

# THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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## Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

The arrival of spring is just around the corner and for some, romance is in the air and recollections of weddings past or anticipated are on the mind and close to the heart. We are very excited about our new exhibit, *Unveiled*, that will feature the wedding dresses and accessories from our collection. The exhibit will span all three Placer County Museums in Auburn and will officially open at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. I hope you put this date on your calendar and join us at the historic Courthouse for the opening reception.

At the Placer County Museum, three to four gowns from the 1920s to 1940s will be featured. They are exquisite. Six dresses along with accessories from the Victorian period will be exhibited at the Bernhard Museum Complex. The wedding theme will also be represented at the Gold Country Museum. You must visit to discover how the theme is interpreted in this gold rush setting. I think you will be surprised!

We are very interested in adding to our artifact and photo collection. If you or a relative were married in Placer County and you have photos or wedding attire, we would love to hear from you. A photo album of Placer County weddings will be a part of the exhibit and your photos could be a part of it. The photos will be scanned and the originals returned to you. To make an appointment, please call Kasia, our Curator of Collections at 530-889-7705.♣



Museum Docent Christie Brzyszc's Wedding in 1974

## Auburn's State Theatre

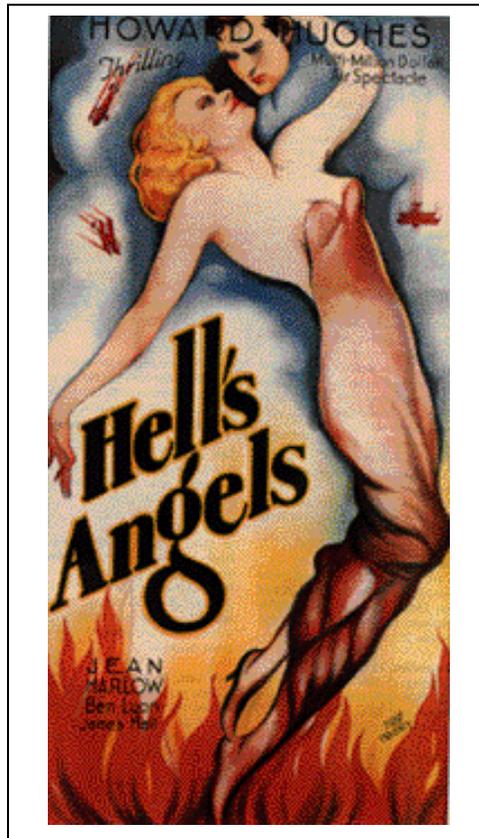
Ralph Gibson

It has been said and repeated over and over the past few months that “the movie industry is recession proof”. When there is an economic downturn, people look for escape. A few find it in a good book; others in their favorite television show; and many more find diversion in darkened theatres. Last month's record box office numbers confirm this phenomenon. It is true in this recession and it was certainly true during the Great Depression when 60-70 million people packed into theatres each week.

The State Theatre in Auburn was one such place where county residents escaped the hardships of the depression. The theatre opened at 6:15 pm on December 26, 1930. A short film in Technicolor featuring the popular song *Dance of the Paper Dolls* was the first to grace the new screen. It was immediately followed by *Fox Movietone News*, then two more short films and finally, the featured presentation *Sunny*, a musical starring Marilyn Miller. At 9:15, the program was repeated. Admission to the theatre was 50¢ for loge seats, 40¢ for adults, 25¢ for students, and 10¢ for children.

Many iconic films were shown in the State Theatre beginning with Howard

Hughes' epic *Hell's Angels* in February of 1931.

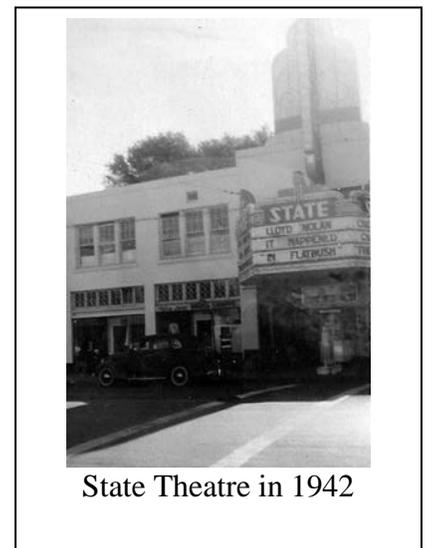


To promote this film about combat pilots in World War I, numbered circulars were dropped from an airplane over Auburn and neighboring towns. The circulars announced free giveaways donated by Auburn businesses. If you were lucky enough to get a circular with a number range (2200 – 2400, for example) you had to be the first to enter the business with that number range to claim your prize. The businesses advertised their winning numbers in the Auburn Journal. Other notable films shown in the first 10 years of the theatre were: *Spirit of Notre Dame*, *The Cisco Kid*,

*Frankenstein*, *The Champ*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Gone with the Wind*.



In addition to showing movies, the State Theatre was built to host vaudeville acts, plays, and events. In 1935, a *Gold Rush Revue* was held with local actors playing parts in the short plays: *A Wedding Reception in 1858*, *The Arrival of Mail in Ophir*, *The Donner Party*, and *Lotta Crabtree Dances for the Miners*.



State Theatre in 1942

There were other theatres in Placer County that operated during the depression, such as the Auburn Theatre, Colfax Theatre and the Tower Theatre in Roseville which was built at the tail end of the depression in 1940. Movies provided an important escape during the Great Depression and residents of Placer County had more than one source of theatrical diversion from real life difficulties.

But some residents sought refuge from the depression in literature. They argued that words inspire one's own imagination and that movies dull the brain by replacing our imagination with that of the filmmaker's. This may be true, but when times are tough and people are working as hard as they can just to stay afloat, it's nice to sit down in a dark theatre and let someone else fill our mind with images and sounds. Sometimes, the filmmaker's imagination works just fine.♦

The day before the State Theatre opened, the *Auburn Journal* ran the following article in the "Do You Know?" section:

### **"These Terms of the Talkies?"**

Decibel – the standard measurement of sound.

Pick up – the instrument that collects sound waves.

Fader – the device for controlling volume and switching it from one projection machine to another.

Amplifier – the instrument for increasing the electrical energy of recording and reproduction.

Stylus – The sharp edged tool that cuts the groove into recording wax.

Film track – the small margin on the side of the film where the sound is recorded for reproduction in the film method.

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Prizes given away during the *Hell's Angels* promotion:

Majestic Dealer – two \$15 first payments on a Majestic Refrigerator.

Jansen Chevrolet – one fancy radiator cap.

Al-Art Miniature Golf Links – two \$3 golf tickets.

Home Groceteria – one \$5 S&W merchandise order.

Auburn Motor Company -- \$10 discount on anything costing \$50 or more and free awards.

*Auburn Journal* – three one year subscriptions.

State Theatre – 20 trip passes.



# Announcing The Grand Opening OF THE STATE THEATRE IN AUBURN

On Friday Evening  
December 26, 1930

*We Extend An Invitation*

To see and all to come to this week and enjoy the State, the largest and the most modern of all 22 popular show houses. We had planned an holiday "open house" prior to the formal opening of the theatre, but delays in construction made this impossible at this time. But we want everyone to visit the theatre as soon as possible, for we know that you will be just as enthusiastic over it as we are and you know why.

## PROGRAM

Grand Opening  
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY  
December 26 and 27th

First Show, 8:15, Second Show, 9:15  
Matinee Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 2:30 p. m.  
Doors Open Grand Opening, 9:15

1. Oration
2. *Home of the Cape Hills* - A Virginia act in Technicolor before the opening song 10 to 15
3. Fox Movietone News
4. *The Operator* - New act for the Grand opening
5. *Love You Neighbor* - Featuring Charles Greenleaf the comedy queen
6. *Maxie Miller in "HONEY"* - An important new item the drama to feature a farced marriage. Her adventures from the tale of the east

Second Show, 9:15

SAVE THE PEOPLE OF YOUR AREA THE CALORIES AND enjoy our special program and act and more are presented in the theatre and story to come, in the course of it.

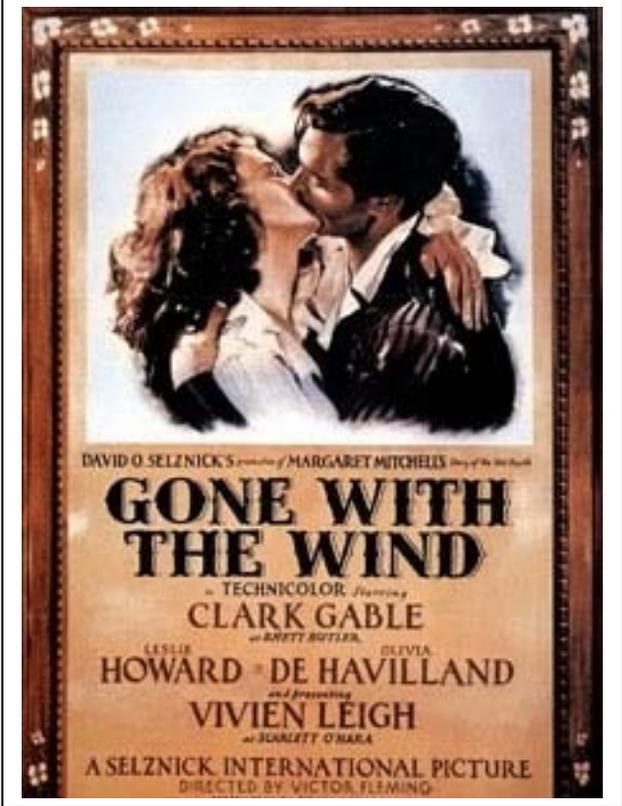
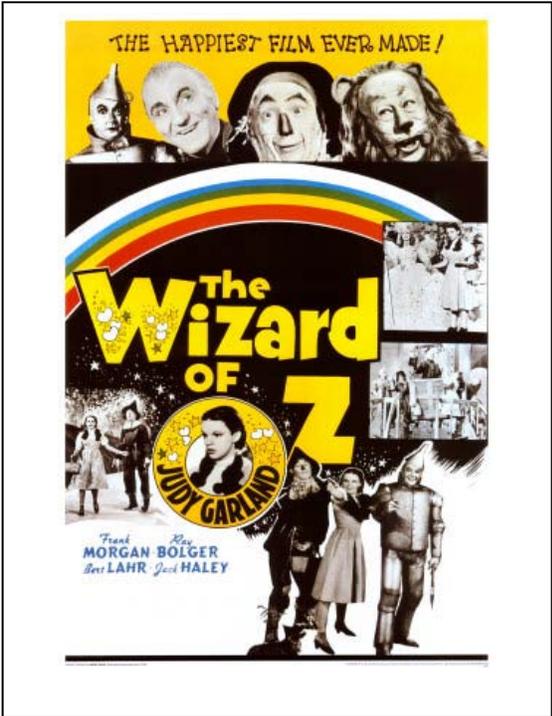
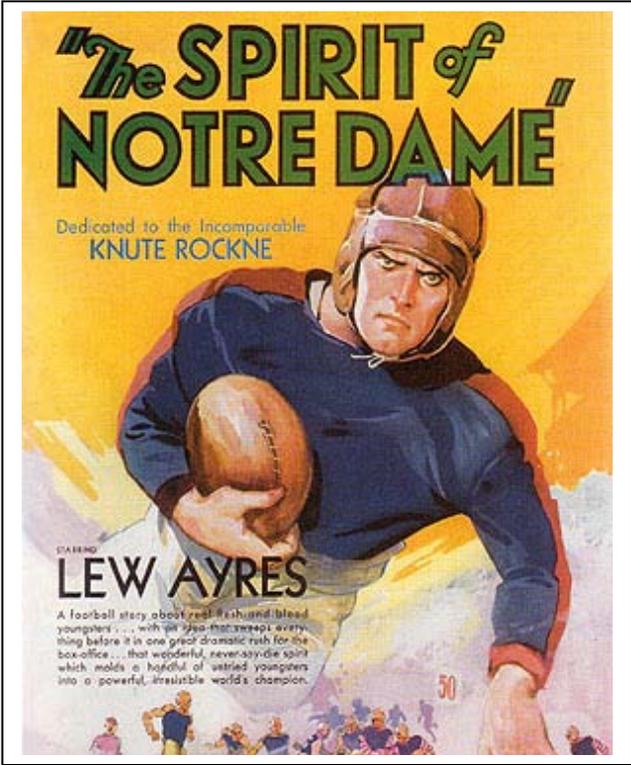
**T. & D. Jr. Enterprises**  
Incorporated

14 South Franklin and General Manager  
THE THEATRE, Home Manager

Western  Electric  
SOUND SYSTEM



Other Great Films Shown at the State Theatre





*Frankenstein* was shown in the State Theatre on January 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> in 1932. The following advertisement promoted the movie in the *Auburn Journal*:

-- *A friendly warning*

*If you have a weak heart and cannot stand intense excitement or even shock, we advise you NOT to see this production, if, on the contrary, you like an unusual thrill, you will find it in FRANKENSTEIN.*

### Placer County Historical Society 2009 Officer Nominations

The following have been nominated to serve as officers of the PCHS for the 2008-2009 year:

President: Michael Otten

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: George Lay

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Addah Owens

Secretary: Walt Wilson

Treasurer: Al Stoll

Board Members (two year terms):

Bonnie Stokes, Larry Moll, Jean Allender

Additional nominations may be made at the annual dinner meeting at 6:30 pm Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn. The election will immediately follow.



## Museums Intelligence

### Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

Just as the Gold Rush program ends, the Living History program begins. Some 3,000 students will come to the Bernhard dressed in period attire to learn firsthand what it was like to live on a 19<sup>th</sup> century farm. Many of our new docents have signed on to help with the program this year and all are looking forward to a great season.

Concurrent with Living History, staff will also be busy working on several exhibits. We will open the aforementioned exhibit, *Unveiled*, on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and will also be working on two other exhibits. We will install a temporary exhibit in the Bernhard Winery in July on camping and we will also work throughout the year on refreshing three Pate cases in the historic courthouse hallway. At the same time we will help plan and organize the next Heritage Trail event scheduled for August 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

And, if our plate wasn't already full enough, we have started a Placer County Museums blog where we will post information on upcoming Community Education programs, artifact highlights, updates on our education programs, and occasionally a behind the scenes look at exhibits. This is the first step in increasing our presence on the internet and we have more ideas to implement. Please check out our blog to learn more:

<http://www.placercountymuseums.blogspot.com/>.

#### Community Education Program: California's Living New Deal Project

The Great Depression rolled across the landscape of the 1930s like a dust storm, yet people persevered through various New Deal programs implemented by the government. The impact of those programs continues to resonate throughout our state. The California Historical Society, in conjunction with U.C. Berkeley, have undertaken an ambitious project to identify and document all the buildings, bridges, power stations, art works, and more constructed in California through New Deal programs. To learn more about this project please join us on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm in the Bernhard Museum Winery for this free Community Education program. Presenter, Harvey Smith, has been working on the project for several years and will discuss how the New Deal affected California, what New Deal sites have been recorded, and what the future of the project entails.

The Bernhard Museum Winery is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road in Auburn. For more information, please call 530-889-6500.

#### Community Education Program: Basic Placer Mining

How did the early 49ers mine for gold? How did their efforts evolve over time? Would you like to learn something about the history of placer mining and how to do it yourself? If so please join us on Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm inside the Bernhard Museum Winery for a free Community Education program: *Basic Placer Mining*. Museum docent and

lifelong gold miner Don Albrecht will present information about early placer mining methods used during the Gold Rush. On display will be various tools used in placer mining and a surprise will be unveiled at the end of the program. Because seating is limited, reservations are required for this program.

For more information, or to reserve your seat, please call 530-889-6500.

#### Second Screening of *Greed*

Due to popular demand, we will host a second screening of the silent film, *Greed*, at the Bernhard Museum Winery on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm. In 1924, Erich Von Stroheim directed the epic silent film *Greed*, which some critics claim is the greatest movie ever to grace the silver screen. Portions of the film were shot in the Iowa Hill region of Placer County. The film is a morality tale that illustrates the destructive nature of greed as three people, whose lives are intertwined, struggle until the bitter end for wealth. After a brief introduction, we will show half of the film, take a 15-20 minute intermission, and then show the last half. *Greed* has a running time of three hours and 48 minutes.

*Greed* is one of four films featured in an exhibit in the Placer County Museum, *History on the Go, The Silver Screen Edition*.

The Bernhard Museum Winery is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road in Auburn. Reservations are not required for this screening. This Community Education program is FREE!

For more information, please call 530-889-6500.♠

## Placer County Historical Society News

### President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

It appears that at one time the Placer County seat was on the cutting edge of handling its waste water. Today, Auburn is in the throes of trying to get back to that state of effluent euphoria without bankrupting its citizens through huge increases in sewer fees.

The city leaders keep seeking more time in meeting state requirements as they weigh the pros and cons of upgrading its current sewer plant or piping its waste to the regional plant in Lincoln. But while our country was at war with Japan and Germany, Auburn Mayor O.A. Moyer and other city leaders were all smiles on April 2, 1942 as they dedicated the City of Auburn Biofiltration Plant to public usage.

Completed at a cost of \$174,316, the waste water treatment may have been the most expensive and the last of the Depression era Works Progress Administration projects to be completed here.

The Auburn Journal reported the project was commended by state health and WPA officials as one of the most progressive sanitation plants in Northern California. The north state WPA Administrator William R. Lawson said the plant helped not only the war effort by contributing to the health of Auburn citizens but that it would continue to serve Auburn for many years to come.

A state official then noted the plant was partially on the site of what was thought to be California's first sewer plant that had been constructed in the early 1890s.

Today, major remnants of the WPA plant lie forlorn on a piece of landlocked city property not too far behind a now private roadway listed on city maps as "Forgotten Road". It is near Ophir and Stonehouse Roads on one side and behind the residences at the end of Hidden Creek Road on the other. Forgotten Road contains the original pavement of a portion of the Lincoln Highway, the country's first transcontinental highway.

As part of some research on New Deal era projects in Placer County, I would welcome any information, photos, etc. about the plant and those who worked there.

I am also looking for photos, especially interior shots, and stories about the Carnegie Library, 175 Almond St., which turns 100 this spring. A centennial celebration with the Friends of Auburn Library and the Old Library Art Studio is being planned for 6-9 pm on Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, in connection with the Auburn Art Walk.

Welcome, too, is information and photos about the county's other two Carnegie Libraries in Lincoln (Sept. 1, 1909) and Roseville (Oct. 12, 1912).

History on the go: To follow up on last summer's successful San Francisco Chinatown trip, your society and the Joss House Museum are taking a look at possibly traveling to Angel Island or China Camp State Park.

My wife and I had the good fortune of attending the dedication ceremonies for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Station restoration museum on Angel Island on a rainy Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>. Sometimes called the Ellis Island of the West, it was the first stop for a million immigrants between 1910 and 1940, when a fire resulted in its closure. The Island,

once home to Miwok, had also served as a World War II POW camp and a Nike Missile Base.

Did you or your parents or other relatives come to this country through Angel Island? Let me know your story. Ideas for other possible trips are also welcome.

--Michael Otten, [otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

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### Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*Addah Owens, Vice President*

**When:** April 2, 2009

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

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

**\*Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Ham Dinner with Scalloped Potatoes, Roasted Vegetables, Salad, Rolls and Dessert

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

**Program:** Nolan Smith, District Archaeologist for the American River Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest will give a PowerPoint presentation on the various cultural resources in the area, what they are, how they are managed, and how they are protected.

Nolan has been in charge of archaeology for Star, Codfish, Ralston and last year's American River Fire Complex. He has been in the American River Ranger District for over 30 years, and has a B.A. in both Anthropology and History.

Note: Please mark your calendars for June 4<sup>th</sup> as we will have a very special film, "They Crossed the Mountain, A History of the Western States Trail," narrated by Superintendent of the Auburn State Recreation Area, Mike Lynch and Hal Hall.♥

## **Placer County Historical Organizations**

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Colfax Area Historical Society  
Ed & Nilda Duffek  
(530) 305-3209  
[www.colfaxhistory.org](http://www.colfaxhistory.org)

Donner Summit Historical Society  
Margie Powell, (530) 432-4015

Foresthill Divide Historical Society  
Sandy Simester,  
(530) 367-3535  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Friends of Griffith Quarry  
Doug Brown, (916) 663-1837

Fruitvale School Hall  
Community Association  
Nancy Peterson,  
(916) 434-1727

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Doug Ferrier, (530) 389-2617

Historical Advisory Board  
Tracy Falk, (530) 889-6500

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

Lincoln Highway Association  
Norman Root, (916) 483-8669  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)

Loomis Basin Historical Society  
Dot Shiro, (916) 663-3892  
[www.ppgn.com](http://www.ppgn.com)

Lincoln Archives Museum  
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3470

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

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society  
Donna Howell, (530) 885-2891

Placer County Genealogical Society  
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Placer County Historical Society  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Placer County Museums Docent Guild  
Joy Williams, (530) 823-3553

Rocklin Historical Society  
Barbara Chapman,  
(916) 415-0153  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Roseville Historical Society  
Michael Bryant, (916) 773-1520  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

### **Western States Trail Foundation Announcement**

The Western States Trail Foundation has released, *They Crossed the Mountains: A History of the Western States Trail* in DVD. The one-hour documentary covers the usage and history of the Western States Trail, by Native Americans to Gold Rush miners, horseback riders and runners. Twelve historians were interviewed, giving the documentary a richness and depth about the trail route that traverses the Sierra Nevada Mountains from Carson City, Nevada, to Auburn, California. A portion of the documentary captures a 1931 film that features a group of Auburn men who traveled the trail on horseback, marking it along the way before this Emigrant Trail faded into the wilderness. The documentary also highlights a background of how the Tevis Cup 100 Mile Ride and the Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run evolved and became such an integral part of endurance riding history.

The film documentary was produced by the Western States Trail Foundation and was underwritten by the Ellen Browning Scripps Foundation, the Josephine Stedem Scripps Foundation, the Placer County Historical Foundation, and Western States Endurance Run Foundation. DVD copies of the *They Crossed the Mountains: A History of the Western States Trail* may be purchased from the Western States Trail Foundation by calling 530.823.7283 or by going to <http://www.teviscup.org>.

Contact: Ms. Kate Riordan 530-333-2002

## Calendar of Events

### March

- Mar. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education program: *California's Living New Deal Project* at the Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Mar. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education program: *Second Screening of "Greed"* at the Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact 530-367-3535.
- Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact 916-624-3464.
- Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact 916-652-7844.
- Mar. 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.

### April

- Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Cost is \$14 per person. Contact Betty Samson 530-885-5074.
- Apr. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education program: *Basic Placer Mining* at the Bernhard Museum Winery. Reservations required. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact 916-652-7844.
- Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting in the Bernhard Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Potluck meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact 530-367-3535.
- Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact 916-624-3464.
- Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.