



The Placer

2022 September-October Volume 25, Issue 5

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Administrator's Notes

by Ralph Gibson, Museums Administrator

Much like a pumpkin farmer, planning for our fall programs began way back in the spring. The Old Auburn Cemetery Tour will be on Sunday, October 2nd from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm. Like last year, the Auburn Cemetery District will provide porta-potties. If you aren't playing one of our dearly departed or assisting as a "Ghost Host", we'd love to have you come to the cemetery to learn about some of the people from our past. This event is Free! Kudos to Carol Cramer who organizes and manages this event so expertly every year!



Old Auburn Cemetery

Also, this fall are the Old Auburn Ghost Tours. We don't run this event, but we do assist the group that manages it and many of our docents portray the otherworldly apparitions of historic tortured souls. The tours will be on October 22nd with the first tour at 5:00 pm and the second tour at 7:30 pm; October 29th at 6:30 pm; and October 30th at 6:30 pm. This event serves as a fundraiser for local non-profits (including our Placer County Museums Docent Guild) and tickets are \$35.00 each. Tickets will go on sale September 10th at 11:00 am both online and at the Placer County Visitors Center located at 1103 High Street in Auburn. To buy the tickets online, visit: [Facebook.com/HauntsofAuburn](https://www.facebook.com/HauntsofAuburn)

Finally, some of you may be aware that we had two separate incidents of theft at the Bernhard Museum. It has been gut-wrenching for our staff and volunteers, but we are working through it and have implemented new security procedures. We're hopeful this will all soon be far behind us as we welcome and revel in the autumn colors, the carved Jack O'Lanterns, and the occasional museum ghost. Happy Halloween, everyone!

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Keyboard Instruments at the Bernhard Museum

by *Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections*

Music played an important part in everyday 19th century life and was enjoyed by Victorians of all social classes. The center of family life was in the parlor and that is where families entertained, enjoyed private musical gatherings, and took part in sing-alongs. Owning a piano or an organ during this period became a status symbol that demonstrated family's social standing, financial situation, and ability to enjoy leisure time. Playing a musical instrument was part of a well-rounded education and children often performed the latest popular pieces at social functions. Musical ability became especially important for young women who hoped to attract suitors by displaying musical talents along with their femininity and domesticity. Keyboard instruments, especially the piano, were seen as the woman's instrument: graceful and modest, with fingers (and shoed toes) the only body parts touching the instrument.



**Woman at her piano c. 1890.
PCM, Sam McClain Collection**

The growing popularity of home entertainment and technological advancements of the industrial evolution influenced the emerging musical industry. Factory mass-produced instruments became widely available on the market with London, Vienna, and Paris as major manufacturing centers. Parlor music repertoire often included religious and patriotic pieces, as well as sentimental songs of love and loss. Sheet music was widely available and polkas, waltzes and music and songs from popular plays were in demand.

Until they were replaced by the phonograph, radio and television, musical instruments, especially the piano, were at the center of family entertainment. Three 19th century keyboard instruments are on display at the Bernhard Museum: a melodeon, a pump organ, and a grand piano.



**Iowa Hill dance hall with organ c. 1910
PCM, Candy Lehman Collection**



This melodeon was donated to our collection in 1974. It is a six octave “Charles Prince” model manufactured by the George A. Prince and Company of Buffalo, NY, around 1862. The George A. Prince Co. was the leading manufacturer of organs in the United States from the 1850s until the 1870s. The melodeon is a type of a reed organ, the forerunner of the parlor organ. It was invented in Buffalo, NY and often looked like small square grand piano. It had one set of reeds, which created

sound when air was pumped by foot pedals. Some had one or two levers on the side of the keyboard that controlled a secondary set of reeds that were usually tuned an octave higher for a more varied and higher pitch sound. Melodeons were very popular before and During the Civil War. They were cheaper than pianos and rarely needed maintenance or tuning.

The melodeon was donated by Ann Ballard of Penryn. Ballard was the president of the Placer County Historical Society, president of the Loomis Garden Club, and member of the Auburn Federated Women’s Club.

This organ was donated to our collection in 1985 and dates to around 1890. These were commonly referred to as “parlor organs,” “reed organs” and “pump organs.” They were operated by pumping large foot pedals, which forced air across a bank of reeds, or thin vibrating metal strips. Organs built during this period had elaborate designs, with shelves, high backs, and carved panels, often in the Eastlake style of the late Victorian Period. This organ was made by the W.W. Kimball Organ Company, which was founded in 1857 in Chicago. At the height of production in the late 1880s the company was able to produce fifty organs a week. By 1890s it expanded to include large-scale pipe organs. The company ceased production of organs in 1942 and focused on piano manufacture.



The organ was donated to our collection by Dale Moore of Weimar. It was a fixture in the front parlor of the Iowa farm home of Charles and Susan Plumly, donor’s grandparents, from around 1887 until Charles’ death in 1933. It remained in the parlor until the estate of their daughter, donor’s mother Belle L. Plumly Moore, was settled in 1963 following her death in 1961. The organ was purchased for Belle Plumly when she was ten or eleven years old. Belle Plumly’s daughter Margaret Moore inherited it and moved it to her house in Weimar.



Buffalo Morning Express
February 1, 1862



The Progressive Farmer
September 3, 1910

By the-turn-of-the-century, the piano became the instrument of choice for the American home. It became the essential instrument in performance, accompaniment, and composition. More sheet music publications were made for piano in comparison to other instruments since the piano allowed amateurs to produce sound quality that would otherwise take months of practice on woodwind or string instruments.



This piano was donated to our collection in 1993. It is a square grand piano, sometimes called a box grand. The square piano is not square but rectangular in shape, and usually has a keyboard that is between five and five and a half octaves, shorter than today's piano that usually has seven and a quarter octaves. Its strings are arranged diagonally across the case, unlike the strings in the grand piano, where strings run vertically to the keyboard. The piano was made by Steinway and Sons around 1868. The company was founded in 1853 in New York City by Heinrich Engelhard Steinweg (later Americanized to Steinway), a German immigrant. By 1880 the company revolutionized the way pianos were made and marketed. The pianos were produced in New York and Hamburg, Germany, and sold in elegant showrooms. The company also built concert venues, where audiences would enjoy performances on various Steinway models. The company is still in business today and continues to build high quality instruments. Square pianos enjoyed popularity until the turn of the century, when upright pianos, which took up less space, became popular. The piano was donated by Edith Slade Frost of Los Altos.



The Sacramento Daily Record-Union
 December 17, 1885

We were fortunate to have Alicia McMillan perform on these three instruments to reveal their complex and beautiful sounds, which you can view on our YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/user/placercountymuseums>. Alicia McMillan is the Worship and Music Director and organist at the Point Loma Community Presbyterian Church in San Diego. She earned her music degrees in organ performance from the University of Tampa in Florida, Northwestern University in Chicago, and National University in San Diego. Her performance experience ranges from seasonal solo organ concerts, performing concertos with orchestra during annual Christmas Concerts, serving as choral festival accompanist, and performing on the famous Spreckels Organ in Balboa Park.



Hanford Semi Weekly Journal
 August 25, 1896

Music in the Days of the Gold Rush

by April McDonald-Loomis

A miner's life was filled with loneliness, homesickness, physical danger, bad food, illness and very, very hard work. Any escape from the day to day drudgery of mining was a much sought after relief.

Men gathered whenever they could for companionship and entertainment. Drinking and gambling were the main pursuits but these were often accompanied by music of one sort or another.

Would be miners brought any musical instruments they could possibly carry across the Plains or on the sea route to California. Banjos, guitars, fiddles, harmonicas and accordions were all very portable and made the long journey. After arriving in California, many men made more money from making music than from digging for gold.



Miner's journals of the early days often recount tales of miners gathering around a fiddle or banjo player and having a "stag dance." Typically, those miners portraying women Jed a white handkerchief around their arms. Fueled by alcohol, the dances could last till dawn.

As the camps grew to small towns, music halls or theaters were often part of the foundation of the town. Traveling troupes of entertainers were hugely popular and miners would travel many miles from their distant camps to a theater. Lola Montez, Lotta Crabtree, Kate Hayes and Ella Bruce were among the most popular gold rush entertainers and they made huge amounts of money on their tours. Ella Bruce sang in Auburn in 1853.

Also very popular were the hurdy - gurdy houses, one of which was said to be in Last Chance. A group of young women, often accompanied by a married couple, for propriety sake, would travel from hotel to hotel with a band of some sort, and dance with the miners for a fee. Some of the women were quite respectable, some not so much!

In *The Days of Gold*, author Malcolm J. Rohrbough wrote: "From the beginning, the 49ers sang. They sang as they marched to the wharves, on shipboard, and around the campfires on the way to California. They sang in the diggings and in the towns. They sang to themselves; they sang in groups; they were sung to by entertainers. Later, they sang on the way home and after their return."

**Complimentary Benefit
TO MISS ELLA BRUCE BY THE
CITIZENS OF AUBURN.**

AUBURN, August 1st, 1853.
To Miss Ella Bruce:

The undersigned, citizens of Auburn, are desirous of expressing to you our appreciation of your talents and acquirements; and, as we understand it is your present intention to visit the eastern portion of our county, if on your return you will honor us again with one or more of your agreeable concerts, by naming now the time we assure you that our utmost endeavors will be put forth to secure you the attention and attendance which your merits so deservedly call for.

In conclusion, allow us again to express our feelings, and assure you that the place of the *First* among those who have formerly visited us, is now occupied by *yourself* in the hearts of the citizens of Auburn.

Very respectfully your
sincere friends and obedient servants,
H. FITZSIMMONS, JOHN D. HARPER,
H. R. HAWKINS, JOHN NYE,
WM. M. JORDAN, GEO. H VAN CLEFT
ED. M. HALL, JOHN Q. JACKSON.
A. A. STEVENS.

NATIONAL HOTEL, Auburn, Aug. 2d, '53.
Gentlemen: Your kind note has been duly received, extending to me the invitation of appearing again before you in Auburn; and in reply I would assure you that I fully appreciate the compliment, and am pleased to appoint Saturday, August 6th, as most agreeable to me and hope it may be equally so to you.

I am, gentlemen, yours,
ELLA BRUCE.
To Judge H. FITZSIMMONS and others.

The first songs expressed the optimism and enthusiasm of the new adventure. Some songs related the hard journey to California by land or sea, later songs would note the contrast between the popular accounts and the realities of mining. Many songs had a “strong element of nostalgia and pathos,” expressing the hard life of the miners and the homesickness they suffered. Many of the songs were humorous. Later the songs would reflect the celebration of the great adventure and the remembrance of old comrades.

Below find lyrics from some Gold Rush era songs.

Oh, California

*I come from Salem City with my washbowl on my knee
I'm going to California, the gold dust for to see
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry
The sun's so hot I froze to death, oh brothers don't you cry
Oh, California That's the land for me
I'm bound for San Francisco With my washbowl on my knee*

Life In California

*O I ha 'nt got no home, nor nothing else, I spose
Misfortune seems to follow me wherever I goes
I come to California with a heart both stout and bold
And have been up to the diggings there to get some lumps of gold
But I'm a used up man
A perfect used up man
And if ever I get home again I'll stay there if I can*

The Arrival of the Greenhorn

*I've just got in across the Plains, I'm poorer than a snail
My mules all died, but poor old Clip I pulled in by the tail
I fed him last at Chimney Rock, that's where the grass gave out
I'm proud to tell, we stood it well, along the Truckee route
But I'm very weak and lean, though I started plump and fat
How I wish I had the gold machine, I left back on the Platte!
And a pair of striped bed tick pants, my Sally made for me
To wear while digging after gold and when I left says she
"Here take the laudanum with you Sam, to check the di-a-ree"*

The above came from a variety of sources: *The Age of Gold* by H.W. Brands p.213. 253, *Days of Gold* by M. J. Rohrbough, p. 287-289, sfgate.com, folkwaysisi.edu, balladsofamerica.org, seecalifornia.com, *Auburn Journal* 6-14-1974 & *Sierra Heritage* June 1981, *Placer Herald* July 30, 1853 & August 6, 1853.

Heavy Metal in Auburn

by Jason Adair, Exhibit Technician

Gold isn't the only heavy metal people around here were into. There was a time back in the late 1980s when you couldn't throw a drumstick without it being incorporated into a local metal band's double bass solo. My own band, Bloody Chicken, was reputed to be the "Loudest band at Placer High" which was probably the closest thing to a compliment that you could pay us. But how did a little town in the foothills become home to dozens of bands of all stripes?

The proliferation of Auburn bands in the late 80s- early 90s was driven by a few different forces. The most important was new places for bands who were just starting out to play at.

There have always been places for nationally touring acts to play shows but small all ages clubs where your friends under 21 could come see you attempt to be a rock star at were almost non-existent. What's now the Auburn Event Center up on Elm Street used to be an all-ages club on Thursday nights called Club Soda with a Twist. The club would book three bands a week plus a DJ. In addition to that club, there were several coffee shops in town like The Firehouse, in the old firehouse on Lincoln Way, and Café Leon next to the bowling alley, where quieter bands could play for tips, coffee and a couple of bucks.

Another driver of band creation was the advent of home recording and duplication. Being in a band was cool, but being able to record your music and force your friends to blast it in their cars was amazing. In the early 80s the only way to do this was to rent studio time and it was hard to justify spending that kind of money to record bands like Bloody Chicken. By the time the late 80s rolled around the Tascam Portastudio was becoming popular enough that there were several musicians around town who had them and would be cool with coming over and spend a few hours recording your band.

After that it was just a matter of getting two tape decks together and copying tapes while you drew cover art and made the insert for the tape case. It was all very rough and do it yourself, but that was just the thing: you could do it yourself.

Having tapes not only allowed you to give your music to friends, you could also sell them at your shows where you might make enough money to pay for gas!

I don't think I have any tapes from my old bands but I'm pretty sure there are a lot of other band's old tapes, t-shirts, flyers etc. floating around in parent's garages. I'm hoping the museum can start a collection of all the music from bands that didn't quite make past Loomis. Or even the ones that did, like The South Loomis Quickstep, who was reportedly the only band who didn't get booted off the stage opening for Cheech and Chong.



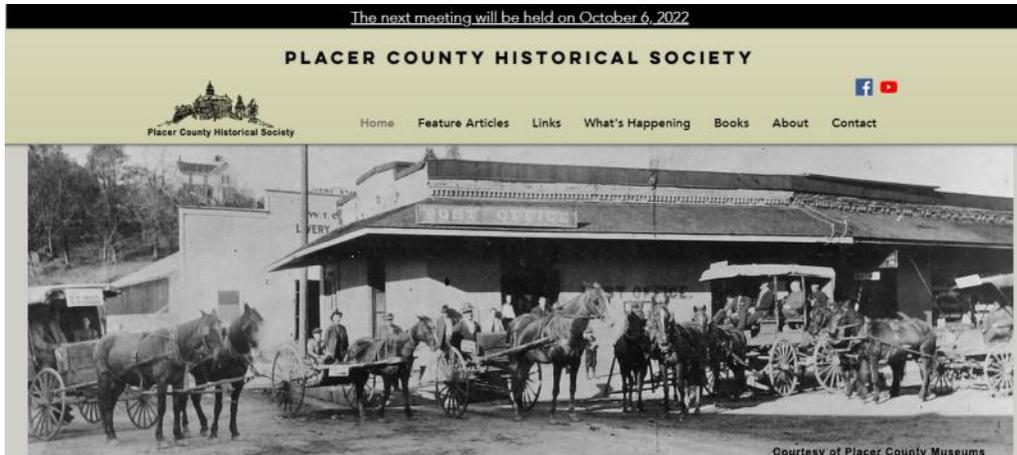
News from the Placer County Historical Society

by April McDonald-Loomis, President

april.pchs@gmail.com (530) 823-2128

The big news here is the unveiling of our new website, it has been “under construction” for some time, (we had tons of content that needed to be reformatted). Do take a look at the fresh, updated new look. We thank Ellen McKay of Webcrafters for the superb job. If you have any ideas for web content please let us know.

placerhistoricalsociety.org



Our Society member Frank Nissen just hosted a really nice book launch for his new Gold Rush era book Fortune's Call. I just picked it up and can't give it a review yet but it looks like it will be a good story of a young man's eventful journey from Vermont to California. I think it is available in all the usual places. Another publication that is out are the six volumes of Auburn's 49ers. Well at least the first three volumes are out, the last three I am picking up at the printers and they should be in place by the time this The Placer is issued. A few years ago, John Knox and I set out to find as many 49ers who mined in Auburn in 1849 and early 1850 as we could. We had hoped to find maybe 15 or 20 and eventually came up with more than 80 men and women that we could document. Each and every one has a unique story to tell. Those should be available at Winston Smith's books, Serendipity, the Visitor's Center and Auburn 360. You can always contact the Society through our new website and order any of our publications or just send me an email.

The Society is working on expanding our scholarship program. We currently have one in place at Sierra College but for some reason it has never garnered any attention. We are working on transferring the \$1,000 scholarship to be available to all the local high schools.

We are getting ready to open the Benton Welty historic Classroom for student tours for the upcoming school year. We have expanded our invitation list and hope to reach more teachers and students than we have previously. The Covid lock down pretty much halted any tours and we are trying to get it going again.

We are still working with the City to get signage up for Nevada Street for Spanish Flat and the fruit sheds. I met recently with the City Manager and have some hope that progress will be made on this project.

Hope to see you all at the next dinner meeting on October 6th. John Knox will be the speaker on Auburn Dry Diggings and Water. A fascinating look at the history of water delivery to Auburn from the days of the Gold Rush to modern times. One not to be missed if you love local history!

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society

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

Donner Summit Historical Society

Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859
donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society

Annie DeMaria-Norris (916) 206-4479
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

Lincoln Highway Association

Trey Pitsenberger
vice.president@lincolnhighwayassoc.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

Diane Fishburn
pcgs.pcgene.com

Placer County Historical Society

April McDonald-Loomis
 (530) 823-2128
placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Craig Norris

Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

Chuck Spinks
Psrhs.org

Rocklin Historical Society

Jim Hammes (916) 624-3464
rocklinhistorical.org

Roseville Historical Society

Denise Fiddymment, (916) 773-3003
rosevillehistorical.org

S.N.O.W. Sports Museum

Jill Short Milne, (415) 254-5686
thesnowmuseum.org

Calendar:

Please confirm all meeting times and locations which each organization

Foresthill Divide Historical Society Meeting: Monday, September 19th at 6:00pm

Golden Drift Historical Society Meeting: Monday, October 3rd at 7:00pm

Historical Advisory Board Meeting: Wednesday, October 19th at 5:30pm

Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting: Wednesday, September 21st at 6:00pm; Wednesday, October 19th at 6:00pm

Placer County Historical Society Meeting: Thursday, September 1st at 2:00pm, **Dinner Meeting:** Thursday, October 6th at 6:00pm

Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society: Tuesday, September 27th at 7:00pm; Tuesday, October 25th at 7:00pm

Placer Genealogical Society Meeting: Monday, September 26th at 7:00pm; Monday, October 24th at 7:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Meeting: Monday, September 12th at 6:00pm; Monday, October 10th at 6:00pm

Roseville Historical Society Meeting: Tuesday, September 13th at 4:00pm; Tuesday, October 11th at 4:00pm



PLACER COUNTY MUSEUMS
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