

# DOCENTS NEWSLETTER

**Historical Society of Dayton Valley**  
**<https://daytonnvhistory.org>**  
**January/February 2015**

DOCENT DOINGS JANUARY 2015 (by Pat Neylan)

TIME FLIES IS DEFINITELY A TRUISM!

It seems like I just finished a piece on our museum; its definite competitive position among small town Nevada museums and the sterling quality of our docent/tour guides; wished you all the best for the Christmas Season and put it all to bed for awhile. But, now it seems that the "season" will soon again be upon us and we will all soon be called back to do what each of you does so well: promote Dayton history. In fact, by the time you read this, we will already have held our first docent meeting of 2015, hopefully completed the museum schedule for the new season and laid out some new projects, especially in the realm of accessioning.

As you know there is a new board and some new ideas in the wings. Some I have heard of include the expansion of the school program to include Homeschoolers, hands on craft tutorials, just for starters. The Society's participation in the May celebration of "Nevada History Appreciation Month" is yet to be determined, but rest assured, whatever we as a Society in May or throughout the rest of 2015 decide to participate in, the museum, and you, will be in the center of it all. The museum is always the focal point of HSDV participation in the Dayton community and has been for well over 25 years!! Justifiably, feel proud of your service to the museum and encourage other members of the society to come join us. Being involved with the museum is the fastest, most sure way to increase your personal knowledge of Dayton history, meet fascinating people from all over the country, if not the world, and serve the HSDV!! Yea, Yea, I know..."preaching to the choir", but what a heavenly choir it is!!! Thanks for all you do!!

## **Winter in Dayton: January and February**

*By Linda Clements*

Winter, esp. January and February, is often very eventful in Dayton. While many things may happen, historically the likelihood of flooding appears to be much higher in these two months than any others, including December. Having examined these pages and drawing on my own experience I'd have to conclude that not enough really, really good things happen in January and February in Dayton. I think I'll go hide under the bed!

As always, I'm happy to provide references and more information on any of these events.

Jan. 2, 1862 DAYTON – A Series of Massive Floods Damages Mills, Washes Some Away

The worst flooding in over 100 years came in two main rushes, one in December and the largest in January, when the entire town and area around it were flooded. Several mills were washed away while others were significantly damaged, although most were rebuilt soon after. Water

flooded well into Old Town and the bridge across the river as washed away. This was later replaced by a toll bridge. The cause was a series of intense storms and freezes, followed by intense and long-lasting warm rains that moved from Northern California eastward. Dayton suffered drownings and the course of the Carson River was changed with a meander through Old Town (along today's River Street) cut off.

Jan. 15, 1862 DAYTON – Post Office Established in Dayton (in Nevada Territory)

Jan. 1863 DAYTON – First Legal Hanging in Dayton

Allen Millstead was hanged after he murdered T. Varney, Lyon County Commissioner, at Ragtown. Dayton Sheriff H. C. Lincoln, representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District, conducted the hanging in a canyon outside of Dayton. 2000 men and women attended.

Jan. 22, 1865 ISLETON, CA – “Captain” Herman Davis born

He later brought prosperity to Dayton when he owned the Nevada Reduction Works at Dayton.

Feb. 4, 1865 CARSON CITY – Nevada State Legislature grants Adolph Sutro exclusive franchise to build tunnel

Dec. 1867- CARSON RIVER – Flooding Takes Out All Bridges on Carson River

Jan. 1868 Two massive rainstorms—from December 20 to Christmas Day 1867 and from December 30 to January 2, 1868—left the Carson Valley a vast lake and swept away all bridges crossing the east, west, and main forks of the Carson River.

Jan. 28, 1870 VIRGINIA CITY – The first train of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad arrives in Virginia City

Jan. 2, 1871 CARSON CITY – Lewis R. Bradley begin his term as the second Nevada Governor

Feb. 1872 DAYTON and EMPIRE – Wood Drive Continues Strong

“The Carson *Register* says it is estimated by those familiar with the business, that the wood drive on the Carson river this year will be fully equal to that of last, which was an extraordinary large one—14,000 cords having been taken out at Empire and 11,000 cords at Dayton. It is estimated that not less than 22,000 cords will be driven and taken out at Empire during the present year.”

Feb. 1873 WASHINGTON, DC – Coinage Act Changes U.S. Gold and Silver Standard to Gold Only

The act resulted from silver moves by Germany and others. It demonetized silver coin for all debts exceeded \$5.

Jan. 1874 DAYTON – Flooding from Warm Rain on Snow Damages Settlements, Mills, and Ranches All Along the Carson River

The mills in the Carson River Canyon from Empire to Dayton were especially hard hit.

Jan. 8, 1881 MOUND HOUSE – First Train on the C&C

Free excursion train run from Mound House 29 miles to the end of the track in Churchill Canyon.

Jan. 8, 1881 COMO – Post Office Closed (reopened May 29, 1903)

Jan. 1881 DAYTON – All Stamps on Comstock Idle Except Those at Rock Point in Dayton

The only stamps running on the Comstock in January 1881 were ten at the Rock Point working ore taken out by C. C. Stevenson on a contract he had with the old Imperial.

Jan. 28, 1881 MOUND HOUSE – C&C RR Accepts First Public Freight

Jan. 29, 1881 DAYTON – Construction on Dayton’s C&C RR Depot to Begin Next Week

[according to the *Lyon County Times*]

Late Jan. 1881 DAYTON – Massive Rainstorms Bring Disaster: Old Town Flooded, C&C Roadbed Damaged, Toll Roads Washed Out

The C&C RR suffered numerous washouts from Daney Cañon through Churchill Cañon and service was disrupted for 12 days. The toll-road from lower Gold Hill was badly damaged and roads and bridges near Mound House were washed out. Old Town was flooded and flumes and tailings dams were wrecked. The Birdsall (Chinese) Ditch was damaged but quickly repaired. The massive rainstorms struck California first, leaving Sacramento in the middle of a large lake, and in Washoe Valley a dam burst, destroying the entire community of Franktown, whose residents barely escaping with their lives. The massive system went on to cause flooding in Utah.

Jan. 24, 1886 DAYTON – Winter Storm Turning to Rain and Melted Sierra Snowpack

Several roadbed washouts of the C&C Railroad in Dayton resulted.

Jan. 3, 1887 CARSON CITY – Charles C. Stevenson begins his term as Nevada Governor

Governor Stevenson was the owner of the mill at the Rock Point site in Dayton when elected governor. He died in office on September 21, 1890.

Feb. 21-24, 1904 DAYTON – Warm Storm Causes Flooding in Dayton Area

Some roads were damaged.

Jan. 1905 DAYTON – Rock Point is Only Mill Operating in Dayton

Though once a principal quartz milling towns of the state, Dayton in diminished to only about 500 residents. Only the Rock Point remains in operation, doing a decent business crushing low-grade ore for extraction using cyanide.

Feb. 1905 WABUSKA – Standard Gauging Completed to Wabuska

Feb. 28, 1905 COMO – Post Office Closed (for good)

Jan. 1906 DAYTON – Snow Followed by Warm Rain Causes Carson River Flooding

Flooding extended primarily from Carson City to Dayton. The Nevada Reduction Works mill at Rock Point was flooded, as was their cyanide plant.

Feb. 1908 DAYTON – Dayton Potatoes Considered Best in West

Feb. 10, 1911 Legislature Moves Lyon County Seat to Yerington

Jan. 21-26, 1914 DAYTON – Warm Rain Falling on Snowpack in Sierra Produced 10-Year Flood on Carson River

Flooding occurred primarily from Carson City downstream. Fortunately, plunging temperatures changed the rain to snow on January 25.

Feb. 21, 1921 RENO – “Captain” Herman Davis Dies of Pneumonia

Jan. 1941 DAYTON – Dayton Dredge is the Largest Dragline Dredge in the World

Feb. 27, 1943 GOLD HILL – Post Office Closes (Services transferred to Virginia City.)

Jan. 1, 1951 CARSON CITY – Charles H. Russell begins his term as Nevada Governor

Governor Russell served until January 5, 1959. Upon his death on September 13, 1989, he was buried in the Dayton Cemetery.

Feb. 1, 1963 DAYTON – Warm, Intense Storms Produce 50-Year Flood

After one of Nevada’s worst winter droughts up to that time heavy rain started in January and continued off and on throughout February. Flooding, including in Dayton, peaked February 1. The river cut new channels in Dayton and many ditches for irrigation were cut off. Significant repair and stabilization was needed.

Feb. 19, 1986 DAYTON – Deterioration of Eldorado Dam Following Heavy Rain Causes Evacuation of About 200 Residents

The Eldorado Dam was an earthen dam built by local ranchers and its reservoir was a popular swimming location. The heavy rain and resulting high water taxed this dam, with a flood threatening Old Town Dayton. Fortunately, the dam held and the evacuation was temporary but the dam was subsequently removed to avoid a repeat of the danger.

Jan. 2-3, 1997 DAYTON – 200-Year Flood on River Does Widespread Damage; Carson River Bridge Holds

Flooding occurs all over the region when a large snowfall just before Christmas was followed by a warm “atmospheric river” of rain flowing out of the area of Hawaii. Homes and ranches were flooded and the Carson River with its floodwaters spread one-half-mile wide through Dayton Valley. The gauging station in Dayton was destroyed. Large portions of two homes and many other structures, diversion dams, and ranch features and facilities were washed away. Altogether 23 homes were damaged in Dayton and Dayton Utilities suffered about \$120,000 damage. The river bridge was struck by debris at the height of the flood but held. Throughout

Lyon County there was damage totaling about \$49M, with the estimate for Northwestern Nevada coming to \$550M.

Jan. 1, 2006 DAYTON – Flooding in Dayton Valley Results from Heavy Rain

Rain started Dec. 30 and continued until mid-morning the next day.

Don't ever be "sure" that a river is not going to flood because it looks placid. I grew up in the southwest and knew about desert rivers but we thought we'd be out and in our new home before a flood got us. It was not to be, of course, and I feel like I even knew better. It was a 200-year flood that wiped us out, so there was not even any history that said it was coming. In 20-20 hindsight I'd recommend you live only above the 500-year floodplain! *Linda Clements*



House before the flood



**Docent Letters**  
**By Ruby McFarland**

*The old begin to complain of the conduct of the young when they themselves are no longer able to set a bad example.*  
*La Rochefaucauld (1613-1680)*

I can't emphasize enough how important Emma Loftus' diaries are to the history of Dayton. We have a record that covers some 40 plus years of what folks were doing during that time. A lot of things were happening during that time. Probably the 20<sup>th</sup> century had the most changes in our lives and lifestyle than any other time in history.

Before WWII Emma noted in her diary the concerns she and others had about the invasion of Poland by Hitler. It was clear that she and others in the U.S. didn't want to have anything to do with the war in Europe. However, that all came to a head when the U.S. was attacked at Pearl Harbor.

Soon after the attack there was a lot of activity with troop movement throughout the country. Fallon was at that time an army base and Silver Springs had an air strip used to train pilots.

The traffic thru Dayton had an effect on the people in town. Mind you, highway 50 went right down Pike Street, made the turn at the Union Hotel, and half a block later turned again at River Street. Emma wrote of the troop transports rumbling thru town along with a lot of heavy military equipment. She was concerned about the road bed being torn up by all the traffic.

During that time there were also a lot of young men hitch hiking thru town. She would talk to the young men and sometimes invite them in for a cup of coffee or a bite to eat. She made a lot of friends of the soldiers passing thru her life. She kept in touch with some of them when they went to other places.

During the WWII all gold mining operations were closed. The government stopped mining for gold. The dredge in the Dayton pit stopped and after the war only ran for a short time more.

Everyone was behind the war effort and did what they could in Dayton. It's so important now for all of us to keep our country safe from those who would harm us. Don't ignore anything that you don't understand that is happening. Ask questions and report all things that seem strange.

Emma was a great source of information about what was happening in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Can you imagine only having a radio for information? She had a close relationship with her radio, and was given the newest on the market as a gift from time to time. We have so many electronic devices now it's hard to keep up with the times.