

# Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

August, 2013



## DOCENTS PROGRAM

By Ruby McFarland

“Money will buy you a pretty good dog, but it won’t buy the wag of his tail.”

I thought I’d just reminisce a little this month. When I first came to sleepy little Dayton it had a two lane highway coming into town. At the top of a hill that dropped down into Dayton produced a beautiful sight of a valley filled with green fields and lovely old poplars along the Carson River. The highway over the hill was referred to as ‘death hill’ because of serious accidents. Then the highway was widened to four lanes and most of the accidents stopped.

As you approached Main Street there was a flea market that was of considerable size. On weekends, it was a destination for people from all over the area, Reno, Tahoe, and all other small towns. Some of the town characters hung out there adding to the ambiance. I enjoyed many hours of poking around before I moved to Dayton.

Across the street from the flea market was a small gas station started by Chester Barton, deputy sheriff of the area. The station was the only gas in town. Inside the little station building was a glass case that served as a counter for the business. When Chester ran the station he kept rattle snakes in the case. He never had a robbery while he ran the station.

Moving down the road a quarter of a mile east was a small trailer park with a nice little pond about a third of an acre in size. The pond was the result of the dredging that was done in early Dayton history. The exact location now is the ‘Greater Nevada Credit Union.’ They filled in the pond and built the bank. The pond was stocked with fish by Chester Barton.

*(continued on page 2)*

## OUR AUGUST SCHEDULE☺

Plan to attend the August 10 western Richard Ellyn benefit concert for saving the Dayton Valley Community Center at the community center, 170 Pike Street, Old Town Dayton, from 7 to 9 p.m. Funds are needed to update the 95 year old building and make it a charming community center for all of Dayton and other communities to use. Richard is joined by Stan Wade on guitar and will be opened by the Ukulocos, Jim Allander, Barbara Peck and Robin Cobbey on their ukes.

Enjoy a cool brew, glass of wine, water or soft drink, treats, raffle and camaraderie with your neighbors for just \$12.00. DOOR OPENS AT 6:30. CALL 775-246-9653 for more information☺

**August 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>:** The Railroad Working Group meets at 6 P.M. at the Museum.

**August 14<sup>th</sup>:** Board Meeting at 10:30 – Museum.

**August 21<sup>st</sup>:** General Meeting at 10:30 at the Community Center in Old Town Dayton/Pike Street.

**August 24<sup>th</sup>:** Annual BBQ at Laura and Stony’s~

**August 27<sup>th</sup>:** Docent Meeting 10:30 – Museum.

(Ruby)

Now you would be fast approaching the end of town. The remaining buildings housed a pizza bar, our first library, post office, and various small businesses on the west side of the road. On the other side of the road was a small mom and pop grocery and a trailer park. The trailer park is still there, but the grocery is now a pawn shop.

Now had you blinked, you would have missed Dayton. But I have to say that behind the scenes were some of the best and kindly people in the world. I'm truly happy to be one of the residents of Dayton.

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## **DOCENT DOINGS**

**By Pat Neylan**

### **ACCESSIONING: THE DREAM MOVES FORWARD!!!**

**BY DEFININITION:** Accession: increase by addition, an addition to property by improvement or natural growth. Senility: characteristics of old age, infirmity of mind.

For those of you who might have read my items before, you should remember that I seldom, if ever, mention specific names. This is mostly because of definition #2 above and my fear of leaving anyone out! Today, however, I must take the risk and in the process of explaining accessioning name names! Today, the most important process of accessioning all of the donated items in the possession of the HSDV is moving forward. Those currently involved are doing their best while standing on the shoulders of the likes of Judy Harris and Del Minor. The entire history of the State of Nevada rests with the State Museum in Carson City and "they" are already operating on the about the fourth system of inventory control developed over 110 years....and even today, those systems are not one!! The items of history belonging to Dayton, because of the efforts of the early members of the Historical Society have suddenly, exploded!!

The barn arrived, the Tennant and JohnD collections arrived. Andy and Mary Ann arrived! The carefully maintained accession records of the past became over run!! New items were everywhere! We now had the depot, new items in the firehouse. Everything was welcomed, needed, trusted, displayed....but not inventoried!! Now...there was a mix. The winter of

"display realignment" added to the confusion. New things came in, old went out...."were they accessioned? Where did they go? Whatever! The new displays look great!!! Public acclaim proved all of the volunteer hours were well spent. The Museum had never looked better. Already, members were looking into resuming proper accessioning.

The arrival of the Tennant and JohnD collections created the stimulus for correction, revision, new methods, before going forward. After meetings with state museum staff, Jenny Dodds, Jack Folmar and the rest implemented, known statewide procedures for the accessioning of donated artifacts. The HSDV Board voted to discontinue the acceptance of "loaned" items, and a new era began!

Many accessioning sessions have been held over the last months to deal with the influx of items from the Tennant and Winter's collections. Accession numbers as well as individual photo numbers have been assigned to every item donated. A detailed description has been logged as well as an individual item tag attached to every item. Inclusive computer inventories with backups including photos have been created and maintained. Jenny Dodds led a group to the State Museum in mid July to ascertain the proper method of permanently marking artifacts (textiles, photos, documents, steel objects etc.) and with purchased supplies will implement them beginning with the next acquisitions (Pieretti Collection).

I hate to say it, but Del and Judy will probably agree, accessioning is a bit dry, if not boring, definitely behind the scenes, but also the most important function of the society to definitely record accurate and specific history. Our thanks go out to the afore mentioned, plus, Gretchen, Stony, Andy, Barbara, Burt, Jake, Mary Ann, Vicki, Sandy, Tom, Elaine, Sheila, as well as anyone else who may come in under definition #2 above!! I apologize!! It ain't easy, but your museum will be better for the effort!



## ~~~Reminiscing~~~

Looking back on old Docent Newsletters and it warms me to see how many good changes have taken place, as well as a few challenges. In the August 2008 letter, our Dayton Walking Tour brochure was introduced and distributed. Tom was reminding about the meeting of the C&C Depot Working Group, and the new place & time of our monthly meetings would be held at the public library. Bob and Lois Wallace were on the road, and everyone was practicing the new key vault and alarm system at the museum☺

I found this wonderful letter in that same issue from Donna McElroy, speaking of changes!

## Historical statistics

By Donna McElroy (August, 2008)

I just found some interesting stuff that Morgan Webber sent me from the year 1908. They Make for an interesting contrast between that era and the present day.

The average life expectancy was 47 years.

Only 14% of the homes had a bathtub!

Only 8% of the homes had a telephone!

There were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads.

The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 miles per hour.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower!

The average wage in 1908 was 22cents per hour.

The average worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2,000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanic about \$5,000.

More than 95 percent of all births took place at home.

Ninety percent of all doctors had no college education! Instead, they attended so called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and the government as "substandard.

Sugar cost 4 cents per pound.

Eggs cost 14 cents a dozen.

Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.

Interesting statistics and more to come later.



Speaking of Donna, I also found a classic picture of her and Pat Neylan arranging the new and improved display cases from May of 2012 before our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. That sure was a lot of fun!

*Dayton is at the western end of the Twenty-Six Mile Desert at a bend in the Carson River. Immigrants stopping there for water would consider whether to follow the river south or continue west, giving the location its first name, Ponderers Rest. (Dayton's first Labor Days☺)*



## A Neat Find During a Work Party at the Depot!

Dr. Linda L. Clements

I've given some of this info to the C&C Railroad Working Group previously but knew you, too, would be interested. I'm putting together some more info for Laura and her Dayton Courier column, so I'll copy you on that, too. On last Saturday morning, July 20, we had a work party for the depot attic cleanup. We had John Crowley, Colin Crowley, Mary Ann Sichak, Andy Sichak, and myself.

We started at 6 AM because of the forecast 105 degree heat (which was delivered later in the day). Some folks who had considered helping withdrew due to either the forecast heat or the early hour, or both. John and Colin worked in the attic while the "ground crew" took the stuff they sent down and loaded it into Andy's truck. There is more to do than John figured (which is not unusual—John is way too optimistic about the scope of work). John now figures we will need two more work parties to get everything cleaned up. He will schedule those and call people to ask for help.

One very exciting thing about this work is that John and Colin found under the fiberglass in the post-RR-era attic of the freight room an old autograph book for Wilma (Sparky) Hankhammer. The book is in very good condition and I'd estimate it to have 60 or more autographs. Wilma was related to Chester Barton by marriage, being the niece of Chester's first wife Sybil (daughter of Sybil's sister Hazel). She was born in Carson City but by 1930 Wilma's parents divorced and the children remained with their father.

During the Depression in the 1930s, Chester and Sybil were also divorced and both before and after Chester was married to his second wife Helen, Wilma's father and siblings lived with the Bartons in Dayton. Wilma and her older sister were young teenagers when they started living there and they had a brother who was several years later. The kids went to school in Dayton and Wilma graduated from Dayton High School in the 1930s. (According to the diary of Chester's mother Emma Loftus, their mother Hazel only visited her children in Dayton one time over the years.) Wilma married Thomas Allington by 1940, and their family lived in the depot (which was a rental, I believe) for quite a few years before it was moved to

the current location. Because 1940 is the last census online, I can't trace Wilma as well after that. However, we have pictures from their son Dave of their life at the depot after it became a home but before it was moved. (Eventually I'll find time to search newspaperarchive.com for more info on the family from Reno newspaper stories. Wilma died in 2006 in Washoe County.

I assume this autograph book fell out of a box stored in the attic and got lost in the insulation. It is a significant record of Dayton (and some Silver City) family names during the 1930s. (One entry was by Joe Ricci, Grace's later husband. Teacher Bernice Johnson also had an entry, with her ubiquitous advice.) Most of the entries were simple rhymes with full signatures and were from 1931-1936, but the earliest entry was from 1928 and the last 1947. They include both teenagers and some adults. Cool stuff!

We'll turn this over to the museum for accession, along with the old sweater block we found previously and anything else of significance that we find.



## Dayton Railroad Days

**in conjunction with  
25th Annual Dayton Valley Days  
"Silver Tales, Trails, and Rails"  
Sat. & Sun., Sept. 21 & 22.**

## DAYTON'S HISTORIC CEMETERY

Compiled by Mabel Masterman

Dayton's 20 acre Cemetery is located on a hilltop overlooking the town. By the 1970s it became quite apparent a deteriorated condition had undermined the cemetery's sanctity. Overgrown with weeds, it had become an illegal drop-off site for unwanted furniture. Many plots and headstones were in disrepair; the grounds were littered.

Dayton's Cemetery predates Virginia City cemetery by 6 or 7 years. During early Comstock days, when freight wagons from Dayton transported goods and vegetables up the hill to Virginia City, they brought deceased miners back for burial. Often their remains were simply deposited at Cemetery front gate.

A number of sites are of unknown people, and are marked as such. Others are identified with a first name but only their last initial.

Headstones reveal a virtual who's-who of early Dayton residents, reflecting the Italian and Western European origin of the town. Sadly, parent's seemingly outlived their children more often than not. Grave markers also indicate birthplaces as Maine, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, just to name a few.

Records show there are five (5) known Civil War Veterans who passed away between circa 1890 and sometime subsequent to the 1910 census buried in our Cemetery. Headstones indicate four (4) Veterans of the Spanish American war, including Morton Stiles, born in 1824.

"Old Virginy", for whom Virginia City was named, died in Dayton in 1861 and is buried in our cemetery.

Famed abolitionist, Elijah Lovejoy's son, Edward P. Lovejoy, who, among other things, was a Carson & Colorado Railroad (Mound House to Hawthorne track worker), was laid to rest in 1891 in the Dayton Cemetery.

Governor Charles Russell, Nevada's Governor from 1950 to 1958 is buried in the family plot with his wife.

Carson City Judge Clark J. Guild, native born Daytonite, is buried in the Guild family plot.

In the mid 1970s a volunteer Dayton Cemetery Committee was formed by May Giometti, the chair person. In September 1983 the Dayton Cemetery was dedicated as a community cemetery. Wayne and Helen Epperson followed in May's footsteps as volunteers until late 1980s. Then Armand and Jessie Arnett stepped forward. By the late 1980s the County made cemetery caretaker a paid position.

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Thanks for bringing this to our attention, Mabel! I found something about Elijah's son, Edward, not much, but that he must've been a good man:

*"Following the murder of abolitionist, Elijah Lovejoy, Celia and her son, Edward, lived a nomadic existence for some years before settling in Iowa. Edward moved to California in 1857, and Celia joined him two years later. Edward believed that she was the first woman to arrive in California on the overland stage. She died in Edward's arms on July 11, 1870, all but forgotten by the veterans of the abolitionist movement who had so idolized her husband."*



## JAZMINE TRULLINGER

Jazmine is a student at Dayton High School, soon to be a senior. She has been working with us, this summer, as part of the "Comstock Youth Program of Dayton Valley" and we are blessed to have her! Jazmine began her work by assisting with our rummage sale, and that's when we got to know and appreciate her kind ways, initiative, and great sense of humor. She was a good help in sorting out mugs given away during our first days of the "Loneliest Highway" program. She's learning our history, helping with the scrapbook, and making our museum shine! She's also working with Jenny on the Accession project, putting information into the computer. Whatever's asked of her, she does it willingly and well.

Jazmine has future plans to be a Veterinarian, and loves working with the Dog Park, but she would like to eventually specialize in horses. She decided to find out about the Pony Express, and was most impressed that the route was once through Dayton!

Thanks for being with us, Jazmine!



*This was sent in mid-July from Bob Wallace, former Docent Newsletter editor © He gave me permission to share his adventures:*

### Travels with the Wallace's©

Today is one of those days to start moving again, from Livingston County, Michigan, to Auburn, Indiana, the first of our handful of days of travel, ending in Fort Worth, Texas by Monday. Today is a brief trip by our standards, a mere 150 miles, about three hours, later on visiting the Auburn, Cord and Duesenberg Auto Museum, then having dinner with a second cousin and her husband.

Of the locations we visited on our way back to Michigan, Scotts Bluff should be interesting enough for most folks around Dayton, given that the pioneers moved past that landmark by the thousands over the course of a relatively few years on their way west. A day or so before that, Chimney Rock. Photos of both locations are in our smart phone and/or laptop, so can be sent along for a story at some point. I suspect our visit to the Frank Lloyd Wright estate at Taliesin, Wisconsin, may be of interest to only a few folks, given that his style of architecture was far more complex than most folks might care to think about. Wright's "Prairie" style homes, however, did go over well with those who could afford them, and do make for interesting viewing IF one is interested in his designs.

Over the next six days, we'll be on the road for about four hours each day, more or less, running about 200 miles or so to cover the 1,300 miles between here and Fort Worth via the route we've chosen to take. One of our visits en route will be St. Joseph, Missouri, the location that saw thousands of immigrants heading west to California and Oregon in the mid-19th century.

**And finally~~~**

**The annual HSDV barbecue and camaraderie-filled fun afternoon is set for August 24 at 2 p.m. at the Tennant's. We provide meat and beverages so please bring a pot luck dish - whatever you choose. Every member and/or their guests are invited. NO SPECIAL INVITATIONS NECESSARY - WORD OF MOUTH IS FINE. Stony and Laura**

**Happy Summer !!!**

## ***BUT WAIT!!!! HERE'S AN ENTRY FROM LAURA TENNANT!***

### **DAYTON: Where Nevada Began**

**By Laura Tennant**

“Gold is where you find it”: Abner Blackburn

It was July 1849 when a little-known frontiersman in American West annals, Abner Levi Blackburn, Pennsylvania native, 22, arrived at the mouth of Gold Canyon, later Dayton, Nevada. Guiding a Mormon pack train to California's goldfields, Abner's party camped here so their livestock could feed and rest. Abner's kept a journal of his treks West between 1845 and 1851; therefore, his role in Nevada history is documented.

Unfortunately, after he married in 1852, his wife, Lucinda, burned the journal, fearing remarks he made about Brigham Young's Latter Day Saints' religious doctrines would bring reprisal. However, in later years, he wrote his memoirs in a detailed narrative, said by historians to be humorous, easy to read, and accurately written as judged by dates used, and compared with hundreds of their journals. His memoirs were documented by Dale L. Morgan, and published in 1992 by Will Bagley, titled: “Frontiersman: Abner Blackburn's Narrative.”

Morgan notes: “A lanky, rawboned eighteen year old when he left home, five feet ten inches tall and dark complected . . ., depicting himself: “a good sort of clown, fond of excitement, adventure, a good time, and wishing to go west...” He experienced all the frontier offered: mob violence, conquests of the Mexican war, floodtide of overland emigration, madness of the gold rush, the glory days and the fall of the American Indian, dynamics of the western movement and the hard edges of religious and cultural conflict...”

The son of Anthony and Hester Rose Blackburn, Abner's ancestors were Irish Quakers who settled in America in 1736.

During his childhood, Abner's parents joined the Mormon Church, constantly moving the family more westerly to escape persecution. At age 18, Abner left

home to work on a Mississippi steamboat. In 1845, he cruised the headwaters of the Missouri River (in Montana) often in Indian territory – he was accidentally shot and went home to Illinois to heal before moving on. His opportunity to go west again occurred soon:

In July 1846, Abner voluntarily joined the Mormon Battalion in Iowa. It consisted of 500+ Mormon males, females and children. This regiment, two from Missouri, one from New York, an artillery, infantry battalion and 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Dragoons were mustered in to serve in the “Army of the West” under Gen. Steven Kearney – the U.S. had just declared war on Mexico. Trained two weeks in Ft. Leavenworth, the troops, except Missourians and New Yorkers, who travelled by sea, marched a grueling 1,900+ miles from Council Bluffs, Iowa to San Diego, arriving in today's California January 1847.

Abner ‘sort of’ settled in Deseret (Salt Lake City) where his family had immigrated but he was a restless and filled with wanderlust: He reminisced in a family letter about writing “his misdeeds . . . I was in the Mexican war and indian wars of which I have had a sad experience – with seven trips across the plains through hostile indian bands, and the mines of California in her palmist days... traveled the Pacific Ocean from the Bering Straits to Valporazo the South Sea islands and sowed my wild oats...”

With the 1848 discovery of gold in California, pioneer trails across the Great Basin and Sierra Nevada to the gold mines teemed with activity. Although Abner denounced Mormonism, an experienced mountain man, he was hired to guide a group of Mormons to the California goldfields in 1849 – the church desperately needed funds to continue building their Zion.

Writes Abner: “In the spring, I joined a pack train for the gold mines [California] and left my folks to come along after when the grass was good...”

Following the Overland Trail, Abner's party took the newer, shorter route along the Carson River:

“We took the new road and crost the Forty Mile Desert of sand. Went up the Carson River two days and stopt to recruit {refresh} our animals,” he noted, saying he asked the other packers who'd been to the goldfields why there was no gold on this side of the mountain. They said “no one” had looked for it.

“While they played cards the next day, I took a bread pan and a butcher knife and went out in the raveins to



prospect and found gold in small quantities in three places. Went to a larger ravine where the water runs down over bedrock a little on the side of the gulch. Dug down in the slate and found a fair prospect and kept panning for an hour or more. Went back to camp, and all hands grabbed up pans, knives and kettles and started out. We scratched, scraped and panned until nearly sundown. They found about \$10 worth of gold. "Being without tools and nearly out of provisions, we were compelled to abandon the place but planned to return... This place is Gold Canyon." (As in many pioneer journals, Abner's spelling wasn't up to par). The Blackburn party spread the word of his gold find upon reaching California's goldfields and the rush to Gold Canyon, Utah Territory, led the way to the discovery of the Comstock Lode.

Although other stories surfaced about Nevada's first gold find, one in 1848; the other in 1850, historians today agree that Blackburn's 1849 gold discovery pans out.

Abner married Lucinda in 1852 – had nine children, settled in San Bernardino, California to farm where Abner was involved in Native Sons of the Golden West, local politics, and organized an anti-Mormon campaign. Experiencing terrible health and in dire poverty, Abner passed in November 1924.



(Mary Ann & family on a visit to our museum 😊)

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Many, many thanks, Laura, and all who contributed to our newsletter, this month!