



# The Placer

2019 January-February Volume 22, Issue 1

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This furniture is over a hundred years old and it's giving the Bernhard a brand new look.

## Administrator's Notes

*by Ralph Gibson, Museums Administrator*

The New Year brings changes to our staff. In December, we selected Curator of Archives, Bryanna Ryan, to be our new Supervising Curator. This means that we'll soon have a new Curator of Archives and will be back at full strength with seven full time and two part time employees. Although we won't be building museums, 2019 promises to be a very busy year.

Aside from the Gold Rush and Living History programs and Heritage Trail, two exhibits are on our radar. In the summer, we will install an exhibit commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1959 Auburn Little League team that made it all the way to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Included in the exhibit will be photographs, loaned artifacts from the players, and the original trophies.



Once that display is installed, work will begin in earnest on our Post Mortem exhibit that will replace the What Killed the American Hat exhibit in the main gallery at the historic Courthouse. This exhibit will probably open in early 2020.

This year we'll also work to expand the hours of the Gold Rush Museum, edging ever closer to our goal of being open Tuesday-Sunday. We also hope to add a day or two at our

DeWitt History Museum. If you know of anyone who might be a good volunteer at one of our museums, please call Bryanna at 530-889-6504. The more volunteers we get, the quicker we can expand the hours at these two great museums.

I wish each of you great 2019!

He was robbed, kicked by a mule, and crushed by a wagon—and still opened a saloon.

Rebuilding is part of our history.

Don't miss the work of these historical organizations this year.

## Old Furniture, New Looks at the Bernhard Museum

by Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections

If you are looking for something new and exciting for the New Year, visit the Bernhard Museum. A recent donation of Victorian furniture offered an opportunity for improvements and inspired some worthwhile exhibit changes. The new pieces reflect the wonderful aspects of Victorian design with their beautiful wood, curvaceous lines and carved detail.



No particular style dominated design during the Victorian period. Rather, it was a revival of various old styles and the mixing of influences from the Middle-East and Asia. Designers drew inspiration from Gothic, Renaissance, Tudor, Rococo and other periods. Frequently a single piece of furniture would incorporate two or more elements of popular styles.

The Victorian period coincided with the Industrial Revolution, making it the first era of home furnishings to be manufactured. The use of new materials and construction techniques replaced the traditional craft-apprenticeship system, ena-

bling furniture makers to create new designs and produce them faster and for less money. A large emphasis was placed on mass production, which allowed the middle class to enjoy furniture not previously available to them.

Restraint was not part of Victorian interior design. Bare rooms were considered in poor taste, so decoration became a symbol of social class and a way to show off prosperity and status. Patterned wallpapers, dark finishes, embellishments, china, stained glass, lace, carpets, rich fabrics, and accessories were a reflection

of good manners and social etiquette that was important to Victorians.

The furniture pieces in our new collection are examples of the Renaissance Revival style that was very popular in the United States and dates from the late 1850s to the 1890s. Inspired by the 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance period, some of the characteristics of this style include architectural elements, raised or inset panels, carved finials and crests, marble tops, inlays and the often large size of the pieces.



*Walnut and marble dressing case. On display in the second upstairs bedroom.*

This dressing case has a large mirror that encroaches on the drawer space dividing the top into three parts covered with white marble. Applied veneered walnut panels on the drawers add some drama to the piece.



*Small marble top table with Eastlake influence. On display in the second upstairs bedroom.*

Eastlake was the new simpler style that was more geometric, with low relief carving and a natural finish. It dates to around 1870-1890. The simple marble top contrasts with the elaborate design of the base, which the Victorians loved.



*Sideboard, also called a credenza or a buffet. Circa 1880. On display in the Dining Room.*

The dining room was the second-most important room in the Victorian house after the parlor and the sideboard was often its focal point. The drawers and compartments behind matching doors offered space for flatware, glassware and other pieces needed in the dining room. Above the top of the cabinet is a wooden back supported by shelves, a small mirror and carved ornaments.



*Étagère. On display in the Sitting Room.*

Similar to a whatnot, the shelves of the étagère provided space for the displaying porcelain figurines, vases, wax flowers and other collectables typical of Victorian home décor.

## From the Archives: Unearthing the Ups and Downs of David Orr

by Bryanna Ryan, Supervising Curator

Investigating clues and following promising leads does not always result in a triumph, but that's what makes a Eureka moment so rewarding.

Two saloon tokens were recently unearthed near Foresthill which prompted an investigation into the history of the Blue Wing Saloon and the David Orr Saloon. When were they built? How long did they operate? Who is David Orr?



Research into the Blue Wing led to a dead-end, for now.

The David Orr research was another story and offered much more satisfying results. Using newspaper accounts, probate records, deeds and assessment rolls, a surprising picture began to emerge of David Orr's ups, downs, and short-lived saloon which existed from 1885-1887.

A well-respected and very early pioneer resident of Placer County, Orr started in mining but ultimately built himself a successful livery and teaming business with animals, barns and stables stationed all along the way from Auburn to Yankee Jims.

Teaming was a very dangerous job and in 1859, Orr was held up by two masked highwaymen while carrying express boxes on the route between Bath and Forest Hill. The robbers got away with \$1440 in gold dust but not before Orr convinced them to clean up the mess of papers they had dumped on the ground.

In 1870, Orr suffered a serious injury when a mule kicked him in the face and crushed part of his nose and cheek causing permanent disfigurement. However, by far the biggest injury Orr sustained was in 1876 when his team started to panic and run at the top of the hill between Butcher Ranch and Sheridan's. Before he could pull the brake, Orr was thrown under the wheel of his freight wagon which weighed over 9,000 pounds. The wheel ran over his leg and it had to be amputated immediately.

By 1880, perhaps in the interest of changing professions, Orr purchased the Tubbs Saloon in Yankee Jims and it soon becomes known as "David Orr's Hall" where several dances and parties were hosted until he sold the popular hall in 1885 and finally made his move



Foresthill. Circa 1865.

to Forest Hill. There, he purchased "a certain brick building... situated between the Forest House and Albrechts store on Broadway Street" and this was the same location where the David Orr Saloon burned to the ground in the Forest Hill Conflagration of 1887. It was a total (uninsured) loss of about \$8000.

While Orr continued to own and improve upon the lot (and there is a Mrs. David Orr with her own land holdings), he was no longer assessed for any liquor or bar fixtures after the 1887 fire.

As the trail continues, David Orr was badly scalded on St. Patrick's Day in 1894, Mrs. Orr died in 1897, and this "good, peaceable, law-abiding citizen, esteemed by all who know him," died in 1902. His legacy only came to light here today because of the small token of the David Orr Saloon that helped to unearth this hidden Placer County legacy.

## News from Placer County Historical Society

by April McDonald-Loomis, President

April400@wavecable.com (530) 823-2128

The devastating fire in Paradise brings to mind the most damaging fire in Auburn that historians refer to as “the great fire.” It was June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1855 when fire swept through the town destroying nearly everything in its wake. At this time, Auburn was only the section we now know as “Old Town.”

Within an hour and twenty-five minutes the fire spread from upper Sacramento Street to the business section of town. About eighty places of business and homes were destroyed. The two big hotels, the Orleans and the Empire, and the offices of the *Placer Press* and the *Placer Herald* were gone. Five days after the fire, the first edition of the *Placer Herald* came out with the help of the employees of both papers at the newly combined headquarters in a blacksmith shop surrounded by horses.

The cost of the destruction was nearly seven million dollars in today’s money.

There were many acts of heroism just like in the Paradise fire. Chesterfield Jackson was rewarded by the County Supervisors for his help in saving the Courthouse. Siffroid Roussin, the local butcher, killed and roasted a whole cow to feed people the night of the fire.

The thing about the Auburn fire, and we can only hope the same will hold true for the Paradise fire victims, is how fast the town rebuilt. Five days after the fire the *Herald* reported some fifteen buildings were already being rebuilt. By the end of June, twenty-five houses were rebuilt in Chinatown. By the end of the year, Auburn’s rebuilding was almost completed.

The newspaper in May of 1856 reported

that “the buildings are better, more convenient and secure and the streets are wider and nearer straight.” Living in Auburn today, you have to love the “nearer straight” comment! Water was now running through pipes all over town and the American Hotel was now three stories and “fire proof brick.” Auburn was thriving, sending out gold dust averaging twenty thousand dollars per week- \$640,000 in today’s money.

The townspeople of Paradise will face many more obstacles in rebuilding: wrestling with insurance companies, government bureaucracies, permits and on and on, but hopefully they will rebuild and be even better off -just like Auburn in 1855.

April McDonald-Loomis

## Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

by Addah Owens, Vice President

**When:** February 7, 2019

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

**Where:** Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East Street, Auburn

**Cost:** \$16 per person

**Menu:** Chinese New Year Theme

**Program:** The Speaker is Stephen Zhou from the US China Railroad Friendship Association who will be talking about the Chinese contribution to the building of the transcontinental railroad over the Sierras.

**Mail Dinner Checks to:**

PCHS c/o Jane Hamilton,  
1871 Crockett Road, Auburn, CA  
95603. (530) 885-7839 or  
hamiltonjane1@me.com

**DO NOT BRING ALCOHOL.**

## Placer County Historical Organizations

### Colfax Area Historical Society

Gayle Sorensen  
(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

Sarah Fugate  
(530) 389-2121

### Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard  
(916) 747-1961

### Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Richard Yue  
(530) 346-7121

### Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen  
(916) 645-3800  
[laamca.org](http://laamca.org)

### Lincoln Highway Association

Bob Dieterich  
[bobd@iname.com](mailto:bobd@iname.com)  
[lincolnhighwayassoc.org](http://lincolnhighwayassoc.org)

### Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford  
(916) 663-3871  
[ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html](http://ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html)

### Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Kaitlin Kincade  
(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  
[tahoemuseum.org](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

Marnie Carr  
(530) 583-1762  
[northtahoemuseums.org](http://northtahoemuseums.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)

### Placer County Historical Society

April McDonald-Loomis  
(530) 823-2128  
[placercountymuseum.org](http://placercountymuseum.org)

### Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Fran Hanson  
(530) 878-6990

### Rocklin Historical Society

Hank Lohse  
(916) 624-3464  
[rocklinhistory.org](http://rocklinhistory.org)

### Roseville Fire Museum

Jim Giblin (916) 538-1809  
[rosevillefiremuseum@gmail.com](mailto:rosevillefiremuseum@gmail.com)  
[rosevillefiremuseum.org](http://rosevillefiremuseum.org)

### Roseville Historical Society

Christina Richter  
(916) 773-3003  
[rosevillehistorical.org](http://rosevillehistorical.org)

## January

- 3** 2:00pm Placer County Historical Society Board Meeting, Room 10, Auburn City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn. (530) 906-4901
- 8** 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Board Meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 14** 6:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Board Meeting, Parks & Recreation Office, 5460 5th Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-3464
- 16** 6:00pm Forest Hill Divide Historical Society business meeting, Forest Hill Divide Museum. (530) 367-3535
- 16** 6:00pm Loomis Basin Historical Society General Meeting, Loomis Library. (916) 663-3871
- 19** 2:00pm "Revealing Victorian Dress," Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500
- 24** 7:00pm Placer Genealogical Society Meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library, Auburn. (530) 885-2216

## February

- 7** 6:30pm Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting - Auburn Veteran's Hall, 100 East St, Auburn. (530) 906-4901
- 11** 6:00pm Rocklin Historical Society Board Meeting, Parks & Recreation Office, 5460 5th Street, Rocklin. (916) 624-3464
- 12** 4:00pm Roseville Historical Society Board Meeting, Carnegie Museum, 557 Lincoln Street, Roseville. (916) 773-3003
- 20** 5:30pm Historical Advisory Board Meeting, Bernhard Winery, 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn. (530) 889-6500
- 23** 5:30pm "Murder in Old Town Auburn," The Pour Choice, 177 Sacramento St. Auburn. (530) 889-6500
- 23** 5:30pm Placer Genealogical Society Meeting, Beecher Room, Auburn Library, Auburn. (530) 885-2216



PLACER COUNTY MUSEUMS

101 Maple Street  
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