

THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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Administrator's Notes

Melanie Barton

The Heritage Trail event on August 7th & 8th was a huge success. Our preliminary numbers indicate that attendance doubled this year. We were very fortunate to have excellent coverage by Capital Public Radio, the *Auburn Journal*, the *Sacramento Bee*, KCRA Channel 3 and Fox 40. In addition, committee members publicized the event in many other ways. As I visited 17 museums in two days, it was especially gratifying to see the smiling faces of staff, volunteers and visitors. I think everyone enjoyed the event. I'd like to thank all of you who volunteered or participated. We are planning to have the 4th annual Heritage Trail again next year. The tentative dates are August 6th & 7th.

Our newest exhibit, *Fashioning a New Identity*, will open Thursday, September 9th at the Placer County Museum. This exhibit features dresses from the Roaring Twenties. No decade in recent history has seen such change in the status and style of women as in the 1920s. Flappers were young women who expressed their independence by wearing knee length, straight, sleeveless

dresses, bobbing their hair, and wearing bright makeup. Their dress and behavior was shocking to their Edwardian mothers and Victorian grandmothers. There are several interpretations of the origin of the term Flapper. One is that it originated in Great Britain where there was a fad among young women to wear rubber galoshes left open to flap when they walked. The name stuck and throughout the United States and Europe Flapper was the name given to liberated young women. I've also read that the movements for the popular dance, the Charleston, resembled ducks flapping their wings. If you have another origin of the term, I would be very interested in hearing it.

In keeping with our theme for this issue of *The Placer*, I would like to briefly mention DeWitt Hospital which was built in Auburn to provide rehabilitation for World War II soldiers. All hospitals built for the Army in WWII conformed to the pavilion plan which was originally developed in the late 18th century. It was refined by Florence Nightingale as a result of her experience in the Crimean War. She believed that disease spread through harmful vapors emitted from the body and she pushed for hospitals that admitted fresh air

and light to each patient. Instead of one large multi-storied building, Nightingale favored many one or two story buildings so that the air and light could circulate through them. DeWitt is one of several hospitals built in this style in the United States.

Construction began May 1943 and was completed in December of the same year. According to the *Placer Herald* of January 8, 1944, the first two patients arrived on January 1st, but DeWitt officially received patients in February and was formally opened with a flag raising ceremony in early March. At its apex, the population of DeWitt was 4,008 including 2,221 patients, 130 commissioned officers, 177 commissioned nurses, 617 enlisted men, 171 WACs, 492 civilian employees and 200 POWs. The last meal served at DeWitt was on March 21, 1946 and it was officially turned over to the Army Engineers on March 31st for surplus.

If you are interested in learning the complete history of DeWitt, please visit the Placer County Museums Archives & Research Center.

World War II & the Great Depression

Ralph Gibson

It is a commonly held belief that World War II effectively ended the Great Depression. But many economists

believe this isn't true. Some economists say it was due to monetary expansion, which was created by an influx of gold into our economy in 1933, while others point at charts and graphs and talk about "aggregate demand" and "endogenous propagation mechanisms". An economist's explanation of what ended the Great Depression is totally confusing. On paper, their esoteric beliefs might be correct. But to the people on the street, I don't think so.

To the regular folks who stood in line for free bread and soup, the Great Depression was about the lack of jobs.

Unemployment was as high as 25% and in danger of going higher. The economic impact to an unemployed person is obvious, but less obvious is the psychological toll it takes. Unemployed with little prospect of finding a good job, people's spirits were down. The Great Depression was a dark cloud that hung over most people's heads.

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, there was a subtle change in the U.S. economically and psychologically. Our allies needed supplies and weapons and this led to more production, which meant more jobs. The unemployment rate in 1939 was 17.05%, by 1941 it was down to 9.66%. This little break in the clouds lifted

people's spirits. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entrance into the war, there was an even greater shift in the unemployment rate. In 1942, the unemployment rate had fallen to 4.7% and by 1944 it had plummeted to 1.2%.

From soldiers on the front lines to women working in tank factories, almost everyone was employed to fight the war.

In 1942, New Deal programs shifted focus as this June 25, 1942 *Auburn Journal* article illustrates:

Drastic curtailments entailing the reduction of the administrative personnel by fifty per cent and the elimination of district offices, was announced for the Northern California Works Progress Administration tonight by William R. Lawson, administrator... According to Lawson, the centralization of administration will be coincidental with an equally drastic reduction in projects eliminating virtually all of these which are not military or naval projects and retaining only such service projects as are directly related to the war effort.

The WPA, which at one time was the largest employer in the U.S., was ended by

Congress in 1943. The war was now the largest employer. Locally, agriculture was a significant employer. An August 6, 1942 *Auburn Journal* article demonstrates the trouble farmers were having:

Fruit workers of all types are in demand and will be during the coming two weeks in the Placer County fruit belt.

This small, two line article was not buried on page six. It was on the front page. Though most young men in the area were in uniform overseas, the real impact to the farmers and ranchers of the area was the internment of the Japanese. After they were pulled from their homes and transported to internment camps in March of 1942, many local agriculturalists were forced to find new workers to take care of their crops and pick their fruit. Though the depression had ended for most Americans, the dark clouds would continue to hang over the heads of Japanese-Americans for several more years.

The economists who feel World War II did not end the Great Depression might be right. Endogenous propagation mechanisms (whatever that means) might have provided the cure to the economy, but I still believe the people who were in a breadline one year and in a war production factory the next would disagree.



WPA Navy Recruitment Poster c. 1941



Poster printed for the War Manpower Commission c. 1943

Bernhard Family Grave Marker Dedication

Karri Samson

As Landmarks Committee Chairman for the Placer County Historical Society, I am pleased to announce that on September 26th we will dedicate a grave marker in the Old Auburn Cemetery to the memory of the Bernhard family. As many of you know, Bernhard Bernhard and his wife, Rosa, and later family members, owned what is now the Bernhard Museum from 1868 to 1958, where they operated an orchard and winery.

Although they were prominent and respected citizens of Auburn, no marker could be found on their cemetery plot. The Society deemed it appropriate that their last resting place should be noted. Also buried in the plot are their children Peter, Benjamin and Elizabeth (Krauss).

The Society would like to acknowledge Paul Ruhkala and Ruhkala Monument Company for their generous contribution toward the cost of the marker and its installation. Ruhkala Monument Company has operated since 1989, but its roots go back to Paul's grandfather, Matt, who established the Union Granite Company in Rocklin in 1904, and family members who operated it until 1977. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Please join us on Sunday, September 26th, at 1:00 P.M., at the Old Auburn Cemetery, for the dedication ceremony.



Museums Intelligence

Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

The film *Titanic* was a huge blockbuster when I was an undergrad at CSU Stanislaus. Beyond the movie there were documentaries on the subject that ran on the History Channel, the Discovery Channel and PBS – just to name a few. Even the major networks put together Titanic-based fluff pieces as part of their evening news. One of the things I heard over and over was how accurate the film was. Before seeing it, I wanted to learn more. I went to the university library and looked on the computer and was pleased to see that they possessed over 20 books on the Titanic. But, when I went to the stacks to find them, they were all gone. Every book on the subject had been checked out. It occurred to me then that the movie inspired people to learn more.

This is what museums are really about: *inspiration*. Exhibits, dioramas, and programs are intended to whet your appetite for knowledge on a certain subject – not to cover every aspect of history in unmerciful detail. To do so would not only bore people to death, but it would also lead to the propagation of inaccurate history. If you give people too many facts at once, the words,

dates, people and events get mixed up. And then they tell their friends who tell their friends and the next thing you know, Auburn was once the capital of California.

Our newest exhibit, *Fashioning a New Identity*, focuses on the Flappers of the 1920s. We hope this exhibit will inspire you to learn more about the “Roaring Twenties” and those that lived through them. While you’re at it, take a fresh look at all of our museums and let us know what exhibits inspire you the most.

The focus of this edition of *The Placer* is how World War II helped end the Great Depression, which I didn’t touch in this article. But, I will end with a story about another film called *Titanic* that was made in Germany in 1943. The film was the brainchild of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels and his intent was to highlight British incompetence.

But the film backfired as German audiences were far too sympathetic toward the British passengers. The Nazi censors pulled the film. They weren’t looking for that kind of inspiration.

Community Education Program: Screening WPA Films of the New Deal

In the 1930s, with the country locked in the Great Depression, the government was hard at work to promote the successes of New Deal programs such as the Works Progress

Administration (WPA). Part of this promotion was the use of films to demonstrate how life was getting better and that the New Deal was working. To see some of these films, please join us at the Placer County Museum on September 17th at 6:30 P.M.

We’ll also screen films shot during the construction of the Auburn Sewer Plant and the buildings in the Gold Country Fairgrounds – both WPA projects. These films have never been seen by the public.

The Placer County Museum is located on the first floor of the historic Courthouse at 101 Maple Street in Auburn. Reservations are required for this FREE program. For reservations or more information, please call 530-889-6500.

Community Education Program: Petroglyphs of the Middle Fork of the American River

Tahoe National Forest Archaeologist Nolan Smith will give a PowerPoint presentation showcasing Petroglyphs of the Middle Fork of the American River. Please join us in the Bernhard Museum Winery on October 30th at 1:00 P.M. for this FREE program. Nolan will discuss the origins of these particular Petroglyphs and highlight what we know and what we don’t know about their meaning. The Bernhard Museum Winery is located at 291 Auburn Folsom Road in Auburn. For more information, please call 530-889-6500.

Placer County Historical Society News

President's Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

On Aug. 21 the Placer County Historical Society joined with the Joss House Museum Association for a trip to Angel Island State Park, led by myself and Richard Yue. Clearly, the highlight for the 49 of us was a special tour of the 100-year-old freshly restored Immigration Station by Joe Chan and his wife, Elizabeth and a picnic outside the station with a picture-perfect view of the bay.

A special thanks goes to Auburn City Councilman Mike Holmes who arranged for the tour with Joe Chan, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel and pilot, is a popular docent and contributor to the Immigration Station, the so-called Ellis Island of the West, through which a reported one million immigrants passed through between 1910 and 1940. Among them were Chan's grandmother, parents, father-in-law and mother-in-law. Chan's erudite description brought to life to us what the immigrants went through, including the prejudice and cultural and language barriers they endured in finding a new home in a new land.

On the way back home from our ferry trip we made a brief stop at the China Camp State Park. Angel Island and China Camp along with our own Auburn State Recreation Area face possible closure because of state financial difficulties. Chan has been in the forefront in trying to keep them open. And with very good reason for in these parks we find not only recreation but a vital glimpse into our past.

I would especially like to thank Linda Johnson and Marion and

Dave Cleaver for making our picnic lunches possible and keeping our trip costs to a minimum.

Bobby Saliba, a 7-year-old new second-grader at the Blue Oaks Elementary School in Roseville, won the special kids-only drawing for the Benton Welty School Room Heritage Trail Kids' Prize Basket. Mrs. Saliba said she expects Bobby will be sharing his bounty of school supplies with his twin brother Tommy. She said her boys had a great time going back to yester year and managed to visit four museums in Auburn and the Maidu Museum in Roseville before tiring.

In addition to a wide range of school supplies and a library book bag, the large basket contained a Patty Reed Doll by Rachel Kelley Laurgaard. The doll is a replica of the doll Donner Party survivor Patty Reed carried on the 1846 ill-fated journey to California.

The basket was prepared by Bonnie Parodi, secretary of the Placer County Historical Society. It included a variety of old fashioned games, a Cat's Cradle Activity Book and some Irish Soda tokens from Auburn Drug Store.

We had a record crowd of nearly 300 for the third annual event, thanks to the hard work of Bonnie, assisted by Jean Allender and many volunteers who took turns staffing the historically recreated classroom.

Family History Day at the California State Archives, 1020 O St., Sacramento, is Saturday, Oct. 9th, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. This is a great opportunity for history buffs and those who want to research their family past. There are more than 20 classes and an opportunity to tour the state archives and learn about what historical documents are held there. It is free. To learn

more go to
<http://fhd2010.blogspot.com>

In closing, I would like to note the passing of Robert Stephens, 92, on June 18. Bob joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934 and went on to receive a degree in forestry from the University of California at Berkeley, which led to a career with the state, including 26 years with State Parks as a surveyor and trail engineer. He and Harriet, his wife of 42 years, lived near the historic Stagecoach Trail in Auburn, which they would often walk and where they erected a bench which allows one to gain a great view of the American River Confluence.

--Michael Otten, otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

When: October 7, 2010

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

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

Cost: \$14 per person

Menu: Stuffed Pork Loin, Roasted Seasonal Vegetables, Green Salad, Rolls and Cobbler Dessert

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

Program: Gary Noy, Director, Center for Sierra Nevada Studies at Sierra Community College and Rick Heide, publisher of many books and recipient of the prestigious American Book Award will present a program on the literature of the Sierra Nevada placed in a historical context, featuring readings from their anthology of Sierra Nevada writing. Selections from the dawn of recorded history until today will be presented including Chief Winnemucca, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, John Muir, Ansel Adams, Robert Louis Stevenson and many more.

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Ed & Nilda Duffek,
(530) 305-3209
www.colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society
Margie Powell, (530) 432-4015
www.donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society
Merilee Reed, (530) 367-2430
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
Norman Root, (916) 483-8669
www.lincolnhwy.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society
Dot Shiro, (916) 663-3892
www.ppgn.com

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

Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59
Tom Potts, (916) 412-3910

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

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

Placer County Genealogical Society
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216
www.pcgenes.com

Placer County Historical Society
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837
www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

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

Rocklin Historical Society
Barbara Chapman,
(916) 415-0153
www.rocklinhistory.org

Roseville Historical Society
Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003
www.rosevillehistorical.org

Artifact Highlight

Kasia Woroniecka

Sewing Kit c. 1941

America officially entered the war in Europe and the Pacific after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. Clothing and gear varied depending on the soldier's mission and location. Besides his weapon and ammunition the standard foot soldier of the US Army carried a backpack which included a first aid pack, a canteen of water, a few days rations, an entrenching tool, a blanket, a cleaning kit for his weapon, foot powder, a change of socks, a mess kit, a shaving and toiletry kit, and a sewing kit sometimes called a Housewife. The sewing kit was issued to each soldier so he could make basic repairs to his uniform. The one pictured, which dates back to around 1941, was issued to Ray E. Wilson and it includes small spools of thread in various colors, needles, extra buttons, and safety pins.



Calendar of Events

September

- Sept. 11th, 7:00 pm Maidu Museum Program: *Imaginary Indians as Artifacts of Power*, presented by Brian Baker. Free admission. Contact: 916-774-5934.
- Sept. 15th, 6:30 pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact: 916-652-7844.
- Sept. 17th, 6:30 pm Community Education Program: *Screening WPA Films of the New Deal* in the Placer County Museum gallery in Auburn's historic Courthouse. Reservations required. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Sept. 18th, 6:30 pm Maidu Museum exhibit opening: *Our Precious Legacy*. Free admission. Contact: 916-774-5934
- Sept. 20th, 6:00 pm Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Sept. 20th, 7:00 pm Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street. Contact: 916-624-3464.
- Sept. 23rd, 7:00 pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.
- Sept. 26th, 1:00 pm Bernhard family grave marker dedication at the Old Auburn Cemetery. Contact: 530-888-7837.

October

- Oct. 7th, 6:30 pm Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Contact: 530-885-5074.
- Oct. 18th, 6:30 pm Foresthill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Oct. 18th, 7:00 pm Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Old St. Mary's Chapel at 5152 Front Street. Contact: 916-624-3464.
- Oct. 20th, 6:30 pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact: 916-652-7844.
- Oct. 20th, 5:30 pm Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Oct. 28th, 7:00 pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.
- Oct. 30th, 1:00 pm Community Education Program: *Petroglyphs of the Middle Fork of the American River* by Nolan Smith on the second floor of the Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.

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