.)

Creation of Nevada counties

By Vicki Kinney

This year, as I am sure you know, is the sesquicentennial for not only Lyon County, but also for Nevada as a Territory as well as the other eight original counties. A discussion of what were the original counties came up between me (a NV native) and a lifelong friend, also a NV native. We couldn't name them! The next day at the minting luncheon (Sesquicentennial First Strike Ceremony) I was asking what the original counties were, and once again they couldn't be named. We got close, but when I got home and looked up the answer, I was really surprised, and a bit embarrassed not knowing more about our state's origins. It was suggested that this could be the makings of an article for the *Docents Newsletter*, and I had to agree. So to the Internet I went.

From Wikipedia: "On March 2, 1861, the Nevada Territory separated from the Utah Territory and adopted its current name, shortened from Sierra Nevada (Spanish for "snowy range"). The separation from the Utah Territory was important to the federal government because of the Nevada population's political leanings, while the population itself was keen to be separated

because of animosity (and sometimes violence) between the non-Mormons who dominated Nevada, and the Mormons who dominated the rest of the Utah Territory."

This information is quoted from the Nevada Association of Counties: "The first Nevada Territorial Legislature established nine counties on November 25, 1861, including Churchill, Douglas, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lyon, Ormsby, Storey, Washoe and Lake. Only Humboldt County, which existed as a county within the Utah Territory, was retained and established as a county within both the Nevada Territory and, subsequently, the State of Nevada. The largest territorial county was Esmeralda which, along with Churchill and Humboldt, comprised four-fifths of the Nevada Territory. Lake County (NW corner of Nevada) was renamed Roop County on December 5, 1862, and then consolidated with Washoe County in 1889 because of its very small population. Two more counties, Lander and Nye, were organized when Nevada was a territory, so that the total number of counties in Nevada when it became a state was eleven."

I found this additional information at <http://nevada-history.org/county.html>:

Ormsby: Original county name in 1861, but changing to Carson City, an independent municipality, in 1969. Ormsby County was the smallest county in the state, 168 square miles, 12 of which are under water at Lake Tahoe. Named for Major William M. Ormsby who came to the area in 1857, and later slain in the Pyramid Lake Indian War of 1860. Carson City is the county seat. Prior to the NV Territory, Carson County was originally created in 1854 by Utah Territory with jurisdiction over an area now in Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lyon, Mineral, Pershing, Storey and Washoe counties; abolished in 1861.

Churchill: The name derived from Fort Churchill, which was named for General Sylvester Churchill of Vermont. Its county seat is Fallon, and previous county seats were LaPlata (1864-1868) and Stillwater (1868-1904). It was noted that Churchill

- Continued on Page 4 -

County was not formally organized until 1864.

Douglas: Named for Stephen Arnold Douglas, a nationally known political figure and opponent of Abraham Lincoln. County seat is Minden. The town of Minden was started by H.F. Dangberg Sr., who settled in Carson Valley in 1857. He was born near a town in Prussia named Minden, hence the town name.

Esmeralda: The name means emerald in Spanish, given to the mining district by J.M. Corey, an explorer of the area and an early Nevada miner. The county seat is Goldfield (1907). It is also believed that Corey named the district after the gypsy dancer, Esmeralda, from Victor Hugo's novel, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

Humboldt: The oldest county in Nevada. It was named for the Humboldt River. The name comes from Baron Friedrich Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859). The Humboldt River was named by John C. Fremont while on his exploration of 1845-1846. Unionville was the first county seat in 1861, but when the mining boom died it was moved to Winnemucca, named after the Great Indian Chief who lived in the area. Winnemucca means – Place by the river.

Lyon: Named in honor of General Nathaniel Lyon who was killed in action at the battle of Wilson's Creek, August 10, 1861, near Springfield, MO. However, other historians claim it was in honor of Captain Robert Lyon who arrived in Nevada via wagon train in June 1850 and served in the Pyramid Lake War of 1860. However, State Archive staff discovered a county seal with the picture of the Civil War general and settled the dispute. Original county seat was Dayton until 1911 when it was moved to Yerington.

Storey: Named after Edward Farris Storey, Captain of Company K, the Virginia Rifles, Washoe Regiment. On June 2nd, 1860, he was killed in battle during an engagement at the Pyramid Lake Indian War. The county seat is Virginia City.

Washoe: Washoe City was the first county seat in 1861 but was replaced by Reno in 1871. Washoe was named after a small Indian tribe known as the Wassou Indians, which means tall bunch grass or

rye grass. It is also reported to be the ethnic name of the small Hokan-speaking tribe that inhabited the area, the Washoe from Washiu, meaning "person."

Lake: An original county; renamed Rook in 1862; annexed in 1883 by Washoe County. My previous source said Rook was annexed in 1889, and I have a third source saying an Act was passed February 18, 1864, to attach Rook to Washoe. And that in the following September 1864 the State Constitution was amended to show Rook now a part of Washoe. (This last bit of information is from the history of Rook Co., nevadaobserver.com/history) So take your pick.

Happy 150th Birthday to Nevada as a territory and to our original counties, those remaining.

C&C anniversary

By Bob Wallace

This month of April 2011 marks the anniversary 130 years ago when the Carson & Colorado Railroad made its first revenue run from Mound House to Dayton. According to the timeline for the C&C compiled by Linda Clements, April 18, 1881 was the date the line was placed in service between Mound House and Hawthorne.

This year, the HSDV is promoting the second annual **Depot Jamboree** (April 30/May 1) in Dayton, an ongoing effort to raise funds to refurbish the depot, again making it appear as it did in 1881 when the first train rolled into Dayton.



Dayton's Carson & Colorado Railroad Depot as it appeared about 1910 under ownership of the Southern Pacific.