



The Placer

2021 March-April

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Administrator's Notes

by Ralph Gibson, Museums Administrator

We are still in the grip of the pandemic, but with multiple vaccines out there, hope is on the horizon. As restrictions begin to ease a little, I want to give you a very general road map for when and how our museums and facilities will reopen.

As I write this, Placer County is still in the Purple Level, which keeps indoor museums closed. When we move to the Red Level, our **Placer County Museum** in the Courthouse will resume normal hours of operation (everyday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm); the **Gold Rush Museum** will open Fridays thru Sundays from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm and the **DeWitt History Museum** will be open the first Wednesday of the month 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm. When Placer County moves into the Orange Level, the hours and possibly days of operation will expand at the Gold Rush and DeWitt History Museums. **The Archives and Research Center** will be able to reopen to volunteers and the public after the County moves into the Yellow Level AND our staff there have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Even then, the Archives will only be open Tuesdays and Fridays from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm with just two volunteers and one public researcher onsite at any time, so we'll create a rotating volunteer schedule. The **Bernhard Museum** may open on a limited basis once we have been in the Yellow Level for several weeks, but not for guided tours. We may open the museum for walk-throughs similar to what we've done for the Heritage Trail.

This is just a draft template and more details will come once we get closer to the Yellow Level. The experts predict that things may get closer to normal by the end of summer or early fall once at least 75% of the population has been vaccinated.

Until then, we sincerely hope all of you stay safe and healthy.



Pin cushions can't be that fascinating...can they?

An update on some of our older (but exciting) projects!

How have we adapted to educating students during the pandemic?

Spring is nearly here, get involved in your local history today.

Put a Pin In It

by Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections

I do not sew, but I really appreciate those that have the skills and the patience to deal with bent needles, bunched up thread or seams coming out wavy. Advanced sewing also requires tools that I do not have, like a sewing machine, sewing shears, rotary cutters, seam rippers, or special marking pens and chalk. Pincushions are also helpful, and it is those little, or not so little, objects that piqued my interest.

During the 19th century, women did not often find themselves with nothing to do and many occupied themselves with sewing clothing and needlework that included embroidery, tatting, lace work, sewing of monograms on household linen and making handkerchiefs and pincushions. Industrial Revolution made needlework supplies more affordable and available. Before John Howe invented the first practical machine for manufacturing pins in 1832, pins were made by hand. They were expensive, in high demand and their shaping required 18 separate steps. Early factories produced fewer than 5,000 pins a day, but by 1835 Howe's machine was able to produce 70,000 in the same amount of time.



Pincushions came in many designs and were made of different materials. Some were very simple, made of scraps of fabric filled with sand or sawdust. Others were made of velvet, mounted on silver, china or wooden bases and decorated with glass beads, embroidery, lace and porcelain dolls. This pincushion (left) features a porcelain half-doll made in Germany circa 1920. The doll is a figure of a Flapper Pierrette, the pantomime character and companion to Pierrot, a sad, love-lorn clown. It was donated in 1977 by the estate of Billie Watkins Olive, a resident of Pilot Hill and avid doll collector. Pincushions were often stored with other sewing implements in special needle cases or sewing baskets and were a collectable item.

Pincushion designs included animals, shoes, fruits and vegetables, like the tomato, which is still popular today. According to Victorian folklore, the tomato was a symbol of prosperity, and when a family moved to a new home a fresh tomato was placed on the mantle for good luck and to ward off evil spirits. Some of the tomato pincushions have a small strawberry attached to it filled with emery powder for cleaning and sharpening pins. Pincushion dolls, with cushions in the shape of skirts, reached the height of their popularity between 1900 and 1930. Most were produced in Germany and France and the early ones were intricately made and very expensive.



Another pincushion donated by the estate of Billie Watkins Olive, this “Lady of the Court” half-doll was made in Germany circa 1920.



Small pincushion made of cotton fabric with a green flower and leaf pattern. Donated in 1983 by Vincent Gianella of Auburn. Most likely used by his wife, Catherine Gianella, who started sewing at an early age. She married Vincent in 1917. He was a professor of geology, who spent his career at the University of Nevada and the Mackay School of Mines. Catherine was active in the Reno Women’s Civic Club, the Reno Twentieth Century Club, and the Women’s Faculty Club of the University of Nevada. In 1957 she was awarded the title of Mother of the Year in Reno by the Nevada Federation of Women’s Clubs. She died in Auburn in 1974.

Heart-shaped pincushion with a doll. The doll used in decorating this pincushion is part of a Storybook Dolls collection, created by Nancy Ann and made around 1936-1947. Nancy Ann Abbott was born in 1901 as Rowena Haskin. In 1935 she opened a book lending shop where she also sold her dolls. They sold well and in 1936 the Nancy Ann Dressed Dolls Company was born. In 1945 the company became known as the Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls, Inc. During the 1940’s the company was the highest volume maker of dolls in the United States. The company went bankrupt in 1965 after Ms. Abbott’s death in 1964. Donated in 1982 by Ferrel Trimble of Auburn.



An Exciting Update on Old News

by Bryanna Ryan, Supervising Curator

Today, I am excited to announce an update to a project we highlighted way back in the 2019 May/June issue of The Placer. Has it really been two years? Back then, we told you all about our nominations to the California State Library's California Revealed Project of some really special archival records that were to be digitized and made available to researchers around the globe through Archive.org.

For this nomination, we selected items that would be difficult for us to digitize ourselves and they really needed immediate conservation. They also needed to be very historically significant beyond our local community and be primary sources that could help researchers better understand the past.

We selected eight "Recordiogram" phonograph discs made of vinyl-coated paper that were on loan to us and we had not the ability to properly clean, digitize, or play. We also selected three Chinese manuscripts, the two oldest of which date to 1886 and were from a secretive society known as the Hung Shun Tong. They were extremely fragile, and there was no way to digitize them properly or completely, without disrupting the historic binding.



The Recordiogram discs came back to us last year. We had few clues as to what they contained but expected to hear prominent personnel of the DeWitt General Hospital recording their voices in 1944 or 1945. We had chills and a few laughs when we finally listened to their content – a jovial birthday celebration for Lorraine Anderson, the Red Cross Administrator – and heard the voices of people we had only read about.

Here is a link to a fun project Jason and Kelsey did as one of her contributions to last year's virtual Sacramento-Area Archives Crawl, where you can celebrate Lorraine's birthday along with the rest of the gang.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK0I3cu10uY>

Just this week, we finally received the digital files for the Chinese manuscripts and I am happy to share them with you. Here is a link where you can find them on Archive.org and learn more about what makes them so special. They have already been shared with scholars from around the world and we hope will become translated and help illuminate the experience of Chinese in northern California around the turn of the 20th Century.

[https://archive.org/details/placerresearchandarchives?sort=-week&and\[\]=mediatype%3A%22texts%22](https://archive.org/details/placerresearchandarchives?sort=-week&and[]=mediatype%3A%22texts%22)



The manuscripts are now being carefully rebound and conserved and soon, will be back in our vault for preservation for generations to come.

To see more of our historic collection, be sure to check out the various artifact highlights Kasia has been creating. You can find them easily on our new online portal at this link.

<https://placer.access.preservica.com/artifact-highlights/>

Or, if you would like to learn more about the history of Chinese in Placer County, here is a presentation Katy recently prepared on this subject.

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/yvWWY7Q7W4gHy>

News from Placer County Historical Society

by April McDonald-Loomis, President

April400@wavecable.com (530) 823-2128

Greetings.

It looks like there is some light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel! Hope you have all been able to get the vaccine or at least have an upcoming appointment. I got my first shot and it is amazing the amount of relief it brings though it will still be a while until things get back to normal. On that note, the board has determined to hold off on the annual election of officers and board members until we can have in-person meetings again. The current board has consented to remain in place.

The Society has another new book out, it will be in several stores and on our website very soon. It is *Auburn's Landmarks, Monuments and Memorials*. John Knox spent hours taking photos of plaques and other landmarks around town and we put together a book correcting some old errors and/or adding new information. The second volume of *Notable and Interesting Women of Placer County* is available as is John Knox's *Auburn Dry Diggings and Water: Rivers, Ravines, Ditches, Springs, Wells and Waste*. Get in touch with local history!

April McDonald-Loomis

Educating out of the Box

by Katy Bartosh, Curator of Education

You have artifacts, you have a museum or a historic site...but you have a pandemic. How do you connect when you can't physically bring people and resources together? The last year has been a crash course in trial and error, creativity, and perseverance. And I hope, if anything remains after the pandemic is through with us, that the online content and connections we've made, remain.

At Placer County Museums, we now have [online resources](#) created specifically for students, primarily 3rd and 4th graders, to help facilitate distance learning. We will also have resources for High School students later this Spring.

Even though the Bernhard Museum Living History program is currently postponed, we have a variety of activity sheets, an online exhibit, and a house tour on YouTube to help students connect. Check out the [house tour here](#), (even if you're not a third grader!) if you're missing the Bernhard as much as I am.

For fourth graders, I recently held virtual Gold Rush Programs with over 300 students on Zoom and Google Meets. Most of these schools participate in the program every year, but I also got to work with students in Honolulu! They were able to take advantage of our online worksheets and exhibits on [Gold Rush Medicine](#), the [Hidden Treasure Mine](#), and more...

Whether you're nine or ninety, these new resources are a great way to learn about different aspects of Placer County's history.

Placer County Historical Organizations

For information on meeting schedules for March-April, please contact organizations individually.

Colfax Area Historical Society

Jay McIntyre, President
(530) 346-8599
colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society

Bill Oudegeest (209) 606-6859
donnersummithistoricalsociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society

Troy Simester
(530) 367-3535
foresthillhistory.org

Fruitvale School Hall Community Association

Mark Fowler

Gold Country Medical History Museum

Lynn Carpenter
(530) 885-1252

Golden Drift Historical Society

Sarah Fugate
(530) 389-2121

Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard
(916) 747-1961

Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Larry Finney
(530) 305-9380

Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen
(916) 645-3800
laamca.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford
(916) 663-3871
ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html

Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Kaitlin Kincade
(916) 774-5934
roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum

The Museum of Sierra Ski History and 1960 Winter Olympics

David C. Antonucci
(775) 722-3502
tahoemuseum.org

Native Sons of the Golden West Parlor #59

Dave Allen (530) 878-2878
dsallen59@sbcglobal.net

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association

Mario Farinha
(530) 269-2412

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Phil Sexton
(530) 583-1762
northtahoemuseums.org

Placer County Genealogical Society

Toni Rosasco
(530) 888-8036
pcgenes.com

Placer County Historical Society

April McDonald-Loomis
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placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Fran Hanson
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Rocklin Historical Society

Hank Lohse
(916) 624-3464
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Roseville Fire Museum

Jim Giblin (916) 538-1809
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