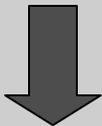


# THE PLACER

A Voice of History

November– December 2012  
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## In this Issue

1. Administrator's Notes
2. Damascus
4. Museums Intelligence
5. PCHS News
6. Historical Organizations/  
Artifact Highlight
7. Calendar of Events

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## Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

After eight months of planning and many remodel/renovation projects, our new location at 11526 C Ave., Building 209 in the Placer County Government Center is ready for the relocation of the Archives and Collections facilities. Our new home has 9,379 square feet and three rooms of hi-density shelving plus a large area for furniture storage. We will have a public research room, a conference/break room, and a kitchen. There is ample space for donation processing and for exhibit layout. The lobby will be a mini museum featuring new donations and special collections.



With this relocation we will be able to expand our collection and implement a Contemporary Collecting Program. We look forward to an enhanced ability to provide for the preservation of historic artifacts and for accessible historical research materials.





You can bet that PC Museum staff is excited! The move will take most of November and part of December. As a result, the Archives will be closed to the public from November 13<sup>th</sup> to December 14<sup>th</sup>. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause and look forward to getting back to normal on December 17<sup>th</sup>. To confirm the reopening date, call 530-889-6500.

## Damascus

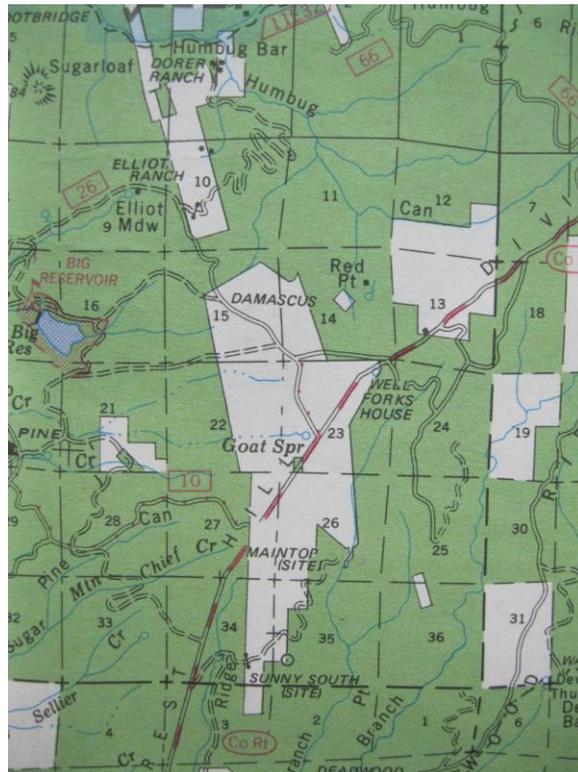
*By Kasia Woroniecka*

Like many towns on the Foresthill Divide, Damascus changed its name. When it was settled in 1852 it was known as Strong's Diggings, after its founder Dr. D.W. Strong. When the post office was established there in 1856, the name of Damascus was chosen. Those who adopted the name must have had a very optimistic outlook for their new town, since the original Damascus, the capital of Syria, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

Damascus was located about five miles from Dutch Flat and 10 miles from Iowa Hill.

Strong's Ravine marked the site of the original claim. It was a long and deep channel on the north side of the Divide near Humbug Canyon. In 1855 a Collins and Marshall's store was built in Damascus, as well as a steam-driven mill. In 1856 it was replaced by a new, larger, 29 stamp mill. The Mountain Gate Mine was the leading gold producer in the district. For many years during the 1870's and 1880's hydraulic operations in the area were very successful.

Harold T. Power was the first white child born in Damascus in 1857. His father, Michael H. Power was the secretary and later the superintendent of the Hidden Treasure mine. For nearly a year his mother, Isaline, was the only woman in Damascus. Harold H. Power became a mining engineer and later the superintendent of the Mayflower mine and the Hidden Treasure Gravel Mining Company. He became the president of the Placer County Miners' Association, and director of the Placer County Bank. He was also elected in 1897 to serve a term in the California Legislature.



Map: Civilian Conservation Corps. Camps in the Tahoe National Forest, USGS 1983.

Damascus never attained the stature of a major mining camp. It did have a school, which at one point enrolled 25 students, and a miner's hotel. The Placer County Directory of 1875 reported only three businesses in Damascus – F.E. Cannon's butcher shop, a general merchandise store kept by H.K. Denly and John Hall's miner's hotel. The hotel and the store were destroyed by fire in 1880. The two- storied hotel was rebuilt soon after the fire and named the Union Hotel.

As far as breaking the record for the oldest continuously inhabited town – it was not meant to be. In 1890, the *Placer Argus* reported that Damascus "is in a depressed condition. Socially it is dead. The population does not exceed forty; but in the days of prosperity the number reached one hundred and fifty. No stage line connects with Damascus. The nearest points at which such connection is made are Iowa Hill, ten miles away, and Forest Hill, sixteen miles distant."



**Damascus Brass Band, c. 1885.**

Brass bands flourished in small mining towns on the Divide. The California Gold Rush brought together not only American musicians and their literature, but the musical styles and repertoire of British, German and Italian bands. It was not unusual to find these bands co-existing in the same town. They took part in dances, concerts, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, church benefits, festivals and other important local events.



**Sunny South Minstrels at Damascus, May 1891.**

Ellis Smith, William Broom, John Kelley, J.H. Herington, Hardel T. Power, Emett Gorham, Arthur Gwinn, T. Brown and Henry M Power.



## Museums Intelligence

### Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

For a while it seemed that October had confused itself with one of the summer months. But the temperature has dropped, we've had some rain and leaves are beginning to turn gold and red. Fall Living History is underway and is going very well. By November 7<sup>th</sup>, our last day of fall Living History, we will have had over 600 students come through the program – far and away the biggest total we've ever had for fall.

The exhibit team is working on an exhibit that will be installed around the stained glass courthouse display in the Placer County Museum. The exhibit will focus on the history of all three Auburn Courthouses and should be installed before winter.

The rest of this year will be spent working on the big move Melanie discussed in her article, a move that will be completed before Christmas.

Speaking of Christmas, I found an interesting article you might want to share with your young children or grandchildren. It was published in the *Daily Alta California* newspaper on December 24, 1850:

*Santa Claus – Our young friends must not forget that*

*this night the good patron of youth, Santa Claus, will visit them, by way of the chimney tops, to signify his favor or displeasure at their conduct during the past year. We advise them, one and all, to hang their stockings by the fire-place, or as conveniently to the stove pipe as possible, to save him as much trouble as they can. We trust they have been all so good as to prevent him from depositing a bunch of rods, an act which that good Saint very seldom indulges in. As we believe all our young friends to be very good, we have no fear that their kind, merry patron will visit such a mark of his displeasure upon them. We therefore conclude by wishing them a bountiful supply of his favors, and a Merry Christmas!*

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

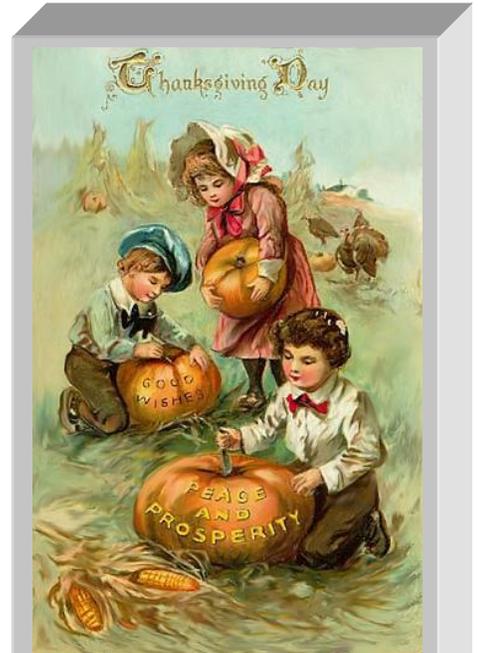
### Old Town Country Christmas at the Courthouse!

Please join us in the historic Courthouse as part of Old Town Country Christmas! You can see a vintage sleigh, browse through the museum, view reproduced Christmas and New Years cards from our collection on the Christmas tree and enjoy some cookies and a hot cup of apple cider. We'll also have a craft station set up where children can make a "Letter to Santa Claus" ornament.

Everything is free!  
The first floor of the Courthouse will be open from

5:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>.

For more information please call 530-889-6500.



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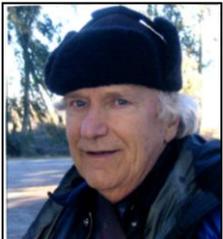
## Placer County Historical Society News



### President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

If the world of the Foresthill Divide, Placer County and the Northern Sierra was anyone's oyster, it belongs to Gene Markley. Markley, 78, a life member of the Placer County Historical Society, made his mark reinventing the early Mountain Man in novel ways.



He came west from his native Wisconsin. He loved the mountains. He loved the

Indians and how they survived for thousands of years in harmony with nature. He led the way and wrote the book on gorge scrambling for the Sierra Club. Best of, all for more than a half century he kindled a passion among legions of followers through his Sierra Club outings and 37 years of popular Placer Adult School Gold Camps, wilderness skiing, snowshoeing and other outdoor adventure outings. He made it fun to learn about history, uncommon literature and preserving what we can of nature and the past. We enjoyed the paths less traveled to places we never may have seen but for Gene. For some of us, it included Placer County's Damascus, a once small Gold Rush community

with a school, a post office, a brass band and a scattering of homes that started as Strong's Diggings about 1852. Since the 1960s Damascus has mostly disappeared from maps and memory.

On Dec. 10, 1988, Markley led one of his adult classes with a group from the Foresthill Historical Society to Damascus to install a marker on a nearly flat rock the old fashioned way. The adventurers took turns using star drills to hammer in one inch holes to anchor the plaque to memorialize a spot whose remaining buildings were virtually eliminated by a 1920s forest fire.

This Markley pearl came to mind as the man dubbed "The Old Buffalo" took what may well be his final trip back home to Wisconsin last month to be cared for by his loving kin. If you haven't heard by now, Markley suffered a near fatal stroke in his Orangevale home in February. His family frantically worked these past several months to put his affairs in order here and to cut through legal and other red tape to fly him back to Wisconsin where they feel they can better care for him.

Nearly 100 friends and relatives showed up for a potluck picnic at Regional Park in Auburn on Oct. 14 to say goodbye and pose for photos with Gene. Thanks to Gene's and his family's wishes, part of his vast collection of books, photos, research and maps is working its way into the Placer County Archives, the Placer County

Library history-genealogical collection and the Foresthill Museum. Some of his devoted followers are continuing the outings, developing an Atlas of Gene Hikes and putting together photos and coordinates on early mines and markers as a lasting legacy.

If you would like to write to Gene, here's his new address: Waunakee Manor, Room B5, 801 South Klein Drive, Waunakee, WI 53597.

[otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

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### Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*Addah Owens,  
Vice President*



**When:** December 6th

**Time:** 6:30 Dinner, 7:30

Program

**Where:** Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

**Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Roast beef and turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, Christmas salad, rolls and apple pie.

**Mail Check to:** PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603.

#### **Program:**

David C. Antonucci, author of two popular books about Lake Tahoe and the 1960 Winter Olympics, will give a special presentation on "Mark Twain in Placer County, A Civil Engineer's Take on History".

## **Placer County Historical Organizations**

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Colfax Area Historical Society  
Helen Wayland,  
(530) 346-7040  
[www.colfaxhistory.org](http://www.colfaxhistory.org)

Donner Summit Historical Society  
Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859  
[www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org)

Foresthill Divide Historical Society  
Gerda Percival, (530) 367-2366  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Fruitvale School Hall  
Community Association  
Lyndell Grey, (916) 645-3517

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

Historical Advisory Board  
Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

Joss House Museum and  
Chinese History Center  
Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

Lincoln Area Archives Museum  
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3800

Lincoln Highway Association  
Bob Dieterich, [bobd@iname.com](mailto:bobd@iname.com)  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)

Loomis Basin Historical Society  
Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871  
<http://www.ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html>

Maidu Museum & Historic Site  
Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299  
[www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59  
Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878  
[dsallen59@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsallen59@sbcglobal.net)

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association  
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society  
Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Placer County Genealogical Society  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Placer County Historical Society  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
[otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

Placer County Museums Docent Guild  
Sandi Tribe, (530) 887-9143

Rocklin Historical Society  
Jean Sippola,  
(916) 652-1034  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Roseville Historical Society  
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society  
Javier Rodriguez, (530) 583-1762  
[www.northtahoemuseums.org](http://www.northtahoemuseums.org)

### **Artifact Highlight**

#### **Band uniform**



This uniform jacket and hat belonged to Leopold Richard Dorer of Auburn. It was used as a band uniform for Placer City Band and Damascus Band around 1885. His name is inscribed on the inside leather headband. The uniform has a label of the Cincinnati Regalia Company, which was a distributor of band uniforms and equipment as well as ribbons, banners, flags and trophies. The jacket and hat are made of wool. Leopold Richard Dorer was the father of Anna Dorer Moeller, who donated the uniform to our collection.

## 2012 Calendar of Events

### November

- Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am** Historical Organizations Committee meeting at the Roseville Historical Society Carnegie Museum. 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville.  
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm** Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting at the Forest Hill Divide Museum.  
Contact: 530-367-2366.
- Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library.  
Contact 530-885-2216.

### December

- Dec 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall. 100 East Street, Auburn. Contact: (530) 885-5074
- Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm** Old Town Country Christmas at the Historic Courthouse, 101 Maple Street, Auburn, 5:00-8:00 pm.  
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Dec. 11, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum. 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville  
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Dec 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm** Forest Hill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall.  
Contact: 530-367-2366.
- Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the new Archives and Collections facility, 11526 C Ave., Building 209 in the Placer County Government Center, Auburn.  
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library.  
Contact 530-885-2216.

**Placer County Museums**  
**101 Maple Street**  
**Auburn, CA 95603**

