

Docents Newsletter

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

April 2014



Schedule of Events:

Nevada 150 Meetings:

Tuesdays, 2 P.M. at the Museum.

Board Meeting:

*Wednesday, April 9th at the Community Center.
All welcome!*

Oodles of Noodles Committee:

*Thursdays, April 9th and 24th, 2:00 P.M. at the
Museum.*

General Meeting ~Come one and ALL!

*Wednesday, April 16th, 7:00 P.M., at the Community
Center.*

*Railroad Working Group: 6:00 P.M., the first Tuesday
of the month.*

The MUSEUM IS OPEN EVERY DAY IN MAY!

***Please check the schedule, and see Pat or Sheila, to
see where you can help ☺***

DOCENT LETTER

By Ruby McFarland

Spring has spring, the grass has riz, I wonder where the BIRDIES is. The birds are on the wing, Ain't that absurd, I thought the wings was on the bird!

.....
Unknown~

I always get giddy in the spring. I can hardly wait to get my hands in the dirt to plant a garden. Gardening in Nevada is at best a crap shoot. I've learned a few things through the years, such as, you're not going to get any apricots, this year. I have an apricot tree that I've only had three years in twenty-four years that produced cots. But, I live in hope.

In the early day, it wasn't any better, only a little more predictable. The folks around Dayton used to cut ice in January to put in their root cellars for summer use. That means the ponds around Dayton would get a foot of ice on them.

The reservoir in back of Steve Saylor's house was Dayton's water supply and ice cutting pin in the winter. One can hardly believe that impressions in the hillsides supplied water to anyone. The water got there via the Chinese ditch. Water was always in short supply.

It was only after modern drilling did Dayton enjoy an ample supply of water? Water was iffy until the 1960's when the deep wells were drilled and a water district formed. We take so many things for granted.

Emma Loftus recorded all of the town improvements in her diaries. It was after WW II that a lot of improvements came to Dayton. However, a few happened earlier. Before 1933, there was a wooden bridge on Pike Street at Gold Creek. It was replaced with the culvert that runs under Pike Street now. It's hard to believe that Pike Street was the main highway through Dayton until the late 1950's.

Even then, the highway that replaced Pike Street was only a two-way road until present day. When I first moved here twenty-five years ago, the traffic was only heavy at early morning and after five at night. Not so, any more.

Change is constant, some good, some not so good. I kinda get the attitude anymore that "I don't much care how they did it where you came from." I miss the small town atmosphere I came to love way back then.



Pike Street Highway through Dayton

Discover 'gold' in Dayton

A letter from Laura Tennant☺

Dayton folks and those living in nearby communities, here's an opportunity to celebrate **Nevada's 150th birthday** close to home. It's also a chance to take a step back in time to experience what life was like more than 100 years ago. Really, kids, and adults, too, if you are playing a role in yesterday's history, it's not boring.

The Historical Society of Dayton Valley is sponsoring a NV 150 signature event, glorifying Dayton and Lyon County's role in Nevada's statehood from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 17 in Old Town Dayton.

The HSDV wishes to take Old Town back 100 or more years in costume, dance, song, demonstrations and more. They'd like friends and neighbors to be part of the program: If you do old-fashioned arts, handicrafts or have long-forgotten life-style skills, please demonstrate them on the old streets of Dayton where thousands of emigrants traveled on their way to California's gold fields. **Life on the trail:**

Most people around this end of Lyon County live within walking distance of an emigrant trail. Picture

the desert near your home as vacant land, without houses, cars, highways, lights, running water, toilets or refrigeration.

Visualize walking next to your family's covered wagon, pulled by horses, mules or oxen, for 2,000 to 3,000 miles from back East to California. Children and women often couldn't ride because their prized possessions, their meager amount of belongings, were stored in wagon beds. They usually didn't sleep inside wagons either, but, depending on the weather, slept under the stars, a wagon or pitched a tent. Dinners were cooked in pots over a campfire. Sometimes when they arrived at a camp site, it was dark outside, and after spending 15 miles on a grueling ride over dusty, rocky roadways in windy, hot, or wet weather, they were too tired to cook or eat dinner.

If they did prepare a meal, it was the kids' chore to gather firewood, and often, when food was scarce, men and older boys hunted deer, antelope, jackrabbits or whatever game they found before they could make dinner.

When reading a pioneer's story, I was amazed that children on the trail usually didn't wear shoes! I'd noticed kids standing barefooted in family pictures next to wagons but I thought they'd removed their shoes because their feet hurt from walking. There were few cordwainers (shoemakers) or cobblers (repairs shoes) on the trail, but some families carried shoe lasts used to repair their own shoes.

They wrapped their feet in rags when they crossed over a snowy trail or ice-covered bodies of water. The rags stuck and quickly wore out. (And kids today think they have it rough?)

First county seat

Dayton was the first county seat of Lyon County. The stately three-story brick building on Pike Street was open for all county business in 1864, the year of Nevada's statehood. Between then and 1909, the building housed the district court where the earliest sheriffs and deputies handled law and order, and resided in Dayton.

Long before Lyon became a county, Dayton was the site of the state's first gold discovery, 1849, and earliest settlement, June 1851. The county court house was warranted when the lively town's population spiraled.

Between 1862 and 1865, it flourished as a milling, mining, ranching, and railroading-commercial hub linking the Upper Comstock, Carson City, Genoa and California gold-country towns.

Dayton's also been a Nevada cultural community from day one with settlers including Chinese, Native Americans, like Sarah Winnemucca, and her grandfather, Chief Truckee, along with newspaper publishers, entrepreneurs, preachers, miners, millers, tinsmiths, federal troops, gamblers, firefighters, lawmen, vigilantes, bartenders, railroaders, woodcutters, blacksmiths, dairy and produce farmers, ranchers and more.

Join the fun

Every organization, young and old, and the general public are invited to participate. Come as you are or wear a costume -- 150 years of history is a long time, and Dayton had it all.

Since we're celebrating yesteryear, there's no room for vendor's booths; unless you know a flimflam man who sells old-fashioned medical remedies like snake oil.

Activities planned:

Pony Express riders, ponies/mail exchange/stories

Adolph Sutro living history

Demonstrations of old-time lifestyles

Gold panning, (children's games and singing)

Stagecoach rides

Museum, historic buildings and cemetery tours

Civil War re-enactors/old-fashioned dances

Blacksmiths demo

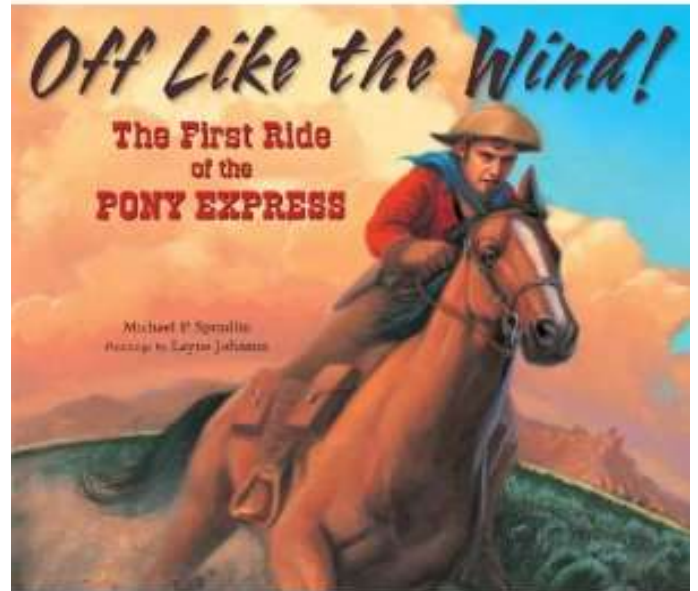
Dutch oven cooked meals and tasting☺ and more!

~~~~~

**Kudos to Lauri Emerich, for your excellent leadership at our NV 150 meetings at the museum while Laura was away! You are appreciated☺ Thanks to Laura, as well, and all who participate and plan.**

Our Dayton NV150 event could be the *just about the FINEST EVER!*

## Happy Birthday to the Pony Express!



The Pony Express was a mail delivery service which operated from April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1860 – October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1861 from St. Joseph, MO to Sacramento, CA.

*It was* the fastest, most direct way to communicate from East to West `until the arrival of the telegraph.



Ron Bell, a Pony Express rider, story teller and writer spoke with our Historical Society on March 19<sup>th</sup>. About 25 people packed the side room of the Community Center. Ron entertained, informed, and then was more than willing to autograph his book from the "Ronnie Campbell Series" The Pony Express Rider.



**Our President Mabel and Speaker Ron Bell~**



# Dayton native: Farewell Andrew Ray Walmsley

*A man to match our mountains~*

**By Laura Tennant**

Friends and family of Andrew “Raymond” Walmsley gathered at the Calvary Baptist Church and Dayton Valley Community Center on February 10 to celebrate his 88-year life in Dayton where he was born to two of Lyon County’s oldest pioneer families, dating to 1859. Until his death, he was a member of the family who had lived in Lyon County longer than any other. Admired by men and women, he was a principled man of integrity who aptly represented this community on the local, county and state level. His firsthand knowledge of Nevada history eventually led to Dayton’s acclamation as the site of Nevada’s first gold discovery and earliest settlement.

Without Ray, this would never have been accomplished, because even today, into the 21st Century, Dayton isn’t even mentioned in some Nevada history textbooks used statewide!

A member of a proud generation, Ray faced adversity few can imagine, facing each day with intestinal fortitude. Hardworking throughout his life, he believed a man earned his keep, accepting something for nothing was unheard of, and he didn’t give up when his body wore thin. It was difficult for family and friends to watch but he rarely complained; just got frustrated when his memory faded.

Ray was an outdoors’ laboring man all of his life: as a youngun’, he helped his father Zenas run a dairy farm on Pike Street later working a variety of jobs available in Dayton or Silver City, including ranching, mining and milling. Times were hard. A cowboy and mustanger, he loved horses, cows and local free ranges. He was educated in Dayton’s schools, a graduate of the Old DHS in 1944 and later married his high school sweetheart, May Cadwallader in 1947. Above all else, Ray’s family was uppermost on his mind. He was so proud of them. Married 66 years, he and May had two children, their daughter Jerry and son Gene.

Ray always dressed in the finest western wear – debonair and handsome. I loved seeing them square dance together, which they often did; May in her gorgeous fancy dresses – what a dazzling team they were.

Unfortunately, they lost Gene unexpectedly years ago. Jerry’s a physical therapist who lives in New Mexico.

Due to his mechanical expertise, gained while working in the milling/mining industry, Ray’s expertise with equipment landed him a good job that led to a 30-year construction career that provided a good living for his family.

For love of community, Ray served on the Dayton Volunteer Fire Department much of his adult life, was the first chairperson of the Dayton Town Advisory Board, a 4-H horse leader, worked with Lyon County Parole and Probation, the Comstock Historic District Commission and an all-around Dayton town advocate.

## **Nevada family legacy**

Ray was extremely proud of his family’s Nevada legacy:

Thomas Riley and Nancy Hawkins, his maternal great grandparents, left Deseret (Salt Lake City) to settle in the Como area, with their two daughters in 1862.

Thomas accepted a mining superintendent job in tiny Georgetown, located about ¾ of a mile down Mill Canyon east of Como where Ray’s grandmother Georgetta was born. T.R. Hawkins name is mentioned in Irving Stone’s book, “Men to Match my Mountains”.

On his father’s side, James Walmsley, his great-grandfather, ran a wood-cutting and charcoal-making operation in the mountains from Como, 22 miles east of Dayton. In 1859, James left Ontario, Canada, arriving in Dayton via New York, the Isthmus of Panama to San Francisco, and overland to Dayton! Incredibly, he’d work here two or three years and then go home to the family farm in Ontario for a few months and return - a he died back there in 1879.

Before then, his son Andrew had joined him here in 1862. Times had already changed – Andrew traveled via train to Virginia City and rode a stage to Dayton. He married Georgetta Hawkins in 1881. They had four sons, one of them, Zenas Walmsley, Ray’s father. Andrew bought the “Quille Tollhouse on nine acres south of Dayton in Eldorado Canyon; homesteading 640 acres, buying nine more.

An entrepreneur of sorts, he bought 40 acres for \$1.25 an acre, cut the wood and let the property revert to the county.

Andrew married Leila Stevenson in 1915. They had two sons, Tom, Ray, and daughters, Beatrice and Lois. Leila’s father, Sam, emigrated here from Canada and her mother, Eva May Swart, was also was raised in Dayton.

Before they married, due to an accident that left her father crippled, Leila was Dayton’s postmaster.

Zenas worked in the Blanchard Lime Kilns south of Dayton at the base of the Dayton D and hauled lime

baked in ovens to Virginia City. Zenas worked at American Flat, west of Gold Hill, and rode his horse there daily. He was considered a “boomer”, meaning he worked one booming mining town across Nevada after another, doing location work for miners, making \$20 a claim – a good living then.

He settled in Dayton when he married Leila and raised four children, Thomas, Ray, Beatrice and Lois.

### **Always in my life**

Although Ray and I worked closely over the last 26 years since we started the Museum at the 1865 schoolhouse where he attended grammar school, he knew me before I met him.

One day, he said: “I delivered milk with my Dad at your house in Silver City when you were a little girl.” He knew my uncle Frank Gordon and my mom Zoe and father Harold Eckelbarger.

One of my favorite memories of Ray is when he played Santa Claus at community Christmas parties held in Old Dayton High, Home of the Haymakers, 1918-1959.

This was a real small-town traditional community Christmas party that lasted into the 1950s. Students put on a gala Christmas play for parents and friends; afterwards, Santa made a grand entrance with sleigh bells jingling. Everyone watched, adults smiling while children’s eyes gleamed with joy. Each child received a gift: a small paper bag with an orange, nuts, and homemade goodies - they were happy to get a simple gift.

Playing by ear, Ray was an accomplished pianist as was his son Gene and mother Leila, also a noted pianist.

During the 1990s EPA mercury scare and clean-up around town, Ray shook his head with disgust, noting he’d worked knee deep in mercury most of his young life in local dredging operations and mines.

Ray was on the committee that worked with Lyon County’s Commission to obtain funds to get the Bluestone Building rejuvenated. It was an eyesore but a committee of five accomplished the task and it’s one of the oldest buildings being used in Dayton today. After that committee fell by the wayside, another was formed in 1990 and that’s when I really got very involved with Ray, May and Dayton’s history. Ray was president, and, with just a handshake, Lyon County let us create a museum in the building where the Senior Center was located.

It was left in shabby condition. In the kitchen, water and gas pipes were hanging from nowhere! Old rugs and older linoleum were removed, leaving a layer of

black tar on the original wooden floor. There weren’t many of us and we met there evenings and weekends, finally opening in 1994. Today, it’s a Dayton showpiece. Ray was a living historian, supplying amazing photos, stories and history.

We’ll miss Ray, his stories and the unique, rare individual he was. They don’t make many like him anymore.



### **At the Old Corner**

And, then, there’s the story Tom Zachary told at Ray’s memorial:

Ray also raised a little hell in his younger days. Evidently, one time, at the Old Corner Bar on Pike and Main, during bar talk, a friend challenged Ray, saying he couldn’t ride his unruly mustang inside the bar. (Mustangs didn’t like it indoors).

Well, Ray mounted his horse tied outside at the old hitchin’ post and rode it into the bar, letting everyone know, saying something like: “Now, you want to see me do it twice.” He did it again.



**Ray and Mae enjoying Oodles of Noodles 20**





*We are grateful~::~*

Thanks to a grant presentation by Linda Clements on March 6<sup>th</sup> to the Commission on Cultural Affairs, the Historical Society of Dayton Valley is now the recipient of a quite generous grant to be used for pre-construction work on our

*Railroad Depot* restoration. Also, the State Historic Preservation Office will do some archaeological work for us. Stony Tennant will be the Project Leader, and we will, I'm certain, be wide-eyed with anticipation! Thank you so much to Linda and John and all who worked so hard on our behalf!!

I'd also like congratulate Phyllis King for being the new chairman of the *Railroad Working Group!* Way to go, Phyllis~Thank you and the whole crew.



**The Nevada Civil War Volunteers will attend our NV150 Event, along with the Battle Born Civil War Re-enactors. David (shown above) and Melanie Cooper are new members of the HSDV, & filled with ideas and enthusiasm!**



``I've been workin' on the railroad (in Nevada),  
all the live-long day☺``



Toni Van Cleave, whose home town is Dayton, is with her fellow Battle Born Re-enactors. Yes, folks, there will be *music*~

**“DISCOVER GOLD IN DAYTON,  
AGAIN” (and more☺)**

**Saturday, May 17,**

**(9 am – 5 pm)**

**Old Town Dayton**

**Jack Folmar, I want to thank you for your excellent pictures. You are very appreciated!**



**The *Railroad Depot* will be opened 'bright and beautiful' for the NV150 Event thanks to the efforts of the 'Railroad Working Group' & good volunteers!**

## DOCENT DOINGS

By Pat Neylan

The museum season is off to a smashing start! What a great group of volunteers that have stepped up to faithfully operate our museum utilizing a new scheduling system. It was hoped that the monthly "whose going to sit the museum this week" confusion could be eliminated and so far so good! Now each of our dedicated docents knows exactly which day every month they are responsible for being at the museum and what to do in the event something comes up that might necessitate a change. We are good to go from now to November. Major thanks to all who came together to pull this off.

It might just be me...or wishful thinking...but I believe we are experiencing an increase in museum traffic this season. So far every day we have been open we have had a respectable number of visitors passing through are doors. There is no doubt that through the efforts of every member of the HSDV Dayton and hence our museum is becoming better known throughout Nevada, California and beyond and this has resulted in an increase in people who actually are seeking us out when they travel. There have already been two special tours conducted for out of town visitors this season and we are gearing up for the walking tours associated with the annual school program for fourth graders in April and May. Next up is the beefed up coverage for the NV150 event to be held on May 17<sup>th</sup> in addition to coverage for every week day during May, half of which are already

spoken for. For a town the size of Dayton we have a most remarkable museum. For a town the size of Dayton we have a most remarkable group of volunteers to run it!!!



**Another remarkable group of volunteers from awhile back. This is from the Nevada Appeal few years ago. I hope you can read the captions!**

**You will find this gem, and others like it, in Ruby McFarland's scrapbook of articles in our museum.**



**Happy Spring'ya'll~ from our kids like Levi©  
Margy**