



2017 March-April Volume 20, Issue 2

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## Administrator's Notes

*by Ralph Gibson*

One hundred years ago, World War I was raging in Europe. Though great armies had clashed over large geographic areas before, this was the first true "world" war—involving over 30 countries around the globe by the time guns fell silent on November 11, 1918.

All of the men and women who participated in this monumental conflict are gone. No one is left to share first-hand experiences of going "over the top" in the face of enemy machine-gun fire, or trying to sleep in muddy, rat-infested trenches as artillery shells explode all around.

Fortunately, epic historic events like WWI are recognized for their significance and through "oral histories," some personal narratives have been captured by historians. The first person accounts of suffragists, political refugees, Native Americans, and Dust-Bowl migrants are just a few examples of notable accounts that have been partially preserved through recording the words of those who lived through it.

While there are numerous official documents, photographs, maps, letters and journals that tell the stories of events like the Great War, it is the personal perspective gained through a well done oral history which can help bring an event (back) to life.

Those few oral histories of WWI veterans are precious. They remind us we need to immediately turn our attention to veterans and participants of WWII. They are fast disappearing and it is their stories and perspectives we need to capture before it is too late.

At the same time, the perspectives of family members and others "back home" all contribute to the story and our collective ability to understand past experiences.

Good, effective oral histories require a well-trained, practiced interviewer and time. We always keep any eye out for oral history seminars and workshops to share with everyone. If you happen to know of a workshop or seminar, please call our office at 530-889-6500.

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PLACER COUNTY MUSEUMS

"The crumb of a hot wheaten loaf rubbed over the carpet has been found effective."  
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the 100-foot hose was used to clean households.  
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Well, yeah! Ask any of our docents.  
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"the police chief used the first floor to find work for the jobless".  
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## The Vacuum

by Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections

Who is ready for some spring cleaning? Winter is almost over and, if you feel ready to tackle those floors, closets, attics and garages, you might need some tools to help with the project. One of them will surely be a vacuum – hopefully a bit more efficient than the ones in our collection.

Victorians gave us simple eco-friendly tips on cleaning just about anything with lemons, vinegar and baking soda. Yet carpet cleaning, as with most housework, was not an easy task in the 19th-century. Prior to the introduction of vacuums, most housewives used rug-beaters, brooms and dust pans to clean floors and carpets.

Cleaning and caring for the home took a lot of time and many Victorian women turned to domestic economy handbooks for time-saving tips. One of the most popular was *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, published in 1861 with very interesting, if not unusual, tips on carpet maintenance:

*“Take a pail of cold water, and add to it three gills (teacups) of ox-gall (contents of ox’s gallbladder). Rub it into the carpet with a soft brush. It will raise a lather, which must be washed off with clear water. Rub dry with clean cloth.”*

*“A weak solution of alum or soda are used for reviving the colours. The crumb of a hot wheaten loaf rubbed over the carpet has been found effective.”*

Many of the Victorian homes had large and small rugs and carpets to cover poor quality, soft wood floors.

Large rugs became a staple in the upper-middle class American homes.

The earliest carpet cleaning machines were hand-pumped. The first vacuum sweeper was produced in Iowa by Daniel Hess in 1860. The machine had a rotating brush and a bellows mechanism to generate suction.



One of the earliest examples in our collection is a Surprise Suction Sweeper, manufactured around 1908 by the Import and Export Company from New York.

The handle moves up and down, creating suction. Some manually operated models required two persons to function: one to operate the bellows and one to move the mouthpiece over the carpet.

The first motorized vacuum cleaner was invented in 1899 by John S. Thurman. It was powered by gasoline.

Great advances in science and medicine during the 19th-century had a major impact on understanding health and disease. Cleanliness and hygiene became key components of Victorian life and offered manufacturers a new “scientific” tool. The portable vacuum cleaner was represented as the *only* modern way to clean the house.

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The manufacturers of the Duntley Pneumatic Cleaner, were the pioneers in the portable vacuum business. In many of their ads, they stressed that only a vacuum cleaner could remove the “real dust—the old, ground-in, dangerous, germ laden dirt that other methods never touch.”

The Duntley Pneumatic Cleaner in our collection was made around 1910 and donated in 1988 by Mel and Karen Locher. According to the donor, it came from the W.B. Lardner residence on Orange Street in Auburn. Lardner was a Placer County district attorney, a state assemblyman, and a state senator.



The first electric vacuum cleaner was invented in 1901 and was large enough to necessitate being pulled by a horse. With the wagon parked out front, the 100-foot hose was used to clean households. The first portable electric vacuum was invented in 1908 by James Murray who, faced with financial difficulty, sold his patent to William Hoover, who turned it into a commercial success.

The first vacuums with disposable bags appeared in the 1920s. Here is another example from our collection, the Bee-Vac Electric Cleaner made by Birtman Electric Company circa 1925.



Housework is definitely much easier these days. Unless you're very fond of experimenting with 19th-century cleaning tips, there is really no need to rub your carpet with fresh bread. Your Hoover or Dyson will do the job just fine.

## The Scoop

by Beth Rohlfes, Curator of Education

This week I found an interesting homeschool internet site by Samantha, a self described “teen entrepreneur, college freshman, former un-socialized homeschooler.” I am always surfing the internet for fresh ideas in education, especially when they wander outside traditional classroom learning. This piqued my interest.

Whether or not she's as young as she claims, Samantha's declared passion for history and statement that textbooks are pretty much the most boring way to learn

history made me eager to check out her list of alternative learning ideas.

Check out some of Samantha's list below, in italics.

### Books

- *Read memoirs/journals, biographies, historical fiction.*

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Well, yeah! Ask any of our docents. Our Museum archives, Docent Library and local libraries are treasure chests for all of these. And the primary documents are most rewarding!

#### Media

- Watch documentaries, historical movies, docudramas.
- Listen to podcasts or other historical testimonies.

This made me contemplate how, thanks to technology, the possibilities on Samantha's list have expanded over the past 30+ years. These options were limited back when I was Samantha's age.

The next category is my favorite, with several "well, yeah" ideas. Still, some are fresh. And think about how the internet has enhanced these possibilities.

#### Experience It

- Go to a museum. (Now, there's an idea!)
- Try to "go back in time" - eat 40s rations, recreate a Victorian-era tea party, host a roaring '20s costume party—have fun!

- Listen to music from the time.
- Research and make food from the time.
- Look at advertisements from the time period.
- Look at art/drawings from the time for insight into how people thought/felt at the time.
- Try to find some radio broadcasts from the time.

And don't discount Samantha's final list of projects.

#### Projects

- Create a timeline for a person, an event or notable events for a certain period.
- Create an argument for the opposite side that you are on.

Most of us have been out of the classroom for a while, so we likely are not in a position to trash the textbooks. But maybe Samantha's list will help us think outside the box next time we have some leisure time to explore history.

Here is a link to [Samantha's site](#).

<http://lechaimontheright.stfi.re/2014/01/30-ways-to-teach-history-without-a-textbook.html?sf=ryjdlzb#aa>

## News from Placer County Historical Society: Carnegie Library Floods, Moldy Books

by Michael Otten, immediate past president

[otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net) or call (530) 888-7837

You might call the old Auburn Public Library - 175 Almond St.—the birthplace of the venerable Placer County Historical Society. We have weathered many a storm during our more than a century of existence. But February's record rain waterlogged the home of the PCHS, the Placer County Historical Foundation and the

Placer County Genealogical Society and sent us in search of a permanent, safe place for our historical records, books and equipment.

We have found at least temporary haven at the Placer County Archives at DeWitt thanks to Museums

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Administrator, Ralph Gibson and Archivist, Bryanna Ryan. They also helped me, Walt, Bonnie and David Wilson, John Knox and PCGS President, Cyndi Davis relocate.

Leaks in Placer County's first Carnegie Library, now called the Old Library Art Studios, caused widespread flooding and a mold-producing soaking.

The water damaged and destroyed many PCHS books, with the most affected being the popular reprinted editions of the 1861 Placer County Directory and Lardner and Brock's 1924 "History of Placer and Nevada Counties." We hope to sell some of the least damaged at our annual dinner meeting April 6.

Special thanks go to artist, Paula Amerine, for alerting us to the situation and the City Public Works crew for mop up and mold control efforts. Artists, Thien Dao and Linda Green appeared to be most adversely affected.

The upper floor of the building housed the city's first



Auburn Public Library, circa 1910  
PCM ID#: 1981.68.28

free public library while the first floor was used as Auburn's City Hall and chambers for the three City Trustees. During the Depression, the police chief used the first floor to find work for the jobless.

The Auburn Library doubled as City Hall from 1909 until 1937 when the seat of local government moved to Central Square. In 2011, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## PCHS 2017-19 NOMINATIONS

President: **April McDonald-Loomis**

1st Vice President: **J.M. "Mike" Holmes**

2nd Vice President (programs): **Addah Owens**

Secretary: **Richard Ravalli**

Treasurer: **Al Stoll**

Immediate Past President: **Walt Wilson**

Board Members (Two-year Terms, 2017-19): **Jean Allender, Karen Bleuel, Delana Ruud, John Knox.**

Nomination Committee: **Michael Otten**, chair;  
**George Lay, Mike Holmes, Jane Misphey, Delana Ruud.**

Officers will be elected at annual membership dinner meeting on **April 6, 2017, at 6:30 pm**, Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East Street, Auburn, CA.

Additional nominations may be made 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 PCHS fiscal year.

## Placer County Historical Organizations

### Colfax Area Historical Society,

Chris Miller (530) 346-8599

[colfaxhistory.org](http://colfaxhistory.org)

### Donner Summit Historical Society,

Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859

[donnersummithistoricalsociety.org](http://donnersummithistoricalsociety.org)

### Foresthill Divide Historical Society,

Sandy Simester, (530) 367-3535

[foresthillhistory.org](http://foresthillhistory.org)

### Fruitvale School Hall Community Association, Lyndell Grey,

(916) 645-3517

### Golden Drift Historical Society,

Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

### Historical Advisory Board,

Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

### Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center, Richard Yue,

(530) 346-7121

### Lincoln Highway Association,

Bob Dieterich [bobd@iname.com](mailto:bobd@iname.com),

<https://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/>

### Lincoln Area Archives Museum,

Elizabeth Jansen, (916) 645-3800

[laamca.org](http://laamca.org)

### Loomis Basin Historical Society,

Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871

### Maidu Museum & Historic Site,

Mark Murphy, (916) 774-5934

[roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

### The Museum of Sierra Ski History and 1960 Winter Olympics, David C. Antonucci, (775) 722-3502

<http://tahoemuseum.org/>

### Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59, Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878

[dsallen59@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsallen59@sbcglobal.net)

### Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association, Mario Farinha (530) 269-2412

### North Lake Tahoe Historical Society,

Rebecca Phipps, (530) 583-1762

[northtahoemuseums.org](http://northtahoemuseums.org)

### Placer County Historical Society,

Walt Wilson, (530) 878-6640

[placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

### Placer County Museums Docent Guild, Tom Innes, (530) 888-8969

### Rocklin Historical Society,

Kathie Nippert, (916) 624-2355

[rocklinhistory.org](http://rocklinhistory.org)

### Roseville Historical Society,

Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003

[rosevillehistorical.org](http://rosevillehistorical.org)

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

### Placer County Genealogical Society,

Toni Rosasco, (530) 888-8036

[pcgenes.com](http://pcgenes.com)

### Roseville Fire Museum, Jim Giblin, (916) 538-1809

[rosevillefiremuseum@gmail.org](mailto:rosevillefiremuseum@gmail.org)

[rosevillefiremuseum.org](http://rosevillefiremuseum.org)

### Roseville Public Library,

Christopher Webber (916) 774-5239

[www.roseville.ca.us/library](http://www.roseville.ca.us/library)

## Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

*By Addah Owens, Program Chair*

**When:** April 6, 2017

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

**Where:** Veterans Hall, 100 East St, Auburn

**Cost:** \$16 per person

**Menu:** Chicken masala, mashed potatoes, seasoned vegetables, salad and dessert.

**Program:** Jack Duncan will discuss atomic bomb research during World War II (1939-1945). He formerly served as an Army Air Force navigator in the Western Pacific during WWII. In 1953 he went on to work at Lawrence Livermore Labs and spent the next 28 years associated with work in nuclear explosives "atomic bombs".

Mail Checks to: PCHS  
c/o Jane Hamilton, 1871 Crockett Road, Auburn, CA 95603.  
(530) 885-7839 or  
[hamiltonjane1@me.com](mailto:hamiltonjane1@me.com)

**DO NOT BRING ALCOHOL. County directives prohibit it, and, we can't get liability coverage.**

# Calendar of Events

## March

- 2** 2:00 pm Placer County Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Room 10, Auburn City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 878-6640
- 13** 6:00 pm Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting, Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-2355
- 14** 4:00 pm Roseville Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 15** 6:00 pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871
- 18** 7:00 pm Colfax Area Historical Society, program with speaker, Chris Ward on "Cemeteries of the Western Sierra." Colfax Depot. (Books for sale).
- 20** 6:00 pm Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530) 367-3535
- 22** 5:30 pm Gold Country Medical History Museum, "Fund Raising Open House," 219 Maple Street, Auburn. (Prizes, special guests, wine & gourmet hors d'oeuvres).
- 23** 7:00 pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library. (866) 894-2076

## April

- 6** 6:30 pm Placer County Historical Society dinner meeting, Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East Street, Auburn. (530) 878-6640
- 10** 6:00 pm Rocklin Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting, Old St. Mary's Chapel, 5152 Front Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-2355
- 11** 4:00 pm Roseville Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 19** 5:30 pm Historical Advisory Board Meeting, Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500
- 19** 6:00 pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871
- 27** 7:00 pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library. (866) 894-2076

The Placer County Museums is on Twitter!  
You can find us @PlacerMuseums.





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Auburn, CA 95603



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