

Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

June 2011

Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“It is the month of June, The month of leaves and roses, When pleasant sights salute the eyes, And pleasant scents the noses.”

Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-1867)

Some horrendous things have happened this past couple of months all over the world. Makes me glad I live out here in the Nevada desert where the wind blows a little dirt around occasionally. Let's all count our blessings and hope those folks who need help find it soon.

Whew, May is over and we can slow down to a trot. We met ourselves coming and going last month. Plus the weather didn't always cooperate with the events. The HSDV folks endured and got the jobs done. What a great bunch of people who sacrifice their time to make the programs work. Only had one little fly in the ointment when the wind I spoke of earlier shut down the Oodles of Noodles celebration on May 15th. Not only windy but bitter cold as well.

In Nevada, if you don't like the weather wait 10 minutes. I love Nevada and all the weather it has to offer. We are having a rummage sale June 17th and 18th. Hope the weather knows how to behave. If you have good stuff to donate let us know and we will pick it up. No clothes please. You can also leave donations on the back porch of the depot at Highway 50 and Main Street. Our volunteers check to make sure donations are taken inside. I've a lot of doodads to get rid of at home – here's my opportunity.

After the rummage sale we will have a little time to enjoy summer – if it ever comes – and plan for all of our fall events. Wouldn't want us to be idle

too long. I'm going to use my time to tend my veggie garden. Nothing like fresh veggies, no matter how much it costs to raise them. I'm not complaining, just an observation. Anyway, take some time to smell the roses.

Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

History is fascinating whether you study it or make it!

It is June already. Where did the first half of this year go? The Society has already participated in several events; the school program, the Jamboree, the wild and windblown Oodles of Noodles, the May lecture series, keeping the museum open every day in May, work days at the museum and depot ... to name only the major ones. Through all of this we have added to the knowledge of our own history. We have met new folks with Dayton stories at these events. Morgan has created new photo displays that have taught us something new. We have discovered new facts in our own museum. This was one of the main reasons I joined HSDV. Oh, I still have a special place in my heart for loading chairs, cleaning toilets and pulling weeds, but learning our history is always my driving force and main passion.

Last year we had a unique opportunity to help make history when Dayton turned out to celebrate the Pony Express and its 150th anniversary right on the streets of Old Town. Most of us will never see the 200th! This year, all year, we get to help the entire county make history as we mark the 150th anniversary of Lyon County. Some facts in early Nevada history get disputed but no one can dispute the fact that Dayton was the first county

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seat of Lyon County and held that distinction for 50 years! In addition to this exciting event we have another opportunity to both study our history and help make it when later this month we welcome the National Lincoln Highway Association to Dayton. They will be coming from all over the country to walk down Pike Street and experience for themselves the Pioneer Route of the Lincoln Highway and we can walk right along with them and share our knowledge and glean from theirs. We will be serving them lunch at the depot and giving tours of the Firehouse and museum. They will only be with us for a short time but all members are invited to come by, meet them, and study and make Dayton history all in one day.

They will be in town Wednesday, June 22nd between about Noon and 2:00 p.m. Meet at the depot. For additional information, contact me at 246-3527, or send email to me at:

virginiacitypat@sbcglobal.net

Georgina Adeline Ballom Quilici remembers life in Odeon Hall/Dayton

By Laura Tennant

Reading Rube Erickson's story about Albert "Bert" Baroni and the Odeon Hall in last month's newsletter, I remembered an article I'd written in *Lyon County Reflections* in 1990, titled "The Spirit Endures" about the Asuero Quilici family and their relationship with the Odeon Hall and Saloon.

I interviewed Georgina Quilici Ballom before she passed away in February 1999. She revealed her family's story in 1990: Her father, 17-year-old Asuero, immigrated to Storey County in 1897. By 1900, he was an American citizen. He and a partner bought the Odeon Hall in 1903 – three years later, he sold his interest in the Odeon and went back to Italy and married Pasquina Tognetti, Georgina's mother.

He and Pasquina moved to the Sutro Ranch east of Dayton (a site on today's Minor Ranch) where daughter Letitia and son Lorenzo were born.

A few years later, Asuero moved to a small ranch in Glendale, Nevada near Sparks, where the family's last two children, Georgina, and her brother Frank made their debut.

In 1916, Asuero repurchased the Odeon Hall and moved back to Dayton. Before long, he suffered a heart attack and died, leaving Pasquina alone to raise four children.

Having little choice, she bartended at the Odeon Saloon, took in boarders and cooked to make ends meet. The family lived in quarters attached to the backside of the Odeon.

Meanwhile, before Asuero's death, Pasquina took Lorenzo, 11 years old, to Stanford Lane [Hospital], Palo Alto, where he'd been treated for tuberculosis of the bone centralized in his spinal column. He was in a body cast for a few years but the bone disease advanced to his cranium. He was in terrific pain. Stanford doctors operated but lost him on the table.

Out of luck, it seemed, Pasquina's oldest daughter, Letitia, suffering from heart disease, died at home.

"It was 1930, the year I graduated from high school. My best friend, Iva Gruber (Union Hotel family) and I were watching a silent movie sitting on a bench with Letitia sitting between us. She slipped to the floor and hit her head on my knee. I screamed. They took her to the balcony for fresh air and that's where she died," Georgina recalled the sadness.

Her brother, Frank, graduated from Dayton High School on Pike Street, attended UNR and worked at the Nevada Highway Department until his death in 1936.

Georgina helped her mother run the Odeon Saloon in the 1930s. She married Les "Bo" Ballom, a Dayton barber, in 1935.

Read more about life in Dayton next month as related by Georgina in 1990 when she was 77 years old, and "The Spirit Endures" continues.

Dayton
Where Nevada History Begins!

Closing notes

By Bob Wallace

From one busy month into another! First, a big "Thank you!" to docents who kept the museum's doors open throughout the month of May as we celebrated National Historic Preservation Month. Weekends saw the typical Saturday and Sunday hours maintained (10:00-4:00, 1:00-4:00, respectively); weekdays were covered between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

June looks like another hectic month for the HSDV and for docents. June 17 and 18 have been chosen as the dates for this year's rummage sale; June 22 will find the Lincoln Highway Association visiting Dayton's historic Old Town; and the monthly meetings, most of those on their usual days. The monthly docents meeting is being set back one week to avoid conflicting with the Lincoln Highway Association's visit.

One other detail needs addressing in this issue, that being the usual June visit of the Pony Express re-ride across Nevada. Over the past month or so an equine herpes virus has impacted horses in the western states to such a degree that the National Pony Express Association announced at the end of May that their annual event has been moved back to August. This year's ride from St. Joseph, MO to Sacramento, CA will get under way on August 17, arrive in Sacramento on the 27th. Details for their visit to Dayton will be available in an upcoming newsletter as they become available.

Over the past several years we have discussed nearly ad nauseum the fact that Dayton seems to be ignored by virtually everyone in the state of Nevada, despite Dayton's enviable place in Nevada history as the beginning point for state history. As one historian has put it, Dayton has more history than any other place in Nevada!

Gold was discovered in 1849 by Abner Blackburn near the mouth of Gold Canyon when he scraped up a few flakes, nearly one year later a small nugget weighing nearly 20 ounces was found in the same general area by John Orr and taken on to California before it was returned many

years later by his family. A replica of Orr's nugget is in the display case at Dayton's museum.

Mormon pioneers en route from Salt Lake to Genoa passed by what later became Dayton, some noting in their diaries that the area was buzzing with activity, a large number of tents being seen in the area near Gold Canyon while on their journey through the lower Carson valley.

All of this and more brings up the notion of telling anyone willing to listen that *Dayton* is *where Nevada history begins!* Rather than being an afterthought in Nevada history, if thought of at all, Dayton belongs at the top of the list!

Calendar

June 15: HSDV general monthly meeting, 12:30 at the Dayton Valley Library, followed by the C&C Depot Working Group.

June 17 and 18: Rummage sale, 8:00 – 4:00.

June 22: Lincoln Highway Association visit to Dayton's historic Old Town. Time and location to be advised for those participating.

June 29: Docents meeting, 10:30 at the museum. (Postponed by one week to avoid a conflict with the Lincoln Highway Association.)

Dayton

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