

Docents Newsletter

Volume 6, Number 5

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

July, 2013

DOCENT DOINGS

By Pat Neylan

As one of the (previous) schedulers of the docents at the museum I am going to propose a major change! I propose that the museum be open on “some” Monday’s and “some” Wednesday’s. I know that we have the set schedule for the Saturdays and Sundays during the summer months but my experience shows that the best traffic for our museum comes when the museum is “sort of” closed!!

In the dead of the last winter, while we were “accessioning”, random tourists wandered into our museum. That was usually on a Wednesday! The day that the “Lincoln Highway” mugs arrived, a Wednesday, Vicki and I delivered them to the museum. Upon leaving the museum and driving down Shady Lane we came upon a couple from the Netherlands!! They were looking for the site of the filming of the “Misfits”!! How could we not open the museum for them!!

Recently, the Society was contacted via our website (thank you Linda C) and a special tour was set up for last Monday with the Historical Society of Lake Tahoe. 12 of their members traveled to Dayton, lunched at the Roadrunner Café, and enjoyed a tour of our museum, the firehouse, and the depot.

The docent asked a couple in the museum, “Where do you live at Tahoe?”. The response was “we live in Benicia CA”. The docent asked, “How are you connected with the Historical Society of Lake Tahoe?”...The response was: “we are not”...“we were just driving by and saw the open door,” parked and walked in”!! A Monday moment!!

They were given a deluxe tour, as were the actual members of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society.

– Continued on Page 2 -



The South Lake Tahoe Historical Society with Pat Neylan, esteemed tour guide. June 24, 2013.

HSDV MONTHLY MEETINGS:

Our monthly general meeting continues in our new ‘digs.’ We meet at the Dayton Community Center on 170 Pike St, the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 12:30. Come early and get a good seat!

C&C Working Group:

They meet at the museum the first Wednesday of the month at 1 P.M.

HSDV Board:

They meet at museum the second Wednesday of the month at 10:30.

Docent Meetings: Come, learn, & be involved☺ Meet at the museum on the fourth Wednesday at 10:30.

Pat's letter, cont...

The moral of the story is, never underestimate our visitor, and never underestimate your ability!! The museum must be kept open during the season, and any question can be referred for an answer with the simple recording of a phone number or email address. Whether it is a Monday, Weds, or the actual days our museum is open....The Dayton museum is the single most important element in the promotion of the history of Dayton!!! The museum is permanent, and your help is essential!!

Editor's note:

And speaking of "deluxe tour," as Pat so aptly described the "South Lake Tahoe Historical Society" tour, he most certainly did not exaggerate. As usual, Pat not only gave an extremely informative one, but his sense of humor was in fine form!! The members were delighted, and asked great questions☺ Pat, until you're better paid, we offer you our humble thanks!!

A thank you letter from the president of the South Lake Tahoe Historical Society:

6/24/13

Dear Patrick,

Thank you for an incredible afternoon. Raves were uttered by all. I have attached our group photo. I hope you can see how happy we all are!

Dayton is so interesting and your commentary had us all mesmerized.

Again, sincere thanks for sharing your darling, historic town with us from South Lake Tahoe.

Warmly,

Denise Haerr and group.

So. Lake Tahoe Historical Society.

DOCENT PROGRAM

By Ruby McFarland

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift; that's why they call it a present."

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

Just thought I might write something about a person who is part of the history of the Historical Society of Dayton Valley. She is, in my books, one of the best examples of a pioneer women. I wrote about her and three other women in a newspaper article some time ago. I said she was one of the women I would have traveled through the 40 mile desert and knew we would persevere to get to the new mining area now known as Dayton. She's made of good stuff. Her name is Delphine Minor.

Del, as she is known as, came to Dayton as a new bride. Gene Minor, her husband, wanted to raise pheasants. She tells of all the pheasants she killed and dressed until she got burned out and balked. It was a hard way to make a living. She and Gene switched to raising cattle and soon raising children.

Emma Loftus wrote in her diary about this young pregnant woman that had to be rescued to have her baby during the flood in 1951. That was Del and her first child. The young woman had to ride a chair on a cable across the raging Carson River to have her baby girl. Del had four more children after that. She made sure they always had a lot to do to keep them out of the mischief. She started youth groups to keep them busy.

In the late 1950's she organized sit-down strikes to get the county to put bathrooms and running water in the old school building. It caused the school to be closed and the kids to take up classes in the high school building, now the community center.

Del and a few others started the historical society. The painted sign above the door of the museum was painted by Del. Oh, did I forget to mention Del is a wonderful crafter and artist?

It would be hard to find someone who contributed more to the community. She has slowed down because of illness, but she still has a garden and helps out where she can in the ranch. I don't have enough room in this newsletter to tell you all there is to tell about Del. She has made her own history in Dayton.

Oodles of Noodles - 2013

We had another successful year, even though we didn't have an official booth. We did have the Firehouse/Jail open and had many happy visitors, reported Mabel Masterman!

MaryAnn Sichak told of a few visitors to the Railroad Depot, on Saturday, and considered the day well worth the effort in the cleaning and keeping it open! We made money on parking, and donations for buttons, but mostly she was glad for the opportunity to reach out to the community. On Sunday, the docents welcomed a Mr. Bordan from Idaho who arrived with stories of his father's ownership of our C&C Depot when it was across the street from its present location. He had actually made some of the inside changes that we see, today, to accommodate his family. What a fascinating and unexpected treat to connect with someone who lived in our depot so long ago.

The museum was 'rocking' last week! We gave many mugs away, told our story, and stamped booklets with Dayton's logo for those who needed proof that they traveled the Southern, Pioneer Route on the Loneliest Highway!



Gretchen and friend

THE RUMMAGE SALE WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!!

Thanks to all who helped, all who shopped, and especially to our esteemed leader, Gretchen Arndt! You went beyond the call of duty, dear lady, and you are appreciated! It was a lot of work, but the rewards were great, especially the fun being all together!

We were also glad to see our DONNA McELROY at the Rummage Sale! Thanks for your help, and your smiles! We miss you and pray for you, always. Hurry back! Lots of love ☺

The Carson & Colorado Railroad

`Our First Dayton Railroad`

Linda Clements, HSDV Railroad Working Group

Those of you who attended my HSDV lecture in May at the Community Center were introduced to some of the people who served the C&C RR in Dayton. I thought it would be good to tell you more about our first Dayton Station Agent, William Henry McCrillis (“Henry or Harry”) Cobb.

I want to thank Stephen Drew, recently retired curator of the California State Railroad Museum, for helping me with information about our C&C agents, giving me copies of documents, and helping me understand the work of the agents and others who served the C&C in Dayton.

Harry Cobb was a very important person to the C&C here, and thus to the residents of Dayton. As Stephen Drew clarified for me, “The station agent wore several hats. He served as agent for the railroad in handling tickets, baggage, and freight. He was also the station’s telegraph operator who represented Western Union Telegraph Company and the expressman for Wells, Fargo & Company Express.” In other words, he was very important to the operations of the very important C&C RR in Dayton.

Harry Cobb was born in Dover-Foxcroft, Piscataquis County, Maine on July 2, 1852. His father was William A.B. Cobb and his mother was Deborah. [Note that the men of this family had LOTS of given names and numerous names they were known by.] In 1860 the family was still in Maine but by 1870 they had moved to California, shortly thereafter to Wadsworth, and then by 1874 to the Carson City area. In April 1877, the Daily Nevada State Journal reported that W.A.B. Cobb, “formerly proprietor of the Carson Exchange” [hotel] had leased the Lake Shore Hotel at Glenbrook, Lake Tahoe (in Douglas County).

However, by January 1877 Harry, age 21, had taken the job as Station Agent for the Virginia & Truckee Railroad at Silver Switch and by April had become the agent at Empire. He stayed there until at least Feb. 1878 [info from Stephen Drew]. In May 1879 Harry

was the best man when his sister Hattie married Mr. Frank McCullough, superintendent of the Mexican Mill at Empire, in a ceremony at their parent’s home in Glenbrook. However, by the time of the 1880 census the single Wm. H. Cobb was listed again living with his parents in Glenbrook and serving as a Hotel Clerk there.

Soon, however, Harry was again on the move, with May 1881 being his first month as the very first station agent for the Carson & Colorado in Dayton. On May 22, 1881, the Daily Nevada State Journal gave his name as W. H. M. Cobb and lists him as agent and operator in Dayton. Unfortunately, we don’t know for sure when the depot itself was actually built—perhaps not by May 1881—so it is not clear whether he initially worked from some type of temporary depot. Nonetheless, the new railroad—which had been accepting public freight since January and paying passengers since March—did a lively business. Stephen Drew says that Henry Cobb reported \$1,533.86 in total receipts including \$148.24 in ticket sales during his first month as agent. Harry Cobb’s salary in 1885 was \$100 per month, for working 7 days a week.

Since he came after the 1880 census we don’t know where he lived—it is likely that the Station Agent’s and Section Foreman’s houses near the depot had not yet been built when he arrived.

Dayton’s population in 1881 was only 391. As I said, Harry Cobb was an important person to Dayton. Not only was he the Station Agent but he was active in Lyon Lodge No. 10 of the Knights of Pythias, where it was a representative to the Nevada Grand Lodge. And his wife was also important to Dayton. We don’t know when he married, but while he was single in 1880 “Mrs. Henry Cobb” was showing up by 1885 as an active member of the Dayton and Nevada social scene. We assume that during their time in Dayton the Station Agent’s house was built and they got to live in it.

Harry and his wife (first name unknown) had four children. However, according to his obituary, three of these four children died. We don’t know if any of the births or deaths occurred in Dayton, but none of these children is listed as buried in our Dayton Cemetery or in Carson City.

- Continued on Page 5 -

Linda's letter, cont.....

In 1887 Harry Cobb submitted his resignation to the C&C and moved to Grass Valley, where he went into business. A June 1887 Weekly Nevada State Journal article indicated he was doing well there. Wallace W. Coffin, previously a Central Pacific agent in Humboldt County, replaced him as Dayton Agent.

Harry Cobb soon returned to Carson City, however, and was appointed Assistant Coiner of the Carson Mint. And wherever he lived he was active in the Knights of Pythias and other fraternal organizations. He had an active social life, undoubtedly using it to withstand his personal tragedies.

In 1889 Harry's father W.A.B. Cobb was attacked at his job as a night watchman for the Carson Mint and died a few days later. In addition, Harry's active wife, bereaved by the loss of three of her children, went mad with grief and became a "helpless" invalid. It is possible this did not occur until after her last child—who survived—was born in late 1891, but it must have been a source of additional grief for Harry.

Then Harry Cobb, in early May 1894, was taken ill rather suddenly with cerebral spinal meningitis. His many friends were shocked and distressed. Only a few days later he was dead, at only 41 years old. His funeral in Carson City was large and was attended by delegations of fraternal brothers from Reno, Wadsworth, Dayton, and elsewhere. Like his father before him, he was buried in Lone Mountain Cemetery in Carson City.

His widowed mother Deborah Cobb mourned her only son's death greatly, but it was not the last for her. Her only remaining child, Harry's sister Hattie, died in 1901 at the age of 45. After this Deborah moved in with Hattie's husband Frank. He was a healthy and active man but also died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1912 at the age of 75. Deborah was once again overcome by grief; she had lost too many loved ones in her 88 years. I do not find her in the 1920 census so it is likely that she did not survive too long after her son-in-law Frank died.

There were many tragedies for this family. Nonetheless, our first Dayton Station Agent, W.H.M. "Harry" Cobb made the best of it. He was active in

several fraternal lodge groups and upon his death had many tributes for his fraternal work and from his acquaintances in state government. And he will always remain important to Dayton.

THANKS TO LINDA, PAT, and RUBY for contributing to July newsletter! We all benefit from your expertise! Please, members of the HSDV, we also need your contributions to our letter. It's fun and not too hard to do the research, but oh so addicting!

JULY 1, 1859 ~ The *rush* to the Nevada and the Comstock Lode begins with an article published in the "*Nevada Journal*" in Nevada City, stating that gold and silver has been discovered in Nevada. Some historians consider this the official end of the California Gold Rush.

*Happy Independence Day,
everyone!*

