

# Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

May 2011

## Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“It's wonderful to do nothing and then to rest afterwards. -Anonymous

Seems I'm doing a lot of nothing lately. My get up and go got up and went! I've been patiently waiting for spring. It shows itself briefly for a day and it makes me feel good for the moment.

The whole HSDV is buzzing around getting ready for a number of projects. The Jamboree being the most important – then plunging headlong into May and daily chores. We have the museum open every day of May, Thursday night lectures, involvement with Oodles of Noodles, parking lot duty and I'm sure I've missed something. Oh yes, we have a Chautauqua at Dayton Elementary School on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May.

If that's not busy enough, the HSDV is getting *stuff* together for the June rummage sale which helps pay our insurance. There are other activities in June, but please let us get through May before we involve ourselves with June.

The museum and the depot look so neat and clean. There have been a lot of man hours put in to make a good presentation. Again – Ron Rowe is in the middle of the work crews. However, there are a lot of other folks who have helped getting everything shiny for spring. I don't have the list of people who have helped – they deserve a big thank you also.

I hope everyone gets to enjoy themselves in the month of May. You all have worked so hard to make it work. Thank you!

[Dayton's historic museum will be open daily in May to celebrate Historic Preservation. Weekdays: 11:00-3:00; Saturdays: 10-4; Sundays: 1-4. -Ed.]

## History, post card size, in three phases

By Patrick Neylan

Phase I was when I was very young and went somewhere with my folks. I would take my trophy Brownie, load the film, take the picture of “the falls,” and then take the film to the drug store and wait a week to see how the picture of “the falls” turned out. I soon learned that my anticipated picture did not turn out at all, so I began also going to the gift shop wherever and buying a postcard of “the falls” as a backup to the picture that may or may not turn out. I might not have Aunt Martha or the dog on the postcard, but I did have the falls! Then I started buying postcards from wherever we went of whatever we saw. Ended up with lots of postcards.

Phase II came later. Older now, I began wandering through antique stores and shows looking for nothing in particular but enjoying all things past. Sometimes I would come upon a postcard that was of a place I had once visited with the folks, etc. It might be a famous old hotel, a natural wonder, a neat restaurant, a special city or whatever. Some view of things I had seen and enjoyed before I started Phase I. Now I was starting to have a whole lot of postcards!

Phase III is by far the most dangerous ... and expensive! This phase goes beyond casually stumbling on a postcard that evokes a warm and fuzzy memory of days gone by, and leads to searching actively, aggressively, even passionately for some different scene, view, town, building, on and on ... that you don't possess! How many postcards are there of Dayton, Virginia City, Gold Hill,

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Rochester, Austin? The list is endless ... but I am going to find out! Now I don't have to go the antique store or show. The entire world of post-cards comes to my house through my computer. New cards arrive almost daily! Now I have a whole ton of postcards ... like this one.



## Comstock era history at historical lecture series

By Laura Tennant

The Historical Society of Dayton Valley will celebrate Comstock era history that began in 1849 with Nevada's first gold find at the mouth of Gold Canyon, today's Dayton.

Each May, the state's Historic Preservation Office focuses on Nevada's history during Historical Preservation and Archaeology Month. This year's theme is "trails."

Lectures are free with refreshments and begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Dayton Senior Center, 320 Old Dayton Valley Road, May 5, 12 and 19.

The annual May Lecture series begins Thursday, May 5, featuring Archaeologist Mike Drews, Gnomon, Inc., depicting Comstock Era life identified with artifacts found during an excavation at Half Way House, an 1860-1887 Way Station, hotel, residence and tollgate located west of Mound House. It was half way between Carson City and Virginia City, linking the two towns through the McDonald and Bedford Toll Road, one of the numerous toll roads that connected Dayton with other Comstock towns and

California's gold country.

The Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the Virginia & Truckee Railway funded the excavation of the site located under the railroad grade near the new bridge crossing at U.S. Highway 50 at Mound House.

- On May 12, Larry Schmidt, "Trails West" Association, Reno, presents info on an emigrant trail: "The Johnson Cutoff provides a key clue for finding Mark Twain's Lake Tahoe timber camp." Mark Twain came through Nevada Territory (through Dayton) on the Overland Immigrant Trail in the 1860s. He and Adolph Sutro visited about the local state of affairs when they met in Dayton in the 1860s.

- May 19: Dayton Historian, Stony Tennant, lectures about life on 1860s pioneer trails, including wood cutter roads in the Pine Nut ranges south of Dayton, Indian and emigrant trails.

For further information, call 246-3256 or 246-9396.

## Albert Anthony Baroni

By Reuben Erickson

Albert Anthony Baroni, an Italian immigrant, grew up in Dayton, managed the Odeon Hall for several years, learned about horses in this area, and owned and trained thoroughbred horses and raced them successfully against the best in the nation for two decades. My attention was called to him when I received a book of collectible coins from Holabird-Kagin of Reno in which a 12½-cent trade token issued by "Bert" Baroni for the Odeon Hall was offered. Having recently read the book "Seabiscuit," the name of Baroni was remembered from the book. The connection was made.

Albert Baroni was born in Marlia, Tuscany, just outside Lucca in 1890. He emigrated to Dayton in 1900 to be with his two brothers who ran a farm/ranch near the Quilici's. The idea was to make money to send back to the family in Italy. A sister also came over who married Bernardo Ricci. Per

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the Holabird-Kagin information, Bert must have been at least managing the Odeon Hall in the 1908 to 1914 time frame. In interviews with Baroni's son it was learned that the first movies in Dayton were shown in the Odeon by Albert. Information on the period from ~1914 to the early '30s is pretty empty to this writer. Perhaps someone else in Dayton can provide more info. Baroni's son knew that he must have been married in this time period but that there were no children. It would appear that Bert Baroni must have had an interest in horse racing and in gambling. Information from the Internet indicates that Baroni, perhaps with a partner, had a slot machine "route" in Reno and profited well from it.

A Time Magazine article in the March 2, 1936 edition reads as follows: "Albert Anthony Baroni is a carefully-tailored gentleman whose wise, sun-burned Latin face has grown increasingly familiar to track followers for the past five years. Long ago, Mr. Baroni ran a restaurant in Reno, Nev. With the profits, he bought race horses which he, himself, trained and ran at minor tracks. He first attracted national attention in 1933 when in Chicago he was arrested, indicted but never tried for giving horses heroin. By that time, track followers had noticed one remarkable thing about Mr. Baroni: His stable was being run at a consistent profit. However, any suspicion that this was disproportionately due to Mr. Baroni's sophistication in matters only indirectly connected with horseflesh was allayed by something he did in 1934. That year, Mr. Baroni bought a horse called Top Row."

In the interview with Albert Jr. he said that while his father was in Chicago he was sought out by Al Capone. He had no information on what transpired but that his dad said he was shaking in his boots. Top Row was a "Claimer." Internet info indicated that there may have been a poker game during which someone let slip something about the horse that provoked Baroni to buy the horse after the next race for \$3,500. Baroni had also looked at Seabiscuit for \$3,500 but did not like his conformation for racing. Baroni returned to California where Top Row began to win races. He

returned to the East where Top Row won 5 of 6 races including the Narragansett Special for \$25,000. In February Top Row returned to the Santa Anita Handicap to race against Discovery, Alfred Vanderbilt's horse of the year, and beat him, earning Albert Baroni \$119,600. Top Row's winnings totaled \$211,820, highest of any horse racing in the U.S. that year. Not bad for a boy from Dayton. One wag suggested that the purse from Santa Anita alone could have purchased Rhode Island in 1936. Grace Ricci has a painting of Top Row hanging on a wall.

Albert continued in horse racing with Specify who came in second to Seabiscuit at the Hollywood Park Gold Cup in 1938 and who won the San Carlos Handicap in 1940. He also had a horse, Autocrat, who won the San Carlos Handicap two years running in 1948 and 1949. Al Jr. said that Autocrat had qualified for the Kentucky Derby but was scratched when the horse had ill effects from the train ride to Kentucky.

Albert Sr. lived at Del Mar during the summers and lived in Pasadena in the 30s and 40s, and in San Gabriel starting in 1945. His silk colors were red white and blue. His last horse was Last Row.

Albert Baroni's wife, Anne Reinhardt and mother of Al Jr., had come west to Nevada to be with a friend, Kay Johnson. She met Albert Sr. at that time. Since Al Jr. was born in 1945 the marriage must have been prior to that time.

Albert Anthony Baroni died in 1955.

Information in this article was gained from interviews with Albert Baroni Jr., Grace Ricci, the Time Magazine article of 1936, racing data from the various tracks, and Google searches for Albert Baroni.

[The painting referenced in this article is too large to fit in this space, thus is included on the following page. -Ed.] The plaque at the bottom of the picture reads as follows:

**TOP ROW**  
**WINNER OF THE NARRAGANSETT SPECIAL 1935**  
**W. WRIGHT - UP OWNER & TRAINER A A BARONI**

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Top Row in the Winner's Circle in 1935

## Closing notes

By Bob Wallace

Barely beyond this year's Depot Jamboree as this newsletter is being assembled and a well deserved "Thank you!" to the HSDV members who assisted in readying the depot for this year's event on Friday, and cleaned up late on Sunday afternoon when everyone had gone home. Already we're into a full month of sitting the museum on a daily basis, provided we're able to find docents whose schedule allows for filling all the days during the week in addition to the usual weekend schedule. Donna McElroy is watching over the museum schedule currently. If you have any questions regarding the museum's schedule, call Donna at 246-8765, or email will reach her at <[donnamcelroy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:donnamcelroy@sbcglobal.net)>. Weekday hours for the month: 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; there is no change in weekend hours.

Historical Preservation and Archaeology Month is upon us once again. This year's theme is "trails," thus lectures on the first three Thursdays of the month will deal with some of the trails in and around Dayton over the years. Among other things, this year's theme will also discuss artifacts found during an excavation at Half Way House, an 1860-1887 Way Station adjacent to the modern-

day V&T Railway bridge over US 50 just west of Mound House. Lectures on May 5, 12 and 19 will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center on Old Dayton Valley Road.

Mid-month brings the Oodles of Noodles weekend event over May 14 and 15. In addition to holding down the HSDV tent on Pike Street in Old Town, we will again be using the depot parking area for vehicles on Saturday and Sunday that weekend, and opening the depot for those who might want to see the inside. With that thought in mind, many of the pictures inside the depot for the Jamboree were left for the Oodles of Noodles weekend.

Several other happenings have been under discussion for some time. Among them, a visit by the HSDV to Dangberg Ranch at the south end of the Carson Valley, and a walk at the eastern edge of Dayton Valley to what may be the site of that train wreck pictured on the back of our T-shirts for this year's Depot Jamboree. Whether either of these will be added to our schedule remains to be seen as this newsletter is published.

Before closing out this month's newsletter, our thanks to Reuben Erickson for the article and photo in this issue, and to Patrick Neylan who also sent along a picture for use with his contribution in this issue. If you have a submission for future newsletters that may include a picture, send the text and picture(s) as separate attachments in an email message. Text and picture(s) combined in one attachment makes it far more difficult to work with.

### Calendar:

In addition to everything else going on this month of May, the following dates to keep in mind.

**May 18:** HSDV general meeting, 12:30 at the Dayton Valley Library, followed by the C&C Depot Working Group.

**May 25:** Docent meeting, 10:30 at the museum.

Deadline for submissions for the June issue: the Memorial Day weekend.