

PLACER HISTORY PRESS

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PLACER COUNTY HISTORY AWARD RECIPIENT: JOHN KNOX

2024

This year’s award goes to John Knox. John was born in Oakland but grew up in Auburn where he attended local schools. After a stint at Sierra College he headed out with his bicycle for Europe. He taught English in Istanbul, hitch-hiked across North Africa and ended up in England where he met his future wife.

Returning home, John finished his formal education and began his teaching career at Weimar Hills Junior High School. He retired in 2002.

While mainly focused on his own family history, which he can trace way, way back, a simple request for information led him to do his first book on Auburn history, *The Story of the Bernhard Family*. In doing the research for the book, he spent lots of time at the Placer County Archives and soon became an indispensable volunteer.

Over time, John authored and co-authored numerous books and pamphlets on Placer County history. He is known for his meticulous research and reliance on primary sources for background.

The list of publications is too large to print here but some highlights include: Walking Tours pamphlets for Auburn (a favorite at the Visitor’s Center), *Early Auburn*, a concise and fascinating tale of Auburn’s early years, *Auburn Dry Diggings*, the story of water and his latest, *Egbert, Wallace, Sisson -Merchants and Chinese Labor Contractors*, the little known story of the Colfax men who played a pivotal role in the building of the transcontinental railroad.



History News

Word around town is that the Farm Bureau & the Native Sons might be interested in doing something at the Halbom House. We certainly hope something comes of this.

We haven't heard anything recently about the Old Town Post Office.

Please share if you have any information. We would all like to see something positive happen at this incredibly historic spot.

The Placer County Historical Society and the Placer County Historical Foundation are working on a project to put plaques on the buildings around the county that have been designated as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The project would start with Auburn buildings.

Speaking of plaques, the Charlie Yue plaque is set to arrive any day now. Robinson Sand & Gravel is helping us install it at the upper parking lot in Old Town. Robinson has been an invaluable help in our plaque projects.

The upcoming book on the history of Auburn's All-Volunteer Fire Department is well underway. Input from Chief Rogers and the members of the Hook and Ladder Association has been invaluable.

Speaking of the fire department. We have to wonder when the City is going to tackle the work that needs to be done on the firehouse on El Dorado Street. That firehouse was the first one built for the Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 in 1888. Several years ago a huge restoration project saved the building but time has again taken its toll. Does some non-profit need a new project? This historic building needs to be taken care of.



In the “you never know what will show up” category, while working on the recent cemetery tour project relating to Gussie Stewart, Carol Cramer reached out to some of Gussie’s heirs believing they held some of Gussie’s papers. Well, talk about hitting the motherlode!

Among her papers was the 1904 Grand Jury transcript indicting Adolph Julius Weber for murder ! This transcript was thought to be lost. The sensational murder trial in Auburn captured nationwide attention. As you might recall, young Adolph murdered his entire family and set the family home on fire. They lived on Snowden hill above Old Town.

The incredibly valuable transcript was handed over to a very pleased Kelsey Monahan, Curator of Placer County Archives. Her phone will be ringing off the hook with researchers wanting to get a glimpse of this document.



Fun Photo - Building the railroad trestle at Newcastle. From the Placer History Facebook page submitted by Keith Fish.