

# Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

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## Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Eleanor Roosevelt

I'm showcasing some of the women who have been my heroines: Eleanor Roosevelt, Golda Meir, Barbara Fritchie and a couple of local girls. The first one would be Fanny Hazlett.

Now Fanny Gore Hazlett came west with her brother and they stayed at Buckland's Station a couple of days before they came on to the Dayton area. Fanny's brother went into the wood business and Fanny had a little boarding business up in Eldorado Canyon.

Fanny was a very ambitious woman and was interested in everything. She married Dr. [John C.] Hazlett and they settled down in Dayton. The couple had one daughter, Gertrude, and the home and office for Dr. and Mrs. Hazlett is still in use by Raymond and Maybelle Walmsley on Tyler Street. Fanny worked hard to get women the vote in Nevada which happened two years before the national vote was realized for us gals. Fanny and Gertrude collaborated on a history of Dayton which was published and now is available at the Dayton Museum.

I could go on and on about Fanny. She wanted to be a writer and wrote under the name of Frank Hazlett as it was difficult for women to be published.

The other woman I admired in the early days of Dayton was Emma Nevada Loftus. She came to Dayton in the 1890s. Her first husband died leaving her with a small child. That child grew up to be one of the colorful people in Dayton. He was

Chester Barton, deputy sheriff of Lyon County. Emma, however, was married again to Jack Loftus who was proprietor of Braun and Loftus Mercantile in downtown Dayton. She was a kindly person and spoke well of almost all the folks of Dayton. She also was a friend of Fanny Hazlett. She kept a daily diary of the happenings of Dayton and the people who lived here. In her later years she ran a motel-like business up at Lake Tahoe near Glenbrook. She opened late May and closed late September. Jack stayed in Dayton. She knew everyone and her historical diaries relate all the goings on from 1917 to 1958. I've read her diaries five times and I feel like Emma was a close friend.

There were other women in early Dayton, but none that interested me more than Fanny Hazlett and Emma Loftus.

## Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

There is a great scene from the musical, *Camelot*, where all the members of Arthur's Court are having a picnic and frolicking on the meadows. Lancelot asks the king, “What are they doing?” and the King responds, “They are a May-ing!” Well, I am here to tell you when the HSDV goes “a May-ing” there is very little frolicking!

What a month we just had! No one in Dayton could have gotten through the month of May without somehow coming into contact with the HSDV. We had lectures in the evening with all the necessary setup and take down, plus refreshment helpers; special tours of the museum (close to 50 people on one) and the firehouse; put on a lunch-

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eon for the Nevada Geographical Names Board and a field trip to Fremont Lookout. We had in-class school programs, school visits from famous Dayton ghosts followed by walking field trips on four separate days. We had members working at the depot on maintenance and event planning. We had a well attended general meeting as well as a C&C working group meeting. There were members working on receiving and preliminary sorting of items for the pending rummage sale. We gained a Facebook page; updates to our website and press publicity. There was work on the 501(c)(3) issue, button designs and photos flying everywhere, lots of behind the scenes activity, and also very importantly, the museum was open each and every day as scheduled.

I do not believe we have had such broad participation and help from such a large and diverse number of HSDV members in a long time. We had 20 individuals involved with staffing the museum alone and several were trying it for the first time. Everyone should be very happy and proud of the results. In the last 31 days we hit on every facet of our Mission Statement. I also believe that after all the dust settled we could also say we had a lot of fun to boot! Thanks to all of you for all you did!

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### History mystery

## Nevada's 1881 'unknown' flood

By Bob Wallace

Dayton and Franktown have something in common. Each was hit by flooding in February of 1881 for which very little in the way of recorded history of that event seems to be available. Dayton lost roads and railroad for a period of time, Franktown was wiped out, including a mile of Virginia and Truckee Railroad tracks. The track was rebuilt but the hamlet became a memory. Curious here, too, is the lack of available details about flooding

through the upper Carson Valley, Truckee Canyon and Meadows, and quite possibly the Walker River drainage.

Given the minimal reporting available on that flood of 1881, every little bit that is found becomes a gem to be cherished. The *Lyon County Times* of February 5, 1881, reports that Dayton was flooded, every road in the area was damaged to one degree or another, the Carson & Colorado Railroad had two washouts in Daney Canyon, each in excess of 100 feet, another pair where Eldorado Creek meets the Carson River. Dayton residents were awakened about 1:00 that Saturday morning and told to seek higher ground as quickly as possible.

In a 2008 reprint of a story on Franktown, details emerge of a town endangered by a dam above the hamlet intended for irrigation purposes that was not built to the highest standards. That story details how widespread flooding impacted Nevada, California and Oregon, Franktown's dam being overrun with more water than it could handle. A wall of water estimated at 20 to 25 feet high came down Little Valley, taking out most of the buildings in Franktown and a mile of V&T track. Of the nearly 200 residents, no one was injured, but all were left homeless, including Eilley Bowers.

Two small areas of population recorded as being hit with at least one heavy rain storm would seem to suggest quite a bit of history on this weather event being readily available for other nearby areas as well, yet very little detail has been located to date. Given that the Franktown story indicates flooding throughout much of the region to the west of us, let's look for information from the other side of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

One story indicates flooding in California along the Feather, Yuba and American rivers from a combination of one storm in mid-January followed by back-to-back storms at the end of January and early in February. If the storms going across California came in the form of a *Chinook* or *Pineapple Express*, the first brings downslope

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winds, the other coming from near the Hawaiian Islands bringing warm rain, and, depending on the storm track, covering much of the west coast. As noted above, California, Nevada and Oregon were hit with two storms within a week bringing heavy doses of rain, the *Pineapple Express*.

Fortunately, a record of the Yuba watershed is available, 150 pages in a publication entitled "Lake Sacramento' -- Can It Happen Again?" Why check that record? Looking at a map finds Yuba City/Marysville, Grass Valley, Bowman Dam and Lake, and Dayton all lining up in nearly a straight line, each on the 39° line (plus a mile, two or three) north of the equator. For a storm coming in from the Hawaiian Islands covering the west coast from Oregon to central California, this portion of northern Nevada is likely to get its own drenching, although the rain amounts may vary one way or the other from what falls on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada range.

Unfortunately for us today, that mid-January storm is not recorded in terms of inches of rain, but what does show up for the late January and early February storms is impressive! Over a three-day period at Grass Valley at just over 2,400' above sea level, 11.04 inches of rain fell between January 28-30, 1881. That was followed by 4.39 inches on February 2-4, 1881. Get further up the Yuba watershed to Bowman Dam near 5,400' above sea level where original records show rain falling heavier at that elevation: January 29-31, 14.25 inches; February 3-4, 8.65 inches, or nearly 23 inches in one week!

Given a February 1 date for Franktown being flooded out, that water would have come out of the late January storm moving across the Sierra Nevada mountains. Same story for those living in Dayton at the time. That second storm in early February would have added more misery for those living on this side of the mountains. If only half of what Grass Valley received in that late January storm made its way over the mountains to Dayton and Franktown, that's seven inches of rain running off in every canyon surrounding Dayton: Daney,

Eldorado, Gold and Six Mile, with plenty of water to overrun Franktown's Little Valley irrigation dam built with boulders, sand and gravel but no masonry only a year or so earlier.

Whatever snow there may have been in the mountains clearly came down with that second storm of early February. Original records from the Bowman Dam site provide the evidence: February 2-3, 1881, temperatures in the low to mid 40s, that strongly suggesting it was raining at the summit. A report from the *Nevada Daily Transcript* for February 4, 1881, a Nevada City newspaper, confirms: "It rained clear to the Summit and the snow was disappearing rapidly." If that first storm in late January on this side of the hill was above the freezing mark, whatever snow was on local mountains would have been coming down, adding to the flooding as has been the situation with some number of flood episodes in this part of Nevada when the *Chinook* (downslope wind) or *Pineapple Express* (lots of rain) comes through.

Laura Tennant, Dayton historian, wrote about this flood event in the 1996 *Reflections*. She will be placing a copy in the museum's reading room for anyone interested in further information. Files with details located since the summer of 2012 relating to this flood have been stored on the computer in the museum office. Click on *Link to Documents*, then *1881 Flood* to view those files.

Given the severity of that midwinter flood, it's amazing that so little information is to be found about the Carson Valley area, Reno/Truckee area or Walker River watershed. Widespread flooding over Oregon, Nevada and California, as noted in the Franktown article by Patty Cafferata in the *Carson Times* five years ago, would suggest a far greater impact across much of Nevada, not just a localized storm showing Franktown and Dayton what can happen when Mother Nature has more water vapor in those clouds than she knows what to do with.

# Nevada Territory Cavalry, Infantry

By Margy Bethers

Call me Scarlett, but I love to sparkle and shine in my Civil War gown as I float through Virginia City with my fellow "Battle Born Civil War Re-enactors" and those of the "1st Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Cavalry." This Memorial Day, 2013, we march in Virginia City because 150 years ago the Nevada Cavalry was born, but I keep Dayton in mind.

In her diary, Fanny Hazlett tells about Dayton's loyalty to the Union during the Civil War. She recalls "stirring scenes enacted here on occasions of rebel demonstrations. As I wander through the streets of old town, I try to visualize these scenes. I wonder if young men wish they were part of the actual battle." Dayton was so far away from the fray! In 1863, however, the call to battle arrived!

Acting Governor [Orion] Clemens received the request to form the "1st Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Cavalry," as well as the "1st Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Infantry." Thus, Nevada units were to serve in the Federal Army! Before this, Nevadans served in California fighting causes, but now they could help in preserving the Union. Although "1st Battalion, Nevada Volunteer Cavalry" was never on the front line out east, their job was to guard the trade routes of the west, protect emigrant routes, and keep settlements from Indian attack. Several forts were built in Nevada, and were staffed by the Nevada Cavalry, as well as units from Oregon and California. Fort Churchill is the most famous.

Cavalry units from the east were now free to fight on the front lines, as previously they were used to protect the western frontier.

Actual recruiting began in Virginia City in 1862 at the firehouse. The early volunteers were mustered into the 3rd California Cavalry. However, when Nevada was authorized to raise their own

Battalion of Cavalry for a three year service, recruitment offices were opened in Gold Hill and Silver City, then later in Aurora, Carson City and Genoa. (What about Dayton?) The "1st Battalion of the Nevada Volunteer Cavalry" of six companies was completed in April of 1864. These companies would be engaged in various operations during their service, and all were disbanded by July of 1866.

The "1st Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Infantry" was raised for the Union Army during the Civil War. Three companies were organized at Fort Churchill, Nevada Territory, beginning in 1863. (Side note: the infantry are foot soldiers, whereas the cavalry are soldiers on horseback.)

It was reported that since the beginning of the Civil War, 34 officers and 1,158 enlisted men had voluntarily enlisted in the service of the United States from Nevada.

I found one member from the "1st Battalion of Volunteer Infantry" buried in the Dayton Cemetery: Guild, Oliver T, 1st Nevada Volunteer Infantry, Co A (Dayton Cemetery, Dayton, Lyon Co., Nevada.)

In her diary Fanny writes, "In 1865, the population of Dayton was twenty-five hundred. It boasted a military company of eighty-four men, a brewery, seven hotels, and other institutions common to mining camps." Huzzah! Is that Capt. John Wayne meandering down Main Street? My! I've the vapors.

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## Closing notes

By Bob Wallace

As Pat noted in his piece, the museum was busy in the month of May with 47 visitors arriving by bus on a Friday afternoon, 60-some students visiting later in the month. As was related to us by Barbara Peck, over the six years a student walking tour of Dayton has been taking place, more than 1,000 students have visited the history of Dayton, including the firehouse/jail, museum and Old Town. With May behind us, it's back to the regular weekend hours: Saturdays, 10-4; Sundays, 1-4.