

Docents Newsletter

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

June 2014



The following by Ruby McFarland

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating, there is really no such thing as bad weather.

John Ruskin (1819-1900)

I think it was Mark Twain who said “Everyone talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.” We here in the Nevada desert know we welcome any kind of moisture. Sometimes we have become over moisturized. Since I’ve lived in Dayton I’ve seen what too much water can do. It doesn’t take too much rain to fill up the dry washes around Dayton into raging streams. The undersized culvert in the road in front of my house plugs up when we have a hard rain and I have a lake in my driveway, and the rubble from the dry wash makes it difficult for me to get out of my driveway.

In the past, ever since the settlement of the Dayton area, there have been floods of huge coverage. There are recorded floods from very early on. Every time the folks in the area built a bridge across the Carson River it would get wiped out by flood waters. Even the concrete bridges that were built in the 1900’s were no match for the force of the flood waters.

Emma Loftus recorded one such flood in 1951. She wrote about this young woman who was pregnant that had to be rescued by cable chair across the raging Carson River so she could have her baby.



HSDV Railroad Working Group meeting is first Tuesday of the month at 6 pm in the Community Center.

The Board will meet Wednesday, June 11 at 10:30 am at the Community Center.

The General Meeting will be held on June 18 at 7 pm at the Community Center. Guest will be Bruce Rettig, speaking about the Pony Express Territory.

Docent Meeting - June 25 at 10:30 am in the museum.

That woman was Del Minor, one of the first members and one of the founders of the Historical Society of Dayton Valley. The baby is her oldest daughter.

One of the floods we had since I've lived here washed Linda Clements and John Crowleys house down the Carson River. All their computers and personal belongings found their way down the river. They picked u their belongings along the banks of the Carson River for months after. They never completely recovered all their belongings. I understand there was a jar filled with quarters that fell under and never found.

It's too bad we couldn't spread some of that moisture over to when we need it. I worry about the fire hazzard the dry years present us. The poor wild animals have a hard time finding food and water. Pray for rain—not too much—just right.

Compiled by Mabel Masterman

Dayton's 20 acre Cemetery is located on a hilltop overlooking the town. By the 1970s it became quite apparent a deteriorated condition had undermined the cemetery's sanctity. Overgrown with weeds, it had become an illegal drop-off site for unwanted furniture. Many plots and headstones were in disrepair; the grounds were littered.

Dayton's Cemetery predates Virginia City cemetery by 6 or 7 years. During early Comstock days, when freight wagons from Dayton transported goods and vegetables up the hill to Virginia City, they brought deceased miners back for burial. Often their remains were simply deposited at Cemetery front gates. A number of sites are of unknown people, and are marked as such. Others are identified with a first name but

only their last initial.

Headstones reveal a virtual whose—who of early Dayton residents, reflecting the Italian and Western European origin of the town. Sadly, parent's seemingly outlived their children more often than not. Grave markers also indicate birthplaces as Maine, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, just to name a few.

Records show there are five (5) known Civil War Veterans who passed away between circa 1890 and sometime subsequent to the 1910 census buried in our Cemetery. Headstones indicate four (4) Veterans of the Spanish American war, including Morton Stiles, born in 1824.

"Old Virginny", for whom Virginia City was named, died in Dayton in 1861 and is buried in our cemetery.

Famed abolitionist, Elijah Lovejoy's son, Edward P. Lovejoy, who, among other things, was a Carson & Colorado Railroad (Mound House to Hawthorne track worker), was laid to rest in 1891 in the Dayton Cemetery.

Governor Charles Russell, Nevada's Governor from 1950 to 1958 is buried in the family plot with his wife.

Carson City Judge Clark J. Guild, native born Daytonite, is buried in the Guild family plot.

In the mid 1970s a volunteer Dayton Cemetery Committee was formed by May Giometti, the chair person. In September 1983 the Dayton Cemetery was dedicated as a community cemetery.

Wayne and Helen Epperson followed in May's footsteps as volunteers until late 1980s. Then Armand and Jessie Arnett stepped forward.

By the late 1980s the County made cemetery caretaker a paid position.

DOCENT DOINGS

By Pat Nyland

The month of May has wound down and come to an end. It could not have been more jam packed with activity if we tried! Thirty one straight days the museum was open and available to locals and the traveling public. This was quite an accomplishment and all involved should be quite pleased with your efforts. You did the HSDV proud!! The timing of Dayton's celebration of Nevada's 150th coincided with the normal History Appreciation Month and only aided in highlighting our wonderful museum giving us these extra opportunities to educate people and spread Dayton's history. I believe the week day traffic in the museum greatly exceeded past years and we are still being aided by the Highway 50 Passport program that is ongoing. There were several special tours arranged in addition to the four fourth grade tours that are a normal part of our school program and all that took extra effort by all our wonderful docents. The entire society, and especially me, owe each of you a special thanks for a remarkable job well done. I know there was a lot of personal schedule shuffling, changed plans and other concessions that just made it happen and just made it look so easy to the kids and other visitors. It takes a large amount of dedication and love for what you are doing to pull off what you each did and have some fun at the same time!!

By Laura Tennant

Curator of Dayton history

I've always loved the story of Dayton's history starting with a butcher knife gold discovery in 1849 by Abner Blackburn, and

later, with a "bang" as noted in the great "Spafford Hall Station" article by Margy Bether in the May Docent's Newsletter. I just want to clarify Margy's historical information quoted from a book, History of Nevada: Early Emigrants by Sam P. Davis, which is erroneous in a couple of ways, but, the worst mistake, was the misspelling of his name (it is Spofford) in early historical books. For over a century, what appears to be a simple mistake, stifled knowledge about Nevada's earliest history in Gold Cañon. It was more than 140 years before anyone figured it out and that's when Dayton held its Founder's Day Sesquicentennial in 2001, claiming to be Nevada's earliest settlement. A.S. "Spofford" Hall, owner of Hall's Station in 1852, got lost in history, throwing Nevada and Dayton's past into a tailspin come modern times.

Incredibly, the difference in the spelling of his name, and the fact he often used "A.S. Hall" in his business dealings, left a hole in history. Fortunately, Dayton's past as published in numerous history books has been proven to be inaccurate by today's academic historians. Dayton's 1849 gold-discovery history was miniscule compared to the Comstock Lode's rich silver and gold discoveries that took the world by storm. Although Big Bonanza discovery occurred 10 years after gold was found in Gold Cañon, naturally, its history quickly overshadowed Dayton's. Even in 2007, Nevada State Archivist Guy Rocha, now retired, said some Nevada historians questioned whether Spafford Hall ever owned a way station near the mouth of Gold Cañon.

"Where's the proof? There's no documentation Spafford Hall existed," claimed academic Nevada historians.

This missing link in our history was one of the obstacles to identifying Dayton as Nevada's earliest settlement. But, the truth prevailed. At last, after countless hours on the Internet in 2007, Nevada and Gold Cañon historians, Martin and Carole Griffith, Reno, hit pay dirt. Explained Rocha: "Carole was playing around with his name on the Internet, and there he was in the 1850 U.S. Census, 'Andrew Spofford Hall' lived in Gold Cañon in 1852. That tidbit of difference opened the door to discovering Hall's life history.

And, notes Rocha, according to testimony in a mid-1800s water rights' trial, a Gold Cañon trading post served pioneers in the fall of 1851, operated by Nathaniel R. Haskill and Washington Loomis, the scoundrels who shot the Sheriff and then ran for their lives. Before the incident, Andrew Spofford Hall purchased the station from the Haskill and Loomis. (Sam Davis says Douglass and Co. owned it but Douglass didn't enter the Dayton scene until much later).

Then, in 1854, after Hall was accidentally shot, he sold the station to his employee, James McMarlin.

Born in Geneva, New York in 1827, Hall was raised in Monroe County, Michigan near Lake Erie, later moving to Ft. Wayne Indiana and then to California in 1849, later emigrating to Gold Cañon when he was about 23 years old. Returning back East, Hall married, had children, and became a successful businessman, well respected in his community. Where exactly was Hall's Station?

According to the Nevada State Historical Marker on Cemetery Road, no one knows exactly where it existed; however, Fannie Hazlett, 1862 Dayton pioneer emigrant and historian, says it was on Main Street across from the Assay Office, which was then located

adjacent to the building across from where Gates Street enters Main in Old Town Dayton.

The gold-mining dredging operation at the mouth of Gold Cañon in the late 1930s used the world's largest dredge and dragline for its time, and, historians say, it destroyed Hall's Station's location, along with Dayton's and Nevada's earliest history. Dredging left the gigantic open pit now easily viewed from the top of Cemetery Road.

To read a well-researched history of Gold Cañon, read Territorial Lawmen of Nevada, Vol. 1 by Robert W. Ellison, published in 1999.

P.S. Nevada's well-known historians have warned me to beware of facts in Sam P. Davis's Early History of Nevada. It's a good idea to check his facts with other primary resources.

Membership Renewal

Reminder that membership renewal is due by June 30. Renewal forms will be sent out electronically to those with e-mail; others will receive it in the mail.

