

Docents Newsletter

Volume 3, Number 11

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

December 2010

Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“Oh! holly branch and mistletoe, And Christmas chimes where'er we go, And stockings pinned up in a row! These are thy gifts, December!”

Harriet F. Blodgett “December” 1907

I hope everyone has taken in their brass monkeys. I can do without this bitter cold, however, I count my blessings that I'm warm and snug and have enough food. Bless all those folks who don't. The old saying “I cried because I had no shoes until I saw a man who had not feet,” applies to all of us who are so blessed to be safe this holiday season.

We have had so much fun this past year in the HSDV, I hope it continues this next year. I can hardly believe another year has rushed past us. We were so busy we hardly noticed the year go by. The only thing we didn't get done was a field trip to Dangberg Ranch. As soon as they open next year and the weather gets warmer I'll make the arrangements for us to visit. Maybe we can squeeze in the museum in Gardnerville at the same time.

I hope each and everyone of you folks in HSDV have a wonderful holiday season. Try to squeeze a prayer in for all the folks who need support. Hug your loved ones every chance you get. If you need a hug, call me at 246-5543. I'm also a good listener. Sometimes the holidays can cause depression and all folks need is a willing ear. We have a very supportive group, so let's all support anyone who needs a help.

We will have our first docent meeting in January. Everyone bring lots of ideas to improve the docent program and things we can do to make

people want to come to Dayton to visit our historical sights.

I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and the very best of New Years. Thank you all for your help to make our year a great success.

Year end reflections

By Patrick Neylan

Traditionally, this is the time of year when you sit back, relax and reflect on the events of the past year. Yeah, like we have time to do that! Off the top of my head I can name at least 12 functions and events we already have scheduled for 2011. Fasten your seatbelt, it is going to be a wild, but fun and productive year!

One thing we can certainly reflect on is the bond of friendship that has been created among our members. As a group of interested historians, we have grown into a family of doers, something we can all be proud of. Each of us as an individual is an asset to the town of Dayton. As a group we are a force to reckon with in the community. We are racking up a long list of accomplishments and each member should be proud of their place on it.

Looking into the future we have two new, and one time events coming up in 2011. The first and biggest is the 150th anniversary of the creation of Lyon County. It is no secret to any of our members that Dayton was the county seat for 50 years and played a major role in the development of the county. Your Society will be involved on several levels. Look for details in the near future. Secondly, we have been invited by the Lincoln Highway Association of California and Nevada to host a visit by 130-150 of their members traveling the early route of the Lincoln Highway in June.

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We have already participated in a planning meeting with a committee from that group and are on our way to participation. Many of these folks will be from the Midwest and have little or no knowledge of Nevada history. What an opportunity for us to educate folks on Dayton history.

While looking forward to an exciting New Year, I, for now, want to wish each of you a Happy and Holy Christmas!

Fires in Old Town Dayton proved to be formidable foes

By Laura Tennant

This is the fourth article in a series documenting early-day Dayton fires, noting the terrible havoc they caused in this booming milling town that was also a ranching and commercial center serving Silver City, Gold Hill and Virginia City during the height of the Comstock Lode's heyday.

Horses lost in 1869 stable fire reported in the "Territorial Enterprise" on March 9:

DAYTON – About 8 o'clock yesterday morning, the stable and corral of J.W. Davids, on the opposite side of the river from town, was destroyed by fire, together with seven team horses, harness and a lot of hay. The loss is estimated at about \$2,000. The origin of the fire is not known. There were eight horses in the stable, only one was saved."

Reported in the Aug. 30, 1871 edition of the "Territorial Enterprise":

"At 11:20 o'clock night before last, a fire broke out in the Blacksmith Shop on Main Street, damaging the building to the extent of about \$300.

"The fire was supposed to have been caused by the unquenched fire in [one] of the forges," said the news, adding: "When the fire was first discovered, those in the vicinity seemed to have forgotten that there was in the town such a thing as a fire engine, but soon someone thought of the machine, and cried: "Let's go and get the engine and away they ran and brought it."

The news indicates: "Since the fire was the first in town since they purchased the engine, they didn't think of it at once. Getting the engine pumping water added another learning experience.

"At first, they put the line hose where the suction should have gone and the suction in place of the line hose, but after they had pumped for some time, the man at the pipe reported no water was coming through. When they reversed the order of things, all went well.

"Commending firefighters, the reporter wrote: "They worked with a will and in just seven minutes from the time the water struck the building, they had the fire out. But for the engine, half of the town would have burned.

"Although the mistake made by the Dayton firemen in attaching the hose where they should have attached their suction, is a good joke on them, but that's what happened to the Knickerbockers in this city (Virginia City) when they owned the same machine (a hand pumper)."

The reporter added: "It is the only machine ever in this city, we believe, with which such an annoying mistake could be made. Daytonites have five or six good fire cisterns that are now well fixed for successfully combating almost any fire. They need an alarm bell, a big triangle or something else in that line with which they arouse the people of the place when a fire is discovered."

1872 fire takes Dayton Methodist Church, says the "Territorial Enterprise" the day after:

"The fire broke out about 2 a.m. on April 8, 1872, first seen in the belfry. The engine company was promptly out and did excellent service. It was found impossible to save the church but much valuable property in its neighborhood was undoubtedly saved through the exertions of the firemen. The fire was without a doubt the work of an incendiary."

[As you will recall from a previous article, Laura defined "incendiary" as being someone known today as an "arsonist." -Ed.]

Laura is a Nevada native, Dayton historian and president of the Historical Society of Dayton Valley.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year

By Donna McElroy

The Song of the Christmas Tree Fairy

The little Christmas Tree was born
And dwelt in open air,
It did not guess how bright a dress
Some day its boughs would wear;
Brown cones were all, it thought, a tall
And grown-up Fir would bear.

O little Fir! Your forest home
Is far and far away;
And here indoors these boughs of yours
With coloured balls are gay,
With candle-light, and tinsel bright,
For this is Christmas Day!

A dolly-fairy stands on top,
Till children sleep; then she
(A live one now!) from bough to bough
Goes gliding silently.
O magic sight, this joyous night!
O laden, sparkling tree!

Cicely Mary Barker, 1923

Above is a lovely little poem that I thought you all might enjoy for the holidays!

Our year has been such a busy and full one, as we all know. I am so happy that we have gained so many new members! Our current membership has outdone themselves with the projects that we have accomplished in this last 12 months. It is so rewarding to work with so many wonderful people. We are meeting new challenges and coming up with new and more things all the time.

I would like to share an interesting experience with you all. Last Sunday, November 28th, I received an email from Harry McDaniel who is the descendant of James and Alice McMarlin who owned Spofford Hall (then known as McMarlin

Corners).

I forwarded the email to Laura [Tennant] who has passed it on to Guy Rocha and Martin Griffith. This should prove to be some interesting discoveries.

Mr. McDaniel acquired my email address from our web site and emailed the enquiry to me. I was very pleased to have been a small part of this process. I will try to keep you all updated as to the results of these findings.

With my best wishes to you all for a very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

Dates to remember

By Bob Wallace

This issue marks the last for the third year of these "Docents Newsletters." The rest of the month will be given over to Christmas parties, followed by a New Year which may find us as busy as this year of 2010 has been, although this year certainly brought with it lots of activity for the Historical Society of Dayton Valley.

Depot Jamboree; State Fair exhibit, both building it, then transporting and setting it up in Reno; Oodles of Noodles, Dayton Valley Days and the Ghost Walk in Old Town followed by the Nevada Day Parade in Carson City kept us busier this year than we've ever been. Add to it the May all-month opening at the Museum, all of this combining to make for a most interesting year.

No HSDV or C&C Depot Working Group meeting this month, but back to work come January.

December 4: Christmas party at the Gold Canyon Steak House.

December 25: Christmas Day.

December 31: New Year's Eve – Goodbye old year, hello new!

January 19: HSDV monthly meeting, 12:30 at the Dayton Valley Library, followed by the C&C Depot Working Group.

January 26: Docents meeting, 10:30 at the School House Museum.