

Docents Newsletter

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

<http://daytonvhistory.org>

August 2014

Docent Doings

By Pat Neylan

LAUNCHED

We did not have a bottle of champagne, nor did we need it to launch the good ship "DVD Library" at the museum last Sunday!! Like after the years of planning by Henry Kaiser for the WWII Liberty ships, the years of planning by Ruby McFarland, Morgan Webber and Jack Folmar finally culminated in another historic event; the successful launch of the HSDV DVD lending library. Two brand new HSDV members, Alan and Julie (just 12 days ago) became the first to "officially" check out DVD's from the new library. They selected a walking tour by Stony, the Chinese by Ruby, one on early ranches (I think....senior moment), and after listening to me for over an hour in the museum (that's usually more than enough for most people) one on early gold discovery by me!

I was especially pleased with this initial check out. It was a small but significant beginning. The "concept" has been years in the making. It was conceived in the mind of Ruby McFarland before the "technology" was experienced by most of us. The practical "how to" was put in place by Donna and Gary McElroy utilizing the production skills of Morgan Webber several years ago when the "first" library was made available to our members. For reasons, simple and complex, the first launch of this vital resource did not quite come off. Building on the past, as historians do, and with the help of many, especially Jack Folmar and Jenny Dodds the new and improved HSDV DVD Historical Library has been launched!!

I would encourage all members of the HSDV, myself included, to take advantage of this amazing resource. There are now over 150 DVD's available to borrow. They cover years of our events, lectures,

school programs, ghost walks, society celebrations...in short our history!! All docents sitting the museum should be well versed in the contents and procedures involving this library. Anyone needing further explanations or updates should simply contact me and I will be delighted to explain the procedures and benefits.

I am very grateful for all of the work of our members, past and present that have made this special launch possible. I am very much aware that others helped over the years and am very sorry if I left out any names. There is now available in your museum a significant historical tool. Please come by and utilize it!!

August Meetings

August 5 –Railroad Working Group 6 pm at the Community Center

August 13 –Board of Directors 10:30 am at the Community Center

August 20 –General Meeting 12:30 pm at the Community Center

Docent Letters

By Ruby McFarland

A painting in a museum hears more ridiculous opinions than anything else in the world.

Edmond De Goncourt (1822-1896)

I'm enchanted with the ghost towns across the Nevada landscape. It amazes me that a town could rise up in nowhere Nevada one day and be gone the next. The swath of mining towns thru Lyon, Churchill, Landers, Eureka, and White Pine Counties were birthed because of the riches that might be found. Some lasted a few months, a couple of years, or as we know still hang on for dear life.

Austin and Eureka are good examples of those towns who still can tell us the history of the area because they are being preserved. All the other little towns are for the most part a pile of rocks where foundations once had a building hovering

over them. Timber was so precious and scarce that once a town died the buildings were cannibalized for the lumber to build a new town. Sometimes those new towns were only a few miles apart. Even the wooden lintels over the doors and windows were taken to new locations.

We have a few little towns around Dayton that have all but melted back into the sage brush and sand. Johntown would be a good example of not a trace remains. It remained just long enough to be mentioned in early stories of the area. It was somewhere between Dayton and Silver City. Sara Winnemucca was said to have attended a dance in Johntown

Then Como and Palmira were thriving little towns. Como had activity thru the 1930s. Chester Barton trucked mining supplies to Como for a long time. I've been to both places and little remains to let anyone know there were towns in both places—about a mile apart. In Palmira there is some wooden loading shoots and a couple of rock foundations. In Como there is a rock structure that once was a bar. There are just 3 walls and no roof. In another area there are many rock foundations where people with picks and shovels have looked for artifacts around the rocks.

Early writings about Como by Alf Doten tells of bars, hotel, and a lot of private homes. He was a big man about town until he moved on to that other big mining town, Virginia City. I suggest you read the Journals of Alf Doten if you have a month or two.

Then, one of the world famous tunnels and ghost towns, Sutro, is part of our backyards here in Dayton. There is very little left of the town that Adolf Sutro had big hopes for making his mark in Nevada. The tunnel entrance has been restored and there are a few wooden buildings used as private residences still intact. A good sized reservoir holds the water that still runs out of the

tunnel at 80 degrees. In the early days the water was used to raise early gardens as the water was always warm and helped germination.

And of course Dayton did survive and we have a lot of history that's relatable since the town never went away. We have to find ways to preserve what we have for future generations.

Some of the building materials used at Como and Palmira can be found in Dayton. Chester Barton was good at cannibalizing the old buildings for the lumber. The Ricci Ranch has some buildings that were part of Como, the square nails and all. Some materials he used in his home are still there.

It's a Small World

By Bob Wallace

(Bob and Lois have just recently returned from a trip to Scotland and have this tidbit to share with us.)

Imagine our surprise, while walking through Arbroath Abbey's old Abbey House to meet someone with a delightful Scottish accent that had visited Nevada. Typically, our first reaction to that statement being that they had been to Las Vegas, not to the northern part of the state. A bit more conversation with the woman whose name we did not learn told us that she had friends in the northern section of Nevada; we started thinking of the larger towns in the region, Carson City, Reno and Sparks, maybe Fernley. Imagine our surprise -- and hers -- when we mentioned that we had lived in Dayton for seven years, had only recently moved to Fort Worth, Texas. She immediately told us that it was Dayton where she had visited friends some years ago, was looking forward to another visit one day. There are days when the phrase "small world" truly means something.

Annual Picnic

Don't forget the picnic on **August 23** at Laura and Stoney's place. It's always a lot of fun and a chance to talk to other members that we may not have seen for a while.

Silver Ore Special

(from "The Train Whistle's Echo")

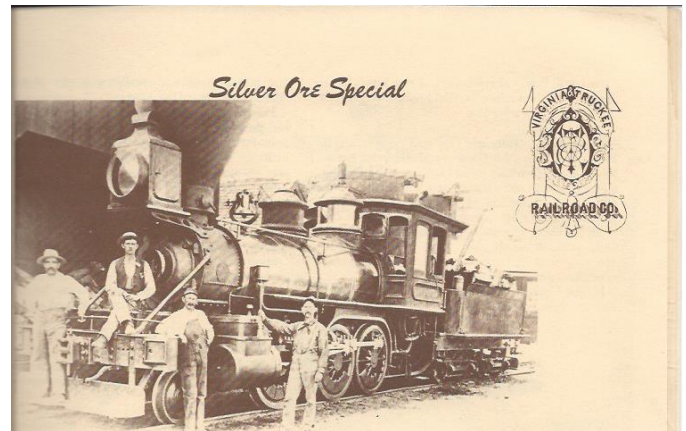
One of the most famous of all short lines, the Virginia & Truckee, was built to cut the high cost of wagon-freighting silver ore out of the mountains by linking Virginia City with mills at Carson City and with the Central Pacific at Reno. Its construction was a triumph of engineering skill. For although the actual distance to Carson City was only 21 miles, it encompassed a dizzying descent of 1600 feet in 13 miles. To accomplish this, the train had to make 20 complete circles and cross a trestle that in itself was an engineering wonder. To say the V & T was a busy little line is a gross understatement. Freight traffic to and from the mines set records. The waybills made at Reno totaled more than all the other offices on the Central Pacific line put together.

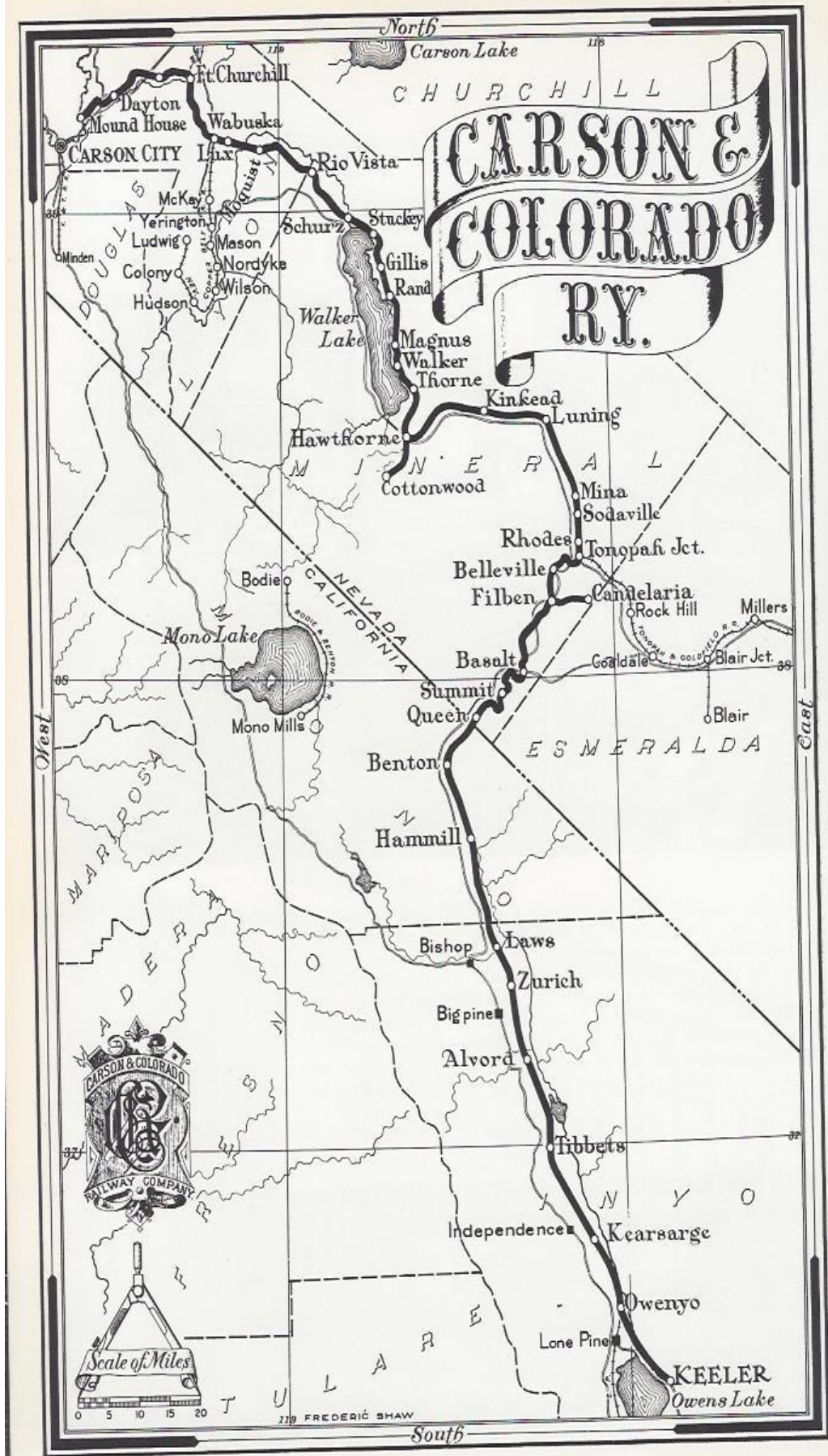
But beyond its practical value, the V & T was a railroad endowed with romance that made it a legend in its own time. It was the pet, the darling of the Comstock. Its canary colored coaches developed a charisma far beyond the wood and iron they were made of. Presidents and nabobs arrived at "the richest city on earth" in private cars hitched to the V & T. Some were uncommonly luxurious, even for the exaggerated elegance of the time, like the private car of Baron Rothschild.

William Sharon, whose dream the V & T was, was a man of grandiose schemes. Following his V & T success, he proposed to his partner D. O Mills, that they run a line to Colorado via Owen Valley. Mills,

who had other matters on his mind, absent-mindedly gave his blessing. The Carson & Colorado's right-of-way was through lovely lands where tall grass rippled to the passing cars. When construction had been completed as far as Owen Lake, Sharon brought Mills to see it. The old gentleman, who had spent a full day viewing vacant desert land without a bonanza in sight, was less than enthused. His comment was to become a classic of Old West railroad folklore: "Either we have built the railroad 300 miles too long, or 300 years too soon."

The C & C continued to operate just that far—a forlorn and wistful ugly duckling, the recipient of hand-me-down equipment—until 1900, when it was sold to Southern Pacific. Then, and only then did it make a profit for that was the year silver was located at Tonopah. And the C & C was the only means of transport for machinery whiskey, roulette wheels and other fixtures essential to the establishment of a progressive mining community.





CARSON & COLORADO RY.



FREDERIC SHAW