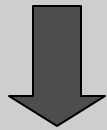


# THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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## Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

Occasionally fantastic opportunities pop up out of the blue! This happened recently when Sonja Hamilton read about the carousel exhibit, *A Leap of Imagination*. To say that this exhibit sparked her imagination is an understatement. Sonja teaches watercolor painting at Placer School for Adults and she proposed that her students, if interested, paint the carousel animals in our exhibit at the Placer County Museum. The response was overwhelming. You can see their finished art work at The Chocolate Shoppe on Lincoln Way in downtown Auburn and at two locations in Old Town: Old Town Gallery and Lighthouse Realty. Please join us for an Artist's Reception of *Grab the Brass Ring, A Watercolor Exhibition*, on March 10<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Two framed original watercolors painted by John Long will be given away in a free drawing. The reception and exhibit "Leap of Imagination" is located in the Historic Courthouse. We look forward to seeing you.

*Grab the Brass Ring* will be open for your enjoyment from March 1<sup>st</sup> through April 4<sup>th</sup>.

This partnership has been so successful that we are already planning another art exhibit. This one will feature watercolor paintings of historic buildings in Placer County. This art work to be exhibited in the upper floor of the Bernhard Museum Winery in August. I can't wait to see what these talented artists produce.

Don't forget to visit our blog to get the most up to date information about all our programs:

[www.placercountymuseums.blogspot.com](http://www.placercountymuseums.blogspot.com)



Original Watercolor  
by Kevin Patterson



*Liberty Racer*  
Original watercolor by John Long



*Mr. Wabbit*  
Original watercolor by Selma Riba

## Sacramento to Auburn Wagon Road

Ralph Gibson

How long does it take you to drive from Auburn to Sacramento? Most of us do it between 30 and 45 minutes if the traffic is light. Those of you running from the police might complete the journey in 20 minutes as long as you avoid the spike strips.

But in the 1850s, it was a ten hour journey on average and for most large wagon teams it took two full days. The Sacramento to Auburn Road began as an early miner's trail. During the Gold Rush, masses of 49ers marched the long path that followed the American River from Sacramento to the mines in the upper foothills. As miners needed more supplies, the trail, by necessity, became a road. Teamsters hauled tons of supplies from Sacramento up to the mining towns and camps over the young road. The road twisted and turned and was estimated to be about 45 miles in length from Sacramento to Auburn. The road roughly paralleled the North Fork of the American River through Folsom. Today, Sacramento and Auburn are only separated by 34 miles on Interstate 80.

On your drive to Sacramento, you might have to stop for gas and food. Teamsters in the 1850s had their own stops to make at

places called *Way Stations* or *Roadhouses* where they could get food, water and shelter for themselves and their animals. Leonard Davis, local historian, noted in his book *The Historic Sacramento to Auburn Road* that:

*These roadhouses were all very much alike, usually, of clapboard frame construction, two stories high, standing lengthwise to the road with large barns directly across the road for teams of horses, mules or oxen. The downstairs portion of the building invariably consisted of a large barroom well supplied with every liquid refreshment popular at that time, a long dining room, a kitchen and a parlor, or sitting room. Sleeping rooms occupied the upstairs or second floor, but often as not teamsters preferred to sleep in the open near their teams and their valuable loads of freight.*

Throughout the 45 mile stretch between Sacramento and Auburn, there was a Way Station every few miles.

Traffic on the road was immense at times. One day in 1859, 28 fully loaded wagons passed through Auburn on their way east to mining camps within a two hour stretch of time. In the summer, the road was choked with dust, but in the winter and early spring it was

a muddy mess. In several places, some teamsters would make their own road around deep mud holes created by other wagon teams. It was a difficult and slow process to haul freight over the muddy road.

One enterprising method of making muddy wagon roads more traversable was by adding planks. In the 1850s, plank roads began to pop up from the valley to the mining camps. Wooden planks were laid across a leveled road with log foundations. Because of the costs involved, all plank roads were toll roads or turnpikes.

A September 24, 1953 editorial in the *Placer Herald* noted that a section of the Sacramento-Auburn Road might be planked from Sacramento up to the Ten Mile House (which was a Way Station about ten miles out of Sacramento). The editor made an impassioned plea for the county to plank its section of the road:

*Are we content to sweat and mire along through another winter's mud, when, by the exercise of a little energy, we can have a fine plank road for the bulk of our carrying trade?  
We have the means within us to affect this, and if we should need assistance, Sacramento is deeply interested in a commercial point of view, and would probably come to the aid of her mountain*

customers. Our forests of magnificent timber would at once assume a proper value, and our numerous fine mills obtain a ready sale for their lumber.

...Plank roads have become quite common in the Atlantic states, and the investment in every instance yields handsome dividends; better than some of the more pretending railroad and canal schemes.

We are not yet able to go into a railroad, but we are a plank road, and the commerce of the country demands it, and sooner or later the enterprise must succeed. The road will pay – pay from the surface to the bed rock – what more do you want? Then let us have the road at once.

Though there were plank roads laid in Placer County, I have found no evidence that the Placer County portion of the Sacramento-Auburn road was ever planked. The problem with plank roads was that they decayed fairly rapidly. Boards that weathered away or warped had to be replaced. The constant labor involved in maintaining a good plank road made it cost prohibitive in some areas. Though some plank roads throughout the United States survived to be used by early automobiles, most faded away soon after their popularity peaked in the 1850s.



Though we don't have images of freighting on the Sacramento-Auburn Road, we do have a number of freighting photographs from other parts of the county, like this one from Forest Hill.

## PCHS 2011-12 NOMINATIONS

Nominations for 2011-12 for the Placer County Historical Society:

President: Michael Otten

1st Vice President: George Lay

2nd Vice President (programs): Addah Owens

Secretary, Bonnie Parodi

Treasurer: Al Stoll

Board members (Two-Year Terms, 2010-11 to 2011-12): Jean Allender, Karen Bleuel, John Knox

Carry over Board Members from 2010-11 with additional year remaining: Sherri Schackner, Walt Wilson, Penny Watson, Karri Samson.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Schackner, chair, nomination committee, Winona Virgil, Smith Virgil, Betty Samson, Karri Samson

Officers for 2011-2012 will be elected at the annual membership dinner meeting on April 7, 2011, at 6:30 p.m., Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

At that time the Nomination committee will make its final report. Additional nominations may be made at that time and a vote taken. If a candidate is unopposed, election to that office may be made by voice vote. Should there be more than one nominee for an office then there shall be an election by ballot for that office. Those elected will assume office May 1, the start of the fiscal year.



## Museums Intelligence

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### Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

Spring Living History of 2011 has begun! This season will be very busy at the Bernhard Museum. Between February 28<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> there are only three open days on the Living History calendar – and those may be gobbled up soon. We expect around 3,000 students this year. We are also working on a new semi-permanent exhibit in the Placer County Museum that will encompass a change in the current Communications Exhibit. It will retell the story of economic change in the county after the Gold Rush. This new exhibit will tie the importance of the railroad in Placer County to agriculture, granite quarries and the Gladding McBean factory in Lincoln.

March is Women's History Month and this year it is especially important because 2011 marks the 100 year anniversary of Women's Suffrage in California. On October 10, 1911 a special election was held that included many propositions. The most significant of which, Proposition 4, would give women the right to vote if passed. Although early returns put the measure behind, a late surge by rural voters turned the tide and the proposition passed.

To highlight this historic achievement, we will add a small panel near the *Fashioning a New Identity* exhibit in the Placer County Museum. This exhibit focuses on the Flappers of the 1920s and notes the passage of Women's Suffrage at the federal level in 1920. We are also planning an event in October of this year to commemorate California Women's Suffrage. Look for details in upcoming issues of *The Placer*.

#### Community Education program: *Murder in Auburn in 1904 A Fresh Look at the Adolph Weber Case*

On the evening of November 10, 1904 a fire broke out in the Weber home overlooking what is now Old Town Auburn. Volunteer firefighters and community members responded to the scene, and after searching through smoke-filled rooms they discovered the bodies of Mrs. Weber, her daughter Bertha and son Chester. The badly burned body of Mr. Weber was discovered in the smoldering ruins of the home the next day. An autopsy revealed that Chester Weber had been beaten by what appeared to be the butt of a gun and the other three victims all died from gunshot wounds. The only surviving member of the family, Adolph Weber, was charged and brought to trial for the crimes.

The tragedy and the trials that followed rocked the state, attracted national and international attention and led to

a change in state inheritance law that is still enforced today. Join us on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm on the second floor of the Bernhard Winery for our next free Community Education program: *Murder in Auburn in 1904: A Fresh Look at the Adolph Weber Case* presented by Dr. Michael Meloy. Reservations are required.

#### Community Education program: *The History and Significance of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad*

Have you ever heard of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad? This 22 mile railroad connected Nevada City to Colfax where passengers and freight could be transferred to trains heading east or west on the Transcontinental Railroad. But, like many things in this region, its rich history is deeply rooted in gold. During its 66 years of operation from 1876 to 1943, over 200 million dollars worth of gold was hauled over its rails.

But its relationship with gold is just one reason it was significant to the region. To learn more about this railroad, including what a narrow gauge railroad is, please join us in the Bernhard Winery on April 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm for this free program presented by Ron Kapper, historian for the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum.

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

The Conference of California Historical Societies has a first time bargain for you by virtue of the fact you are a member of the Placer County Historical Society. You can now subscribe to its *California Historian* without being a direct Conference member. A one year subscription is \$12; two years for \$20. You can check the online version of *The Placer* at the Placer Museums website for a subscription form to print out and send in with your check.

This bargain is available to other member organizations including the Colfax Area Historical Society, Golden Drift Historical Society, Placer County Historical Foundation, Rocklin Historical Society, Placer County Museum Docent Guild and the Placer County Museums. If you don't belong to one of the organizations but receive *The Placer* please designate Placer County Museums as your member organization.

The Conference (CCHS) was founded in 1954 as a federation of historical groups, museum, libraries and related groups and individuals. CCHS helps those interested in history to connect and share information with the goal of preserving records, artifacts, sites and buildings and to develop organizational skills

and techniques in preserving history.

Typically up to now the CCHS publication *California Historian* only went to organization or individual members who usually pay \$30 or more. It has been rare that individual members of organizations ever saw a copy.

What a treasure the *California Historian* is. If you read recent issues you might learn that our state parks house more than a million museum objects, three million archival documents and two million archaeological specimens. You would learn that the greatest wartime mobilization in our nation's history occurred in the Richmond area and the massive public works of the Great Depression left behind structures that we use every day, including schools, post offices, courthouses, city halls, airports, dams, bridges and swimming pools and much, much more. The latest issue has an article on the oldest Art Museum in the West, the Crocker and its new world class status.

I was surprised to learn in February that in the Sierra Gateway Region of CCHS-- covering Placer, Nevada, Sierra, Sutter and Yuba Counties--there are only 13 group members (eight in Placer County) and four individual members (myself and three others). Group member perks include obtaining very low cost group liability insurance as well as access to informative workshops, symposiums and the

annual meeting. The annual meeting this year is June 23-26 in Berkeley and it will be a great opportunity to visit and learn about the Bancroft Library, a treasure trove of information where the Mark Twain papers are housed, on the University of California campus.

The *California Historian* website is [www.californiahistorian.com](http://www.californiahistorian.com). To subscribe send your check for \$12 or \$20, your name, address, phone, email and your member organization to CCHS, C/O Ben Wirick, administrator, 112 Harvard Ave. #15, Claremont, CA 91711.

\* \* \*

In case you haven't heard, the state Historic Resources Commission on Jan. 28 unanimously approved the Auburn Public Library and Multiple Property nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. The official designation could come as soon as this spring.



He was a big bear of a man with a huge white beard and he loved to ride his big motorcycle. But

we at the Placer County and Foresthill Divide Historical Societies knew Michael Jon Moffet as our gentle giant nerd.

Moffet died Jan. 28 at Sutter Auburn Faith Hospital from an extremely rare cancer. He was a 21 year Navy veteran, trained as an electronic technician who served in Korea and Vietnam and at the U.S. Naval Security Engineering Facility in Washington D.C., where he met his bride, Pat. He went to work for Reliant Heating and Control as general manager, moving to Foresthill when the company relocated to Auburn.

Mike became a vital cog in the operation of the PCHS and the FDHS, creating and maintaining their websites, serving as president, vice president, treasurer and docent with the FDHS and scanning and archiving historical photographs. To learn more, check his obituary in the Foresthill Messenger (<http://www.foresthillemessenger.com>). We will miss him.

That is why the PCHS website hasn't been updated. We hope to fix it soon so keep checking back at <http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociet.org> .

--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 7, 2011

**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, seasonal vegetables, salad, rolls and dessert

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

**Program:** James C. Scott, the Information Services Librarian at the Sacramento Public Library will give a program on the saloon culture in antebellum Sacramento – gaming, drinking and general vice in Pre-Civil War Sacramento. The program is entitled *El Dorado in a Shot Glass*.



Exchange Saloon in Gold Run



## California Historian Subscription Form

Please check subscription length, and send with check to the Conference of California Historical Societies, % Ben Wirick, Administrator, 112 Harvard Ave. #15, Claremont, CA 91711

Yes, I'd like to receive the CALIFORNIA HISTORIAN. I am a member of

\_\_\_\_\_ which is a CCHS member.\*

My check for \$12 for 1 year \_\_\_\_; \$20 for 2 years \_\_\_\_ is enclosed

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\* Placer County member organizations include the Placer County Historical Society, Colfax Area Historical Society, Inc., Golden Drift Historical Society, Placer County Historical Foundation, Rocklin Historical Society, Placer County Museum Docent Guild and the Placer County Museums. If you don't belong to one of the organizations but receive **The Placer**, please designate Placer County Museums.



## **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  
[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  
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)

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  
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](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  
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)

### **Artifact Highlight**

*Kasia Woroniecka*

The pictured freight wagon team bells belonged to James H. Sweeney of Placerville. He bought them in 1889 when he was 16 years old from a Teamster who was freighting between Auburn and Foresthill. He used them for 22 years until he gave them to Dr. H.L. Fuog who donated them to our museum in 1963.



The bows on which the bells are mounted are made from sections of a cross-cut saw. Bells were usually mounted on an arched bail over the collar of each horse. They served as a warning to other wagons that they were coming or that they found a place to pull over. The teamsters took great pride in their teams and the music produced by the bells. They were also expected to give up their bells to the man providing aid if a wagon got stuck in the muddy roadway or broke down.

## Calendar of Events

### March

- Mar. 8<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.  
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Mar. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Murder in Auburn in 1904: A Fresh Look at the Adolph Weber Case*, presented by Dr. Michael Meloy. Reservations required.  
Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-652-7844.
- Mar. 21<sup>st</sup>, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum.  
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Mar. 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.
- Mar. 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.

### April

- Apr. 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.  
Contact: 530-885-5074.
- Apr. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: *The History and Significance of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad*, presented by Ron Kapper. Bernhard Museum Winery.  
Contact: 530-889-6500 with any questions.
- Apr. 12<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm** Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum.  
Contact: 916-773-3003.
- Apr. 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall.  
Contact: 530-367-3535.
- Apr. 18<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.
- Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library.  
Contact: 916-652-7844.
- Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting at the Bernhard Winery.  
Contact: 530-889-6500.
- Apr. 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.