



# THE PLACER

**Happy Retirement Mary Jane Coon!**

2014 Sept-Oct Volume 17, Issue 5

## Administrator's Notes

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*Ralph Gibson*

It won't be long before leaves begin to turn and grassy fields around Placer County are lit up on Friday nights as young men in pads collide in one of autumn's rituals. Although football reigns supreme among our nation's sports, historically, the fall season belonged to baseball. Close pennant races were decided in September, and October belonged to the World Series. Right now, we are in the planning stages for a baseball exhibit.



Bill James was born in Iowa Hill on March 12, 1892. Baseball was a popular sport in the region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and many Placer County towns and communities had their own team. In 1900, eight-year-old Bill James was a water boy for the Iowa Hill baseball team. It was here he fell in love with the game.

Bill would eventually end up on the mound for the Boston Braves pitching against the Philadelphia Athletics in the

1914 World Series. His story will be interpreted in a small exhibit that will open in the lobby of our Archives and Collections Facility on October 9<sup>th</sup>, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1914 World Series. To follow the Boston Braves 1914 pennant race, you can follow us on Facebook as we occasionally post highlights from games played 100 years ago.

Another small exhibit we will install in October features Halloween cards from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Just like there were many

Victorian and Edwardian Christmas traditions there were also some pretty interesting traditions for Halloween. We'll explore some of these with 100 year old Halloween postcards. Please check our blog for more information.

The best way to find our blog and our Facebook page is to simply visit our main website: [www.placer.ca.gov/museums](http://www.placer.ca.gov/museums) Once there, you'll see the buttons for all of our offsite content.

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"Three to four gallons of embalming fluid are needed to embalm the body."

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"In regimented response to his orders, the soldiers repeatedly loaded and fired their muskets."

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"Reading about evil may cause the reader to commit robbery and other crimes."

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

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## A Letter from the Editor



Jason Adair

Dear Readers,  
The Gold Country Museum in the Fairgrounds is not long for this world. We've taken over the old

railroad depot at the top of Lincoln Way in downtown Auburn and will be converting it to the new Gold Country Museum.

The last day the old museum will be open for you to visit is Septem-

ber 30<sup>th</sup>. After that the doors close and Tom Reinke and I will take the old exhibits down with gentle care and probably sledgehammers. So stop by and say goodbye to a place that's been a big part of the community for a long, long time.

## Discussing Disgusting Funereal Artifacts

*Kasia Woroniecka*

Curator of Collections

The most common cause of death in the world is heart disease. One day you are hunting ducks at the Placer Gun Club and the next day you are missed and remembered. Such was the case of Frank R. Bell of the Bell Electric Co., who died of a heart attack in 1924. The Placer Herald reported that "the floral offerings were many and beautiful, and it was not only one of the largest attended, but one of the most impressive funerals ever held in Auburn. The business houses were closed during the ceremonies."

Preparing human remains for that final journey is not a job for the squeamish or the fainthearted. That is evident when looking at



Surgical set with pump, Placer County Museums Collection

the collection of mortuary equipment that was recently accepted to the Placer County Museums permanent collection. The collection came from the Chapel of the Hills Mortuary in Auburn with some objects dating to the late 1800s. It includes a portable pump organ, draining tubes, hand pumps, glass jars, syringe sets and many other

surgical tools, most tucked neatly away in black leather cases.

The modern day embalming dates back to the Civil War. Many soldiers were dying far from home and the process offered families the last looks at their loved one before the burial. Military surgeons perfected their embalming skills during the war and made an impact on the growing funeral industry. A turning

point in the awareness of embalming was the cross-country journey of Abraham Lincoln's embalmed body after the war. Lincoln was buried 18 days after his death. The Chicago Daily Tribune reported on May 2, 1865 that "...his countenance exhibited an extremely natural and life-like appearance, more as if calmly slumbering, than in

the cold embrace of death.”

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the practice of embalming became popular as a way to sanitize the body as well as enable the family to have extended wakes or time for reconstructive or cosmetic work on the body. The remains were prepared at home and that is why the embalming equipment was portable. Popular acceptance of embalming led to the rapid emergence of funeral homes. By the early 1900 embalming was a standard practice in much of the country. There was no need to embalm at the home of the deceased as the industry took over every aspect of funeral preparation. Instructors representing the embalming companies offered courses in the trade and states began to recognize the profession through licensing boards. The profession appealed to Elliott C. Broyer, a young Placer County administrator who attended the California College of Embalming and left his position at the Citizens Bank of Roseville to study the undertaking business. The Placer Herald reported in June 1936 that he died in a tragic car accident before completing his studies.

There are two ways to embalm the body. Viscerally where the fluids are pumped in the body cavities and arterially where the fluids are



Mortician makeup. Cosmort Powder, Moll Plasto Finishing Compound and Morell Finishing Powder, c. 1930s. Placer County Museums Collection.

pumped into the arteries. Three to four gallons of embalming fluid are needed to embalm the body. Embalming fluid consists of a variety of chemicals and preservatives that slow the decomposition process. One of them is formaldehyde which most states started using around 1906 to replace the use of arsenic. Formaldehyde is still used in today's fluids, along with



Syringe set. A. S. Aloe and Co. Manufacturers of Surgical Instruments, c.1885. Placer county Museums Collection

conditioners, dyes, water and disinfectants.

The treatment of death and dying is much different today than a century ago when the grieving process was long and regulated by Victorian etiquette. Today most deaths take place in hospitals. Funerals are shorter and simpler and modern refrigeration equipment can maintain the body for longer periods of time. Embalming and traditional burial are expensive and more families are choosing cremation. Cremation rates in the United States rose by almost 30% since 2000. Ultimately it's about having choices. These days, for a mere \$695 you can have your remains launched into space or for a lot more made into a synthetic diamond made from carbon captured during the cremation. Embalming will give your loved ones that last chance to say goodbye, but diamonds are forever.

## The Scoop

*Beth Rohlfs*

Curator of Education

This summer my husband Larry and I ventured out on an eight-day tour of the Mid-Atlantic states. I hadn't been there since I was a kid and was pleasantly surprised at the positive difference 50 years made in how historic venues engage visitors. I really enjoyed the opportunity to gather new ideas and to see how I think our Placer County Museums compare to national sites.

Our first stop, Fort McHenry in Baltimore, was especially and unexpectedly engaging. The entire experience there involved a progression of learning activities that would be interesting to consider as we design new museums in Auburn.

Visitors to the fort are first encouraged to watch a video in the Visitors Center, a pretty common national park feature. But the film and its setting were not common. Instead of an auditorium, the theatre seating blended into a small museum (might work in our museums), so we could explore exhibits while we waited for the video. And once the film was finished, the space converted seamlessly back to a museum.

The film was short, dramatic and to the point. When the room went dark, music swelled, cannons boomed and lights flashed as we were introduced to the story of the fort's valiant defense and the inspiration for Francis Scott Key's writing of "The Star Spangled Banner." As the movie ended, the

screen lifted to reveal a window view of the flag still flying over the fort's historic ramparts.

The grounds at Fort McHenry include a good-sized Visitors Center, a waterfront park and the fort itself—somewhat larger in scope than most of our museums. But scale really doesn't limit the potential for ideas. With the fort revealed in the film's finale, we excited towards it and were immediately confronted with a host of 200-year-old sights, sounds and smells.

First we encountered a uniformed military corps. Their drill instructor explained the gun power of muskets and two-ton cannons. In regimented response to his orders, the soldiers repeatedly loaded and fired their muskets.

Within the fort we were treated to a ranger tour of the ramparts, small exhibit rooms with videos, maps and diagrams, staged officers' barracks and a WWII era radio that delighted young visitors with the mellow voice of an old broadcast (potential for the new DeWitt Museum).

A good-sized chalkboard reminded visitors of the days' activities. Children could enlist and practice



military drills with wooden muskets or participate in indoor arts and crafts. Reminding me of our docents, costumed ladies and members of the military corps milled around to chat with visitors about the fort.

To cap it all off, we participated in a ceremony where we actually helped lift, then fold a huge, 30 x 42 foot flag—a replica of the original that inspired the writing of our national anthem. That final event not only impressed on us the grandness of that flag, but it also left us with a lasting image of the fort's role in our nation's history.

Fort McHenry totally engaged us in its history and actually set pretty high standards for the rest of our trip to more prominent sites. As I toured all of them, I observed that elements of our Placer County Museums docent program, living history and museum exhibits compare very favorably. Now I just need to figure out how the flag ceremony can be translated to a similar finale for one of our museums, or maybe our Living History Program...

# Placer County Historical Society News

## President's Message

By Michael Otten

Every year on the Heritage Trail I learn something fun and new in the Benton Welty Classroom in the Auburn Grammar School. This time I discovered a 1909 pioneering text (*The Human Body and Health*) from the Auburn public school library.

The author, Dr. Alvin Davison, a biology professor at Lafayette College, is noted for his pioneering study, *Death in School Drinking Cups*, that led to schools (followed by hospitals) banning the use of shared tin cups (that led to shared diseases).

Even in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century tobacco was deemed an addictive poison, especially dangerous to young people, shunting their growth. Smoking by boys "not only clouds the intellect of the young, but tends to make criminals of them." Teachers a century ago were encouraged to experiment by boiling a pipeful of tobacco in a cup of water. The cooled contents would then be diluted in a quart or half gallon jar of water containing a small fish. The students then can watch the fish die in less than a half hour.

Also severely dinged were opium, morphine, cocaine and cough medicines. Davison scorned most patent medicines for often containing alcohol, strychnine and other poisons, costing the American public in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century \$75 million a year.

Other health items from the time:

*The body requires three quarts of water a day.*

*The body is like a locomotive doing the bidding of the*

*engineer who should know its parts, learn its use, practice good hygiene and avoid bad food and water.*

*Alcohol makes people wicked.*

*"It is almost as important to wear the right kind of clothing as to eat the proper...food."*

*"A cold cannot be cured by medicines."*

*"..One or two hours a day should be devoted to exercise."*

*The brains of teachers, lawyers and businessmen continue to grow until about 40. Those who shovel coal or do the same work every day requiring no thinking, the brain stops growing after 20.*

*Reading about evil may cause the reader to commit robbery and other crimes.*

\*\*\*

Probably no one was more excited by a visit Aug 2 to the classroom than veteran HT traveler Emma Bleecker. Though only 7, Emma and her brother, Easton, 9, with mom Lindsay Bleecker managed to visit 8 museums that weekend.

What made the visit memorable was that Emma won the children's only basket packed with school items, games and fun stuff just in time to enter the 3rd grade at Valley View Elementary in Rocklin.

"They are really excited by going to the museums," said mom. "Emma loved the skeleton greeting them at the entrance to

the school room. She keeps all her things in the basket and enjoys learning all the old fashioned games. Emma keeps ask-



ing to come back to Auburn so she can use her soda tokens" that were donated by the historic Auburn Drug Co and Ice Cream Parlor on Lincoln Way.

Special thanks go to Jean Allender, the PCHS classroom chair, and her helpers. They include Jane Hamilton, Karen Bleuel, Eula Marriott, Sally Palmer Dawley, Mary Lue Hardey, Walt Wilson, Betty Samson, Karri Samson, Sherri Schackner, Bill George, Dorothy Hall Overton, Bonnie Parodi and yours truly. See you on the Heritage Trail No. 8 on Aug. 15-16, 2015. Mark your calendar.

--otten@ssctv.net

## Placer County Historical Organizations

### Colfax Area Historical Society

Helen Wayland, (530) 346-7040

[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

### Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

### Old Town Auburn Preservation Society

Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

### Lincoln Highway Association

Bob Dieterich,

[bohd@iname.com](mailto:bohd@iname.com) or [lincolnhwy.org](http://lincolnhwy.org)

### Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen, (916) 645-3800

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

### Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Richard Yue, (530) 346-7121

### Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871

[ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html](http://ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html)

### Roseville Fire Museum

Shari, (916) 538-1809

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

### Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Glenie Strome, (916) 782-3299

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

### Native Sons of the Golden West, Parlor #59

Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878

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

### Golden Drift Historical Society

Jim Ricker, (530) 389-8344

### Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association

Aileen Gage, (530) 885-911

### Placer County Historical Society

Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837

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

### Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Tom Innes, (530) 888-8969

### Rocklin Historical Society

Jean Sippola, (916) 652-1034

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

### Roseville Historical Society

Phoebe Astill, (916) 773-3003

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

### North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Javier Rodriguez, (530) 583-1762

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

### Placer County Genealogical Society,

Toni Rosasco, (530) 888-8036

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

## Placer County Historical Dinner Meeting\*

*Addah Owens, Vice President*

**When:** Thursday October 2

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

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

**Cost:** \$14 per person

**Menu:** Stuffed Pork Loin,  
Roasted Fall Veggies, Green Salad, Rolls, Zucchini Cake. Present-

ed by Tom Stout, formerly of Mary Belle's Restaurant.

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

**Program:** The W in Rocklin's 3Rs: Few persons in Placer County's Gold Rush history are as fascinating as Joel Parker Whitney. Whitney is part of Rocklin's Three Rs, Railroad, Rocks and Ranch with the biggest ranch of all, the

Spring Valley Ranch. There are many facets to the Whitney story.

**Bill Marble** of the Rocklin Historical Society will tell about the facets he uncovered in transcribing four volumes of Whitney's diaries.

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

# Calendar of events

## September

4 2:00pm Placer County Historical Society Board of Directors meeting, Room 10, City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 888-7837

9 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society meeting at Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln St., Roseville. (916) 773-3003

17 6:00pm Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis library. (916) 663-3971

15 6:00pm Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, at the Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530) 367-3535

15 7:00pm Rocklin Historical Society's Welcome Back Potluck at the community center in Johnson Springview Park. (530) 652-1034

26 7:00pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting, in the Beecher Room, at the Auburn Library. (530) 885-2216

## October

2 6:30am Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting. Auburn Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn. (530) 885-5074

9 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Meeting at the Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003

17 6:30pm Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871

18 5:30pm Historical Advisory Board Meeting at the Bernhard Museum Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500

25 7:00pm Placer County Genealogical Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. (530) 885-2216

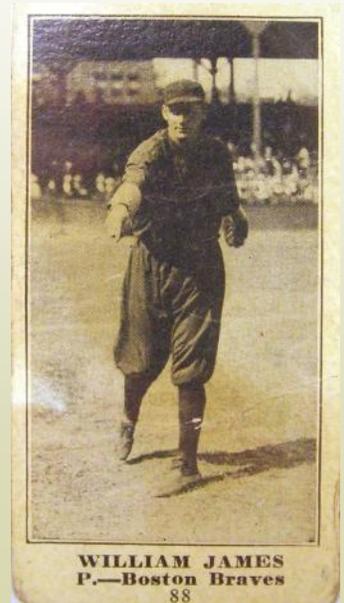
### Bill James Baseball Card

Baseball is America's national pastime that dates back to the mid-1800s. With its popularity came marketing and a variety of merchandise desired by today's collectors and sports enthusiasts. Baseball cards are highly collectable and as proven by the recent auction of a Honus Wagner card, extremely valuable. This "Holy Grail of Baseball Cards" sold at auction in 2013 for \$2.1million. The 1916 Bill James baseball card in our collection might not be as valuable, but it has its

ties to Placer County. William Lawrence James was born in 1892 in Iowa Hill and was a Major League pitcher. He played for the Boston Braves in the 1914 World Series. The Braves, the heavy underdogs, defeated the Philadelphia Athletics. Numerous injuries and shoulder operations ended his Major League career. James pitched and coached in the minor leagues until 1925.

This card was generously donated to the museums by the Placer County Historical Society.

## Artifact Highlight



**Placer County Museums**  
101 Maple Street  
Auburn, CA 95603

