

# Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

July 2011

## Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“Don't knock the weather; nine-tenths of the people couldn't start a conversation if it didn't change once in a while.”

Kin Hubbard (1868-1930)

Well, if I had a bucket list, I did something last Sunday to fulfill what might be on it. I got up and made my way to the Eastgate train station of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad and made the round trip to Virginia City and back to Carson City. Love every minute of the trip. If you haven't been on the trip it would be worth your time to do it. There is a lot to see and digest. It's a completely different view of the Comstock area. The only thing I wasn't crazy about was the three hour layover in Virginia City. I occupied my time with people watching since my walking skills are not the best. Tourists are a great source of amusement to me, and Virginia City was wall to wall tourist.

Summer is finally here and the weather is a lot warmer – sometimes. It's still Nevada. My garden is up and thriving. I guess the county is going to spray the weeds at the depot. Since we use the depot for a lot of events it's nice to keep the yard looking kept and cared for. We want to let folks know we care about what happens to the Carson & Colorado Depot. I think everyone knows how much we care already. After my trip Sunday it made me more aware of how much the railroads meant to the area.

I noted that the weeds around the museum have been taken care of by people who care. Thank you. Our little museum is a gem of the Comstock and thanks to those who help to keep it open and spiffy. I couldn't help telling the people I met on

the train how important Dayton was to the history of the area. I love carrying the message.

## Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

On the road again! It's just a few weeks shy of the ninety-ninth anniversary of the announcement of the formation of the Lincoln Highway by Carl Fisher in Indianapolis and ninety-eight years since construction began. The reasons for conceiving the idea were varied. The main forces behind the plan were all men involved with the auto industry. Carl Fisher headed Presolite, Frank Seiberling ran Goodyear Tires, and Henry Joy was president of Packard Motor Company.

Part of their reasoning, of course, was the promotion of their products, but beyond that was their vision and sense of adventure. Soon after most of the system was operational the Army saw it as a national defense issue for the rapid movement of troops and material from coast to coast and sent Dwight Eisenhower and a convoy across the country to investigate its practicality.

Another force in the project was folks like our grandparents who usually could not drive their cars in winter, who would never travel too far from home because of the poor conditions of roads or the total lack of roads. The very thought of being able to travel by auto anywhere in the country fired the imagination of thousands of Americans and that spirit still lives in the Lincoln Highway Association of today. Like on the later Route 66, many folks love to relive the experience of early auto travel on the Lincoln Highway and that brings us, and them, to Dayton, Nevada on the Pioneer Route of the original Lincoln Highway.

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Spurred by the same enthusiasm from days gone by, 110-plus people in three buses from all over the country (I counted at least ten different states) came to Dayton on June 22<sup>nd</sup> to experience our part of the Lincoln Highway which runs down River Street, jogs onto Main Street and goes out on Pike Street. To say a good time was had by all would be a major understatement! The experience created by the members of our Historical Society evoked wonderful comments from all the attendees. For a few hours we put Dayton on the map, albeit an old map, but on the map nonetheless!

This was just another example of what makes me so proud to be a member of HSDV! Many thanks to all the members that took part in this special and fun event. Thanks to the planners. To the food servers. To the museum, firehouse, depot tour folks. To the setter uppers and taker downers. To the banner and sign makers. To all who helped make a visit to Dayton, Nevada a memorable experience for so many of our fellow history buffs from around the country.



HSDV's volunteers ready to host the...



Lincoln Highway group's lunch on June 22

## Dayton Where Nevada History Begins

## George H. Clagett Tombstone at Dayton Cemetery

By Reuben Erickson

### Some history on the metal tombstone in the second from top row at the Dayton Cemetery.

The tombstone marks the second burial location for George H. (Harry) Clagett. The tombstone is poured from zinc metal which was used from about 1875 to 1910. George Clagett was born in 1836 to Thomas W. Clagett and Susan Geiger Harry in Upper Marlboro, Prince Georges County, Maryland. Thomas W. moved his family to Keokuk, Iowa probably in the late 1840s.

George H and brother, William Horace (1838) went west to the Dayton area about 1860. George died in a horse accident. The local story is that it was similar to Ole Virginny's demise, too much to drink.

Note that George H. died on October 26, about six months after Ole Virginny. William Clagett saw to his brother's proper marker later on. To shed a little light on the re-burial happenings, the following is repeated from a San Francisco "Call" article by Charles H. Lincoln, republished in the Lyon County Times of March 12, 1881:

"I see some inquiries are being made as to the death and burial of 'Ole Virginny,' in Dayton, Nevada. About the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, 1861, I went on horseback from Virginia City to Dayton. I went up to an old adobe hotel kept by a man named Tyler, at Dayton, to get dinner, and tied my horse outside. While at dinner, 'Ole Virginny' untied my horse, got on him, and was thrown off before he had ridden over 100 yards. He died the next day from the injuries received by being thrown from the horse, and on the following day was buried on the hill to the west of Dayton, south of the road as it then ran. I could easily find it now."

Lincoln's letter was prompted by an effort to move Finney's body from its original burial site to the Dayton cemetery. The old acquaintance suggested raising \$150 for the move. Lincoln also

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mentioned that if there was any question about the right body being moved, “(t)his doubt could easily be removed by exhuming the body said to be 'Ole Virginny's,' as he had iron gray hair,...” The other body moved a few years before, and presumed to be the brother of former Nevada legislator William H Clagett, had red hair, Lincoln insisted.



Since George H. was so young there is little accomplishment to report. Brother William is another story. Billy was a close friend of Samuel Clemens, who upon hearing of George's death, wrote back to Keokuk to his (Clemens) mother informing her of his death.

The surviving brother, William H., was a lawyer, partner of Samuel Clemens, a member of the Territorial Legislature 1862 and State Legislature 1864, prospector in the Humboldt area, and a

mining claims lawyer in most of the western states. He was the person who introduced the legislation to the U.S. Congress to establish Yellowstone National Park. Perhaps he made up for his older brother's premature death.

George H. Clagett was Lynn Clagett Erickson's grandfather's first cousin.

Information herein has been gathered from Reno Gazette Journal [rgj.com/news/stories/html/2005/08/27/107474.php](http://rgj.com/news/stories/html/2005/08/27/107474.php); Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress; History of North Idaho, Shoshone County Biographies; and Mark Twain Project ::Letters

## Newsletter notes

By Bob Wallace

First, one correction to last month's notes about the gold nugget found by John Orr. The size of the nugget was misstated as being “nearly 20 ounces,” when it should have said “nearly 20 grams.” The official weight is said to be 19.4 grams.

Second, to everyone who participated in setting up the C&C Depot yard for arrival of the Lincoln Highway group on June 22, thanks for your time. The group arrived nearly 40 minutes earlier than anticipated, but was delighted at the way their early arrival was handled. Note in the picture of Patrick Neylan's antique Cadillac the desert water bag hanging on the license plate, just in case we had an over-hot day. Picture of the host group provided courtesy of Patrick Neylan; picture of the Lincoln Highway group picking up their lunch boxes courtesy of your editor.

In addition to the usual dates over the course of July, include the 14<sup>th</sup> for the Mark Twain group from Hartford, Connecticut, who will arrive in Dayton at approximately 5:00. The early estimate of people in this group is about two dozen.

A note from Pat Neylan regarding the docents meeting on Wednesday, July 27: review of the cash register procedures, and review and inventory the items for sale in the gift shop. Make every effort to be there, please.