Historical Accuracy

Roger Staab articles

Foreward by April McDonald

Most of us involved with the museums and the archives highly value and strive for historical accuracy in the papers we write and in the information, we give to visitors. Sometimes though, folk lore gets passed along for so long that we think it is correct when in fact, it isn't at all. And sometimes, folks have their version of truth and even when presented with facts will stick to their own story. Have you checked the Powers Mansion Inn website lately? After literally years of trying to persuade them that deeds tell the truth, the story they want to tell and do tell is historically inaccurate.

We have some historical plaques around the county, put up in all good faith and with the knowledge that people had at the time, that are now known to be inaccurate. While some may feel that it is easier and certainly less expensive to just leave things as they are, others feel that everything should be done to make the necessary corrections. Which brings us to the theme of this newsletter – **Historical Accuracy.** What is it really? How are some local myths exposed?

Roger Staab is a very able historian with excellent research skills. If you haven't already read his book on the *Towle Brothers*, do it soon. It is a textbook example of primary research work that is easy to read and extremely informative. As he is known for his commitment to historical accuracy, the Colfax Area Historical Society asked Staab to present position papers on two topics that have been a part of the Colfax historical narrative for years:

   1. Did the Chinese workers on the Cape Horn part of the construction of the transcontinental railroad use ropes or hanging baskets to do the work?

   2. Did the town of Colfax rename itself spontaneously after the visit of Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax in1865?

Here are Roger's responses to those questions reprinted from the *Colfax Cobblestones* with Roger's permission.

+ [The Chinese Laborers and Cape Horn by Roger Staab](#) (pdf)

+ [The Naming of the Town of Colfax by Roger Staab](#)(pdf)