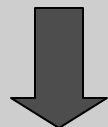


# THE PLACER

## A Voice of History

Nov.-Dec. 2011  
Volume 14, Issue 6

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### Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

What's new in the museums?

We are making some changes and hope that you will bring family and friends to our Auburn museums during the holiday season. At the historic Courthouse, the carousel animals have trotted home to Placerville and two wagons loaned by the Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59 have been moved into the Treasury. Photos of horse drawn vehicles are displayed along with leather harnessing. It's amazing to realize that horse drawn vehicles were the primary mode of transportation 100 years ago!

The Christmas tree in the foyer will be decorated with Christmas postcards from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this year. Visitors are welcome to touch them and read the greetings on the back. I hope you notice the wreaths and garlands on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor porch. We will be open from 5:00 to 8:00 pm for Old Town Country Christmas on December 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Stop by and enjoy the museum, decorations, and hot cider and cookies.

The Bernhard will be all decked out in Victorian holiday finery

beginning the week after Thanksgiving. Our finest silver and place settings will be laid out on the dining table along with a description of a Victorian Christmas dinner. The Christmas tree will be decorated with candles and glass ornaments surrounded by unique period gifts. All the manikins will be dressed in special holiday clothing. We will feature coats, furs and hats appropriate for the season. This is a special treat not to be missed.

At the Gold Country Museum we are updating the monitor exhibit. It will be finished before Thanksgiving. If you stop by in December, you'll notice special holiday touches including 1849 journal entries written by miners about Christmas during the Gold Rush.

If you are looking for a unique holiday gift, check out the Placer County Museum calendar and Christmas cards that are available from our online store. To view these items go to:  
[www.Zazzle.com/placercountymuseums](http://www.Zazzle.com/placercountymuseums).

I am pleased to announce that we are moving and consolidating the Archives & Research Center and the Collections Management

Facility. This has been a goal for several years. The new location is on C Avenue at the Placer County Government Center (DeWitt). The building is currently being remodel to accommodate our needs. This will include high density shelving which will expand our storage capability and much larger public and staff research areas. We hope to be moved before the summer.

Good things are happening in the Placer County Museums. We look forward to the challenges of 2012 and know that we can count on your support.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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## Martyrs for Preservation

*By Ralph Gibson*

The history of I-80 begins in the 1950s as postwar American leaders, such as President Eisenhower, spoke of the need for better roads and highways for National Security. When Eisenhower was a young officer, he participated in a convoy of army vehicles that traveled the Lincoln Highway from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to San Francisco in 1919. The muddy sections of road and cracked bridges contrasted sharply with the autobahn system of highways he saw in Germany during World War II.

Eisenhower urged Congress to address the issue of highway construction and they did. In

1956, Congress passed the Federal-Aid Highway Act. The act called for the construction of 41,000 miles of the Interstate Highway system at a cost of 25 billion dollars. Three years later, highway projects were underway throughout the country and some towns and cities, including those in Placer County, learned that the cost of progress was much more than monetary.

In 1959, a lot of things were happening in Placer County. This was the year that endless newspaper articles reported on the progress of the widening of U.S. Highway 40 into a federal freeway. It was the year the Auburn Little League team made it all the way to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. It was the year Colfax and Del Oro High Schools opened to students. Amid all this expansion and progress, something was lost forever.

The sentry of Old Town Auburn, the Orleans Hotel, was torn down in the summer of 1959 to make way for a Super Shell Station. Shell saw the potential of the site once plans were made to expand U.S. 40 into an interstate freeway and they made an offer to purchase the Orleans and Round Corner buildings. There was a public outcry and several non-profit organizations tried to save the structure, but they only succeeded in delaying the inevitable.

A series of newspaper articles illustrates the losing battle. The following article was published

in the January 8, 1959 *Auburn Journal*:

*The sale of the historic Orleans Hotel and the adjoining Round Corner building in old Auburn to the Shell Oil Company has been confirmed by officials of the company in Sacramento...The impending destruction of Auburn's finest historical block has caused a widespread feeling of dismay, but to date no practical solution has been proposed.*

*...A Shell spokesman was quoted as saying the company had held up its option for months in order to give the county historical society a chance to raise funds to buy the property and preserve it. This was denied by May W. Perry, executive secretary of the historical society, who stated: "We resented this statement because it was absolutely untrue. Many of our members did not even know it was for sale."*

Here's an excerpt from the March 5, 1959 *Auburn Journal*:

*...The Shell Oil Company appears adamant in its decision to tear down the Orleans and Round Corner buildings in spite of the widespread opposition which has been voiced and the offers made to help the company find a more suitable site.*

In the end, the Orleans Hotel was lost. For a time, a similar

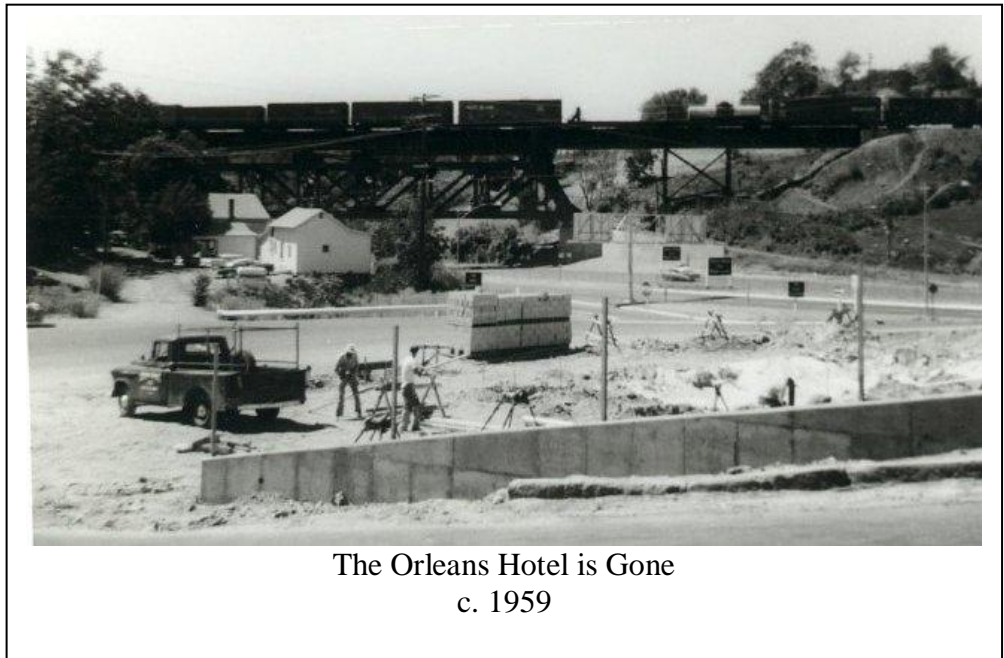
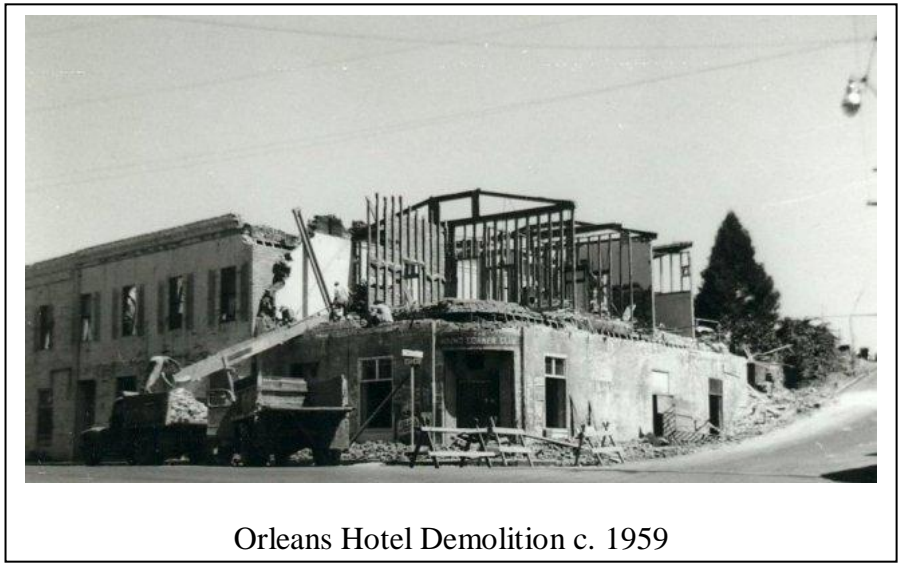
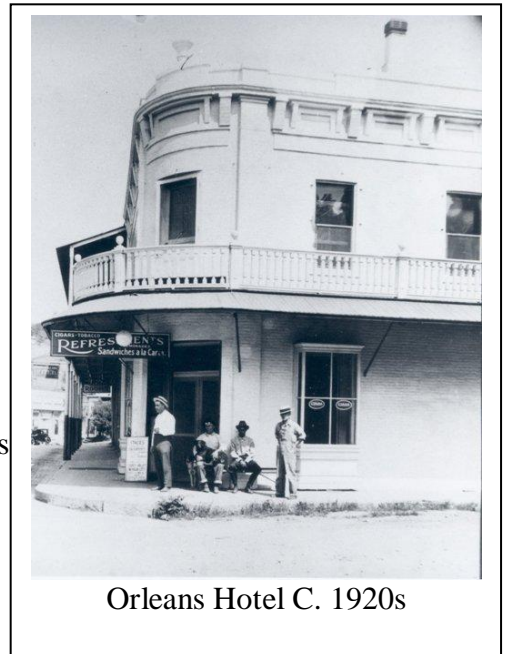
fate loomed over the Old Firehouse, which sat in the path of the new freeway, but it was moved from harm's way in 1959. It was rededicated in its new location on September 11, 1959 and during that ceremony the Orleans, erased from the landscape, was remembered as recounted in this article in the September 17, 1959 *Auburn Journal*:

*The dedication ceremonies took place last Friday morning before a large group of citizens who realize the importance of preserving the pioneer buildings of the city. Some sadness was cast over the group when they saw construction workers preparing the land for a service station where once the historic Orleans Hotel stood.*

Similar losses of historic buildings and sites were reported throughout the country during the late 1950s and early 1960s when highway construction was at an all time high. There was little the local populace could do. But over time the voice of non-profit preservation groups grew louder as they fought to retain their history. This forced Congress to act. In 1966, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act, which promised to curb the destruction of history by federal projects throughout the country. This act made federal agencies take into account the adverse effects of federal undertakings (projects with federal funds,

land, or permits/licenses) on historic properties.

Through the projects funded by the Federal-Aid Highway Act, many communities throughout the country lost historic buildings that held special significance. Their demolition turned them into martyrs for preservation. The Orleans Hotel could not be saved, but its death helped preserve countless others.







## Museums Intelligence

### Placer County Museums News

*Ralph Gibson*

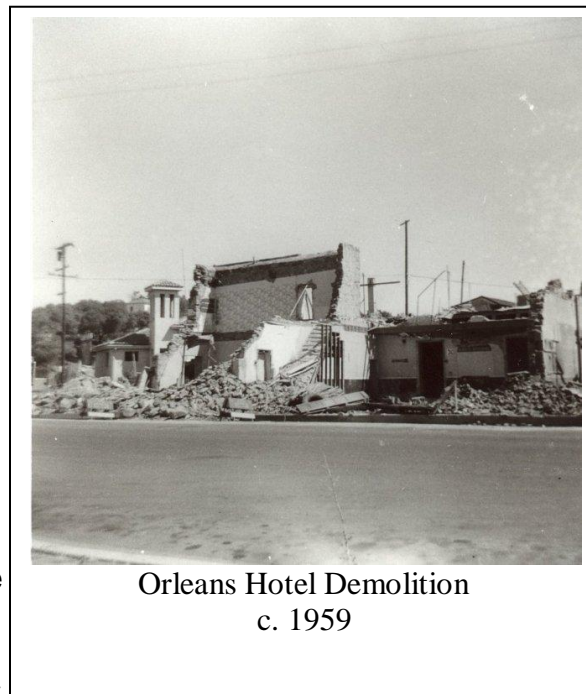
It's hard to believe the Holidays are right around the corner. It's been a fast year at the museums and it seems we are always busy. We just completed Fall Living History, we took out the Carousel exhibit in the Treasury of the historic Courthouse and replaced it with a couple of wagons (a doctor's buggy and a child's surrey), and we're working on updating the hydraulic mining exhibit in the Gold Country Museum. And, of course, we are preparing to dress our museums up for the Holiday season.

Volunteer Training has gone very well and is almost over. We have nine new volunteers who are chomping at the bit to get into one of our museums or facilities. We really appreciate their drive because, as always, we really need them. If you know of someone who would like to volunteer, please have them call: 530-889-6500.

I hope everyone has a terrific Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas!

### Community Education Program: *Old Town Country Christmas at the Historic Courthouse*

We will celebrate Country Christmas in the historic Courthouse in Auburn! Inside will be displays of vintage Christmas cards and Christmas ornaments as well as two vintage wagons. The museum will be open and we will be serving hot apple cider and cookies. It can be cold during Country Christmas, but it's always warm in the Courthouse. The Courthouse will be open from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> during Old Town Country Christmas. For more information, please call 530-889-6500.



Orleans Hotel Demolition  
c. 1959

### Placer County Historical Society News

#### President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

Got history?  
Make history?

Now is the golden opportunity to answer both by helping us dig out the nuggets of the past to preserve it for the future using the technology of today.

This month marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final report of Auburn's ambitious Historic Resources Survey. It was spurred by then City Planning Director Steve Hallam and others who had high hopes that Auburn would be among the early California entities with the distinction of being a Certified Local Government, an unusual moniker that was provided for in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

A team of nearly 50 citizens and the PCHS took part in the survey. It was the first step in forming a Business Improvement District that would involve restoring significant historic buildings in the context of revitalizing the city's downtown area.

The survey attempted to identify and record pre-World War II structures, objects and sites to evaluate them for architectural, historical and cultural significance under the guidelines for the National Register of Historic Places. At the time only the Old Auburn Historical District was on the National Register locally (1970). It was only last year that a second local landmark made it (Auburn's Carnegie Library).

President Harry Truman was quoted as saying the only new

thing in the world is the history you don't know. I find that the more I learn about history just in my native city, county and state, there's a lot more I don't know. There are lot of new things about the past I learned last month in going over the now-yellowed pages of the report and lengthy appendix that provided details of the 684 properties surveyed.

Unfortunately, the goals and dreams of those who participated in the project were not fully realized. Neither the city of Auburn, Placer County nor any of its other cities have managed to realize the goal of becoming a "Certified Local Government" (CLG).

Elk Grove, which boasts on its website as being California's first incorporated city of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, managed to beat us to that honor last November. The State Historical Resources Commission in its recognition resolution noted Elk Grove had joined in a partnership with the federal and state governments "to foster conditions under which our modern society and our prehistoric and historic resources can exist in productive harmony."

Councilman Mike Holmes, a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Auburnite, has dusted it off and is going like gangbusters in not only getting Auburn landmarks listed on the National Register but renewing efforts to achieve that special CLG status that only 58 other cities and counties in the state enjoy.

Donna Howell, who served as PCHS president in 1985 and was involved in the survey and in making many corrections, said unfortunately those involved "ran out of money and out of time and had to wrap it up." Howell, one of the best and most articulate when it

comes to local history, was disappointed that the hard work of dedicated citizens didn't lead to better results.

Still, the late '80s were heady times. Interest in history was rekindled with the centennial of Auburn's second incorporation and the conversion of the 1915 Auburn Grammar School into the city's current City Hall and Civic Center. The City Hall was marked with a plaque by the PCHS as a Point of Historical Interest 10 years ago and is the latest nominee for the National Register of Historic Places.

The 1986 report lamented that historic preservation became important only after the Orleans Hotel and the Freeman Hotel were lost to Interstate 80 and new development. There had also been close calls in saving the historic Placer County Courthouse and the Bernhard Museum Complex, which are now two of the county's top tourist attractions.

Holmes told his fellow council members last month he firmly believes "the more we celebrate our history, the more economic vitality is increased."

The best way to achieve that is for the city of Auburn to become a Certified Local Government. Achieving that status makes the city eligible for Preserve America funds and helps in many other tangible and intangible ways. It won't be easy and it will once again take a lot of volunteer help and public education.

The goal is to update and expand the 1986 survey. City Historian April McDonald, who did some of the writing, research and ideas, and PCHS Board Member John Knox have already started compiling 360 pages of additional research work

at the County Archives. Retired County Archivist Carmel Barry-Schweyer has been busy cranking out National Register nominations.

You too can help make it happen not only in Auburn, but through the historically rich county, including Roseville, Rocklin, Loomis, Colfax and other locales. There is a lot to be done. If interested in helping, or just learning more, please contact me at the email address below.

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

### **Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting**

*Addah Owens, Vice President*

**When:** December 1, 2011

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

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

**Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Holiday Turkey Dinner and  
Dessert.

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

**Program:** Sierra College  
professor and author, Richard P.  
Hilton, will discuss Dinosaurs in  
Placer County.

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### **Technology Help Wanted**

The Placer County Historical Society needs your help in updating our website and making history easier to access using the latest technology.

Please contact Michael Otten  
(530) 888-7837 [otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)  
or Barbara Van Riper  
(530) 885-2074  
[bvr@foothill.net](mailto:bvr@foothill.net).

## **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  
Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859  
[www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org](http://www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org)

Foresthill Divide Historical Society  
Donna Coffman,  
(530) 367-3437  
[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  
George Lay, (530) 878-1927

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

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

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  
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216  
[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  
Barbara Chapman,  
(916) 415-0153  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

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

### *Christmas Time in Auburn in the 1880s*

By Abe Stern

c. 1940-1950



## Calendar of Events

### November

- Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum.  
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street.  
Contact: 916-624-3464.
- Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.

### December

- Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.  
Contact: 530-885-5074.
- Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>** Community Education Program: *Old Town Country Christmas at the Historic Courthouse* in Auburn. **5:00 to 8:00 pm.** Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.  
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall.  
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street.  
Contact: 916-624-3464.
- Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-663-3871.
- Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery.  
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Dec. 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.

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

