



Inside this issue:

Administrator's Notes	1
Dance Cards	2
Christmas Past and a Peek Into the (New) Docent Library	4
Changes for 2024	5
News from the Placer County Historical Society	6
Historical Organizations	7

Administrator's Notes

by Ralph Gibson, Museums Administrator

Halloween is just a memory and now we look forward to the Holiday Season that begins with Thanksgiving. For the Museums, this is a busy time as there are five museums that we install Christmas exhibits in. For the Bernhard Museum, we interpret Victorian Christmas, and the entire house is filled with 19th century Holiday spirit; the Placer County Museum in the Historic Courthouse interprets early to mid-20th Century Christmas; the DeWitt History Museum interprets Christmas on the home front during the War; the Gold Rush Museum celebrates the holidays with a few touches of Christmas along with diary and journal excerpts from Christmas in 1849; and at the Griffith Quarry Museum, we interpret a Welsh Christmas with sprigs of Holly and some unique holiday traditions.

Our goal is to have all our museums ready to interpret the various Christmas traditions by the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Believe it or not, these exhibits take time to design, produce and install, so don't complain too much if you happen to see touches of Christmas invading your Thanksgiving.

Please be sure to stop by our museums this Holiday season and see what we've been up to. We also have our Holiday programs scheduled: S'mores & Stories at the Bernhard Museum is on Friday, December 8th from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm; and we'll have Old Town County Christmas at the Courthouse on Saturday, December 9th & 16th from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. We hope to see you there!

I wish all of you a wonderful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Christmas Tree Lot, PCM Collection.

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Dance Cards

by Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections

Social dance brings people together at wedding receptions, holiday parties, and other gatherings. Not long-ago dancing was bound by strict rules of etiquette and dance cards played a key role in this practice.

The dance card, also known as programme du bal or ballspende, was used by women to record the names of men they intended to dance with. It was typically a small, decorated booklet with a list of scheduled dances and space to write the names of dance partners. It was often made of cardboard or decorative paper with covers made of celluloid, wood, leather, cloth, and even metal. The organization sponsoring the dance and the band performing were usually listed on the cover. Often a small pencil was attached with cord, ribbon, or chain. Cards with cord attached on a loop were worn on the wrist.

The decorated covers made the cards an attractive souvenir. Some of them were very creative, as in the case of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen's Ball given at McRae's Hall in Roseville in 1915: "The dance program was in the form of a railroad timecard and the number of dances corresponded to the number of the different trains which run in and out of Roseville." (Roseville Register, February 25, 1915) The organizers of the Junior Prom at the Roseville Union High School in 1938 decided that "a musical theme, in black and silver will add attractiveness to the event, the dance cards carrying out the same effect." (The Roseville Tribune and Register March 11, 1938). At another dance, sponsored by the Roseville Bethel of Job's Daughters in Roseville Masonic Hall "dance programs were bound in sections of a Chinese newspaper and tied with black yarn (...)." (The Roseville Tribune and Register November 27, 1940.)

The history of dance cards goes back to the 18th century, but they reached the height of popularity during the Victorian Era when they became the essential accessory for ladies attending balls. They continued their popularity on college campuses in the early 20th century. Dance cards fell out of favor with the Jazz Age and the generation that rejected Victorian etiquette in favor of spontaneous dances like Swing, Charleston, and Foxtrot. They remained in use as decorated keepsakes that listed dances and refreshments until the 1950s.



Old Foresthill Dance Hall c. 1900. PCM, Foresthill Divide Historical Society Collection.

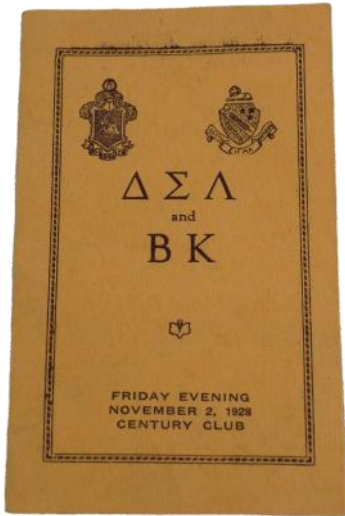


Dancing c. 1940s. PCM, Bill Wakefield Collection.



Dancing c. 1970. PCM, Auburn Fire Department Collection.

Here are examples of dance cards from our collection:



Dance card for the Delta Sigma Lambda fraternity and the Beta Kappa fraternity dance at the Century Club, November 2, 1928. PCM, Vincent Gianella Collection.



Dance card with pencil, 1931. Alpha Upsilon of Beta Sigma Omicron Spring Formal. PCM, Vincent Gianella Collection.



Dance card for the Frosh Glee, 1925. PCM, Vincent Gianella Collection.



Dance card with pencil. Phi Gamma Fraternity Formal Dance 1925. PCM, Vincent Gianella Collection.



Dance card for the Spring Formal of the Beta Kappa, 1937. PCM, Vincent Gianella Collection.

Christmas Past and A Peek Into the (New) Docent Library

by Christina Richter, Administrative Clerk, Archives & Collections

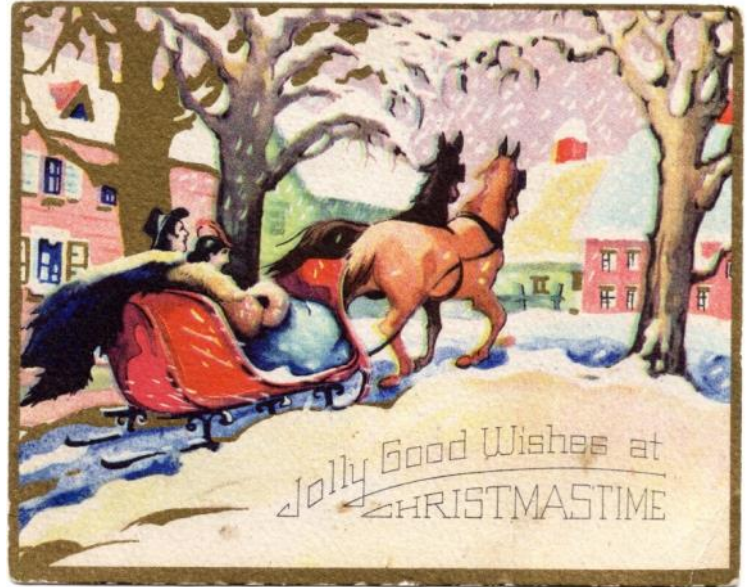
Our docent library located at the historic courthouse in Auburn is undergoing a significant reorganization! The library currently has over 400 books that cover a span of approximately 12 history related subject areas. To make it easier for docents to peruse, the books will now be organized by sections instead of alphabetically by title.

One of those sections is “Christmas” which is a small, but nice collection of books. In keeping with our end-of-year holiday spirit, the following

provides an overview of some of these titles. This collection mainly centers around the Victorian Christmas and its origins, but it also includes suggested family traditions to be created in the modern-day spirit with a nod to the past.

One book in the Christmas section is “Joy To The World” published in 1990 by Workman Publishing Company. This book features brightly colored Victorian era pictures and illustrations. These include holiday cards and postcards, alongside images of Christmas trees decorated with homemade ornaments, candles, beautifully wrapped small gifts and dolls. One page gives the reader some time-period background: “From 1870 to 1910, the golden era of Victorian Christmas ornaments, the tree glowed with glass figuratives in scores of shapes, sometimes decorated with crinkled gold or silver wire; with the glorious hand-blown, heavy glass globes called kugels; and with Dresdens, the most exquisite paper ornaments ever created.”

Another title “The Gift of Christmas Past” published in 1981, is dedicated to recreating the traditional Victorian Christmas for today’s family. One of its five chapters includes tips for Christmas decorating. A particularly ingenious practice to be discovered is forcing a rose bud to bloom on Christmas day. The explanation goes as follows: “Those Victorians... picked the last rosebuds grown in the fall, dipped the ends of the stems in melted paraffin, then wrapped the flowers in tissue paper and placed them in a cool dresser drawer until Christmas Day. Then the roses were recut and placed in warm water, and they bloomed for that one day.”



Finally, a third title “A Victorian Christmas” published in 1993 by Antioch Publishing Company, enlightens readers with a brief, insightful history of the holiday. It speaks to the early traditions of plum pudding, the was-sail bowl, the yule log and mistletoe. It also includes reminders of writings from the 19th century that inspired the Christmas spirit. Of particular mention are famous Victorian writers such as Charles Dickens and his 1843 novella “A Christmas Carol,” and the poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” which begins “’Twas the night before Christmas” by Clement Moore.

These are a peek into the ‘Christmas’ section of the docent library. As we continue to organize all of the books into their appropriate section and prepare them for checking out, we’ll keep you updated. The expectation is to make the library once again available in January 2024. Meanwhile, if you would like to donate a history book or two that you think might be a good read for our docents and volunteers, please let us know!



Some Changes for 2024...

by Kelsey Monahan, Curator of Archives

After two years as Editor of The Placer newsletter, the time has come that I must hang up my editorial hat! Starting in 2024 our new Editor will be the incredibly talented Kasia Woroniecka, Curator of Collections, who I know will do an amazing job.



County Clerk Lillian Rechenmacher and Assessor Lloyd Geraldson, July 1959.
PCM, Auburn Journal Collection.

It has been a privilege to serve as a “curator” of the newsletter, bringing you the latest news and articles about our beloved local history and the Placer County Museums collections. Many thanks to you, the readers, for your support and enthusiasm! I look forward to remaining a fervent reader and staff contributor. I will still be working away at the Archive and Research Center, so don’t hesitate to reach out with any of your research questions!

News from the Placer County Historical Society

by April McDonald-Loomis, President

april.pchs@gmail.com (530) 823-2128

Greetings from the Placer County Historical Society,

It looks like a couple of our historic buildings are getting new life. Word about town is that a key shop/mail place is going into the Old Town post office after its abrupt closing and loss of the USPS contract for mail. It could be a good fit and an asset to Old Town. There also seems to be a new owner for the Powers Mansion Inn although they are dealing with substantial water damage that occurred when the building was empty. We wish both these endeavors the best of luck!

The opening of the Benton Welty classroom under the able hands of Carol Cramer has been a great success this past summer with almost 300 visitors. It is still undergoing some refurbishing and brightening up with the help of the City folks. We are actively looking for any artifacts that might have come from the old grammar school. Anything hiding in your attic? We do not need books however. Recently Jane (Hinkle) Classon dropped in with a wonderful gift, an original grammar school desk. It had been in her family since a 1971 rummage sale when her mother bought it for \$10.00. It is a great addition as some of the desks in the room are not in great shape. If you have anything to donate please give a call first to make sure it is something we can use. There is not always someone at the classroom so just bringing something in will not work.

Our next dinner meeting is December 7th. Author Chris Enss will be the speaker on her book "Iron Women, the Ladies Who Helped Build the Railroad." Along with the Historical Foundation, we will present the annual History Award. Since it is the end of the year we will also be holding our annual raffle – a busy but fun evening! Mark your calendars!

Looking forward to seeing you all,

April McDonald-Loomis

President

Placer County Historical Society



Auburn Grammar School Class c. 1900. PCM, Native Daughters of the Golden West Collection.

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society

Jay McIntyre, President, (530) 346-8599
colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society

Bill Oudegeest, (209) 606-6859
donnersummithistoricalociety.org

Foresthill Divide Historical Society

Annie DeMaria-Norris (916) 206-4479
foresthillhistory.org

Fruitvale School Hall Community Association

Mark Fowler

Gold Country Medical History Museum

Lynn Carpenter, (530) 885-1252

Golden Drift Historical Society

Sarah Fugate, (530) 389-2121

Historical Advisory Board

Glenn Vineyard, (916) 747-1961

Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center

Larry Finney, (530) 305-9380

Lincoln Area Archives Museum

Elizabeth Jansen, (916) 645-3800
laamca.org

Lincoln Highway Association

Trey Pitsenberger
vice.president@lincolnhighwayassoc.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society

Karen Clifford, (916) 663-3871
ppgn.com/loomishistorical.html

Maidu Museum & Historic Site

Kaitlin Kincade, (916) 774-5934
roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum

The Museum of Sierra Ski History and 1960 Winter Olympics

David C. Antonucci, (775) 722-3502
tahoemuseum.org

Native Sons of the Golden West Parlor #59

Dave Allen, (530) 878-2878
dsallen59@sbcglobal.net

Newcastle Portuguese Hall Association

Mario Farinha, (530) 269-2412

North Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Phil Sexton, (530) 583-1762
northtahoemuseums.org

Placer County Genealogical Society

Diane Fishburn
pcgs.pcgenes.com

Placer County Historical Society

April McDonald-Loomis
 (530) 823-2128
placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Museums Docent Guild

Craig Norris

Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society

Chuck Spinks
Psrhs.org

Rocklin Historical Society

Jim Hammes (916) 624-3464
rocklinhistorical.org

Roseville Historical Society

Denise Fiddymment, (916) 773-3003
rosevillehistorical.org

S.N.O.W. Sports Museum

Jill Short Milne, (415) 254-5686
thesnowmuseum.org

Calendar:

Please confirm all meeting times and locations which each organization

Foresthill Divide Historical Society Meeting: Monday, November 20th at 6:00pm

Golden Drift Historical Society Meeting: Monday, December 4th at 7:00pm

Historical Advisory Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 20th at 5:30pm

Historical Organizations Committee Meeting: Tuesday, November 7th at 9:00am

Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting: Wednesday, November 15th at 6:00pm; Wednesday, December 20th at 6:00pm

Placer County Historical Society Meeting: Thursday, November 2nd at 2:00pm; **Dinner meeting:** Thursday, December 7th at 6:00pm

Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society: Tuesday, November 28th at 7:00pm

Placer Genealogical Society Meeting: Monday, November 27th at 7:00pm

Rocklin Historical Society Meeting: Monday, November 13th at 6:00pm; Monday, December 11th at 6:00pm

Roseville Historical Society Meeting: Tuesday, November 14th at 4:00pm; Tuesday, December 12th at 4:00pm



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