

DOCENTS NEWSLETTER

Historical Society of Dayton Valley

<http://daytonvhistory.org>

May 2016

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!!

By Pat Neylan

Not sure whether you will get to read this before or after the Society has presented the 2016 version of the 4th Grade School Program, but rest assured it did, or will, go on as usual! 2016 presented a myriad of problems facing the program. The perennial driving force, the energizer bunny Barbara Peck would not be available to put it all together. Three of the original “characters”, Donna McElroy, Vivian Smith and Tom Parcels have passed away and Linda Adams, Bob Wallace and Margy Bethers have moved away necessitating a major overhaul of the cast. In addition to that, stalwart “technicians” like Ruby McFarland have had to take a lesser role in the production this year although still have left their mark.

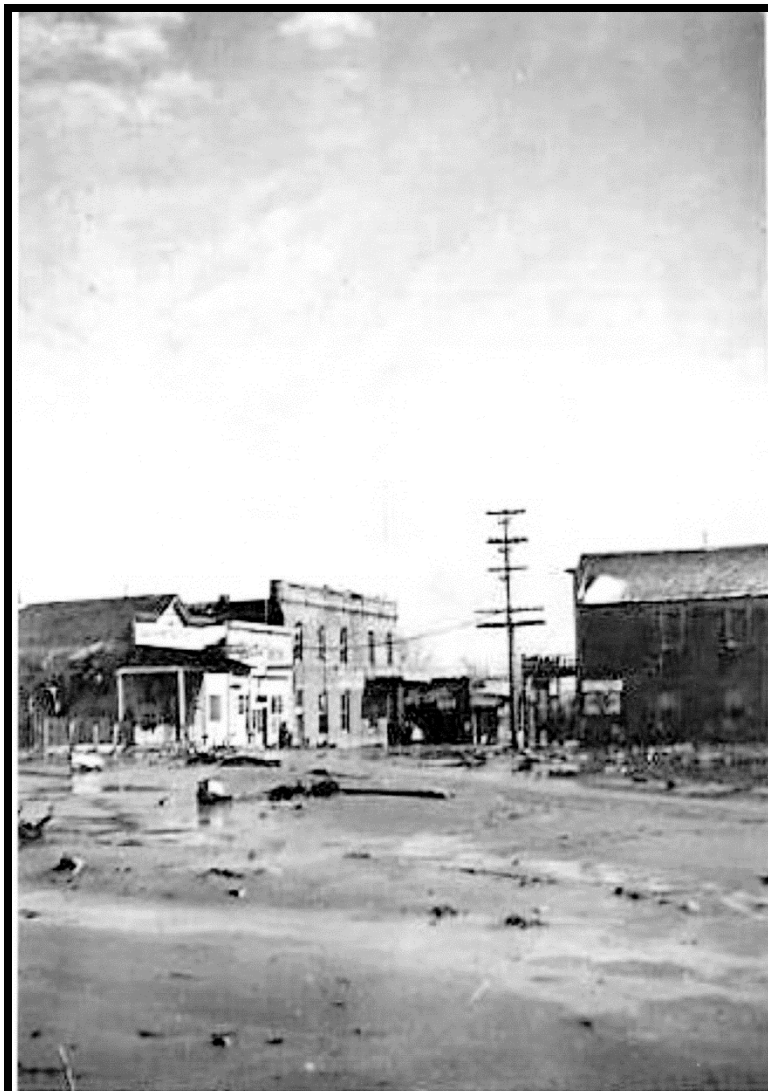
Stepping up and catching the falling knife was Fannie Hazlett aka Vicki Kinney, last of the original cast. Realizing the additional commitments of the Society and its members as well as the monumental extent of the original program and the time crunch partially created by the slower than normal response from the schools, Vicki restructured the program by combining some of the segments, increased the time line participation of different characters and streamlining the program into a fast moving fact filled adventurous romp through Dayton’s history. The traveling troupe will (or has) put on three presentations at three schools in two days. No longer will “ghosts” of Dayton’s past travel the school halls. Now there are HSDV Society members portraying early Dayton residents. The “ghost” issue, it has been determined, distracted the kids and diluted the impact of our history.

The new ensemble consists of Gloria Manning portraying Lucena Parsons, Vicki Kinney as Fannie Hazlett (talk about type casting), new members Al Lucero as R.S Raw (who knows who he was) and Julie Lucero as the venerable Bertha Scott. I will introduce my character Manly Johnson and act as narrator for the presentation. It is (or was) different than in the past but just as effective.

The school program is our most important contribution to education in Dayton throughout the year. Our kids are the future of Dayton and they cannot be that without knowing their own history. Many thanks to the dedicated and determined Society members who are making sure that the “Show must go on!!”



On the day the HSDV PastPerfect team were at the Nevada State Historical Society facility in Reno, Lee Baumgard, the photographer there, and a volunteer, Bob Horton, are sorting and labeling a collection of 5,000 slides that were donated to the Society. They have six paid employees and 82 volunteers who attempt to keep up with with the huge number of donations they constantly receive that pertain to Nevada history! (Laura Tennant.)



**Flood through Dayton after rainstorm
broke tailings dam, Late 1930's**

Gold Canyon Creek deluge of 1938 covered Dayton streets with muck

By Laura Tennant

Pineapple Express blows in

An old newspaper article I have tells a scary story about a big, wet storm that sent thousands of yards of muck, slime and rock down Gold Canyon Creek into Old Town Dayton on March 14, 1938.

Historical record indicates that local weather patterns have not changed much during the last 160 years, when random drought and overly wet weather adversely affected residents' lives.

When snow levels accumulate on the mountaintops, and a Pineapple Express blows in a rainstorm, and melts the snow, the dry desert easily floods.

In 1938, a warm wind blew in, and heavy rains melted the snow to create so much water that the mountain ranges could not absorb it quickly enough. Dry canyons or mountainsides soon became rushing rivers.

I have seen waterfalls flowing over the rocky mountainsides above the Rose Peak residential area. This phenomenon was created because the heavy, constant rain flowed freely over the mountains on its way to the Carson River.

These weather conditions had prevailed in March 1938, when, without warning, Gold Canyon Creek became a raging river due to

man-made reservoirs that were built in the 1920s in Gold Canyon.

Compared to other years, when similar weather conditions had prevailed, these 1938 floodwaters created more damage to the town than residents had seen since the historic, devastating flood of March 1907 that washed away mills and Dayton's railroad and vehicle bridges.

Donovan's Mill Dam broke

Residents who lived in Dayton then say the canyon flooding began in Silver City when the Donovan Mill's tailings pond broke and sent an enormous amount of water gushing down the canyon, which washed out a series of three smaller dams along the way to Dayton. These reservoirs were built as part of other milling and mining operations. Making matters worse, the waters' path did not break through all of the dams at once; they broke at different times, so the huge volume of water, which was mixed with mud and formed slime, sped down the canyon three different times and made locals' lives miserable.

When the last flash flood hit the town about 9:30 that night, residents already had their hands full. By daylight, some Silver Street homeowners found 18 to 20 feet of foul smelling muck inside their homes.

Can you imagine how difficult those homes were to clean with nothing but brooms, shovels and elbow grease?

The runny muck filled the yards, basements and outhouses of many homes on Main, Shady Lane and Silver Streets and the immediate estimated cost of the damage had totaled \$8,000.00 when the news story was written.

About the only way to clear the mess then was by hand with shovels. I have a photo of an old truck with a snowplow type of device attached to the front to help push debris out of residents' yards.

CCC, Nevada Highway workers

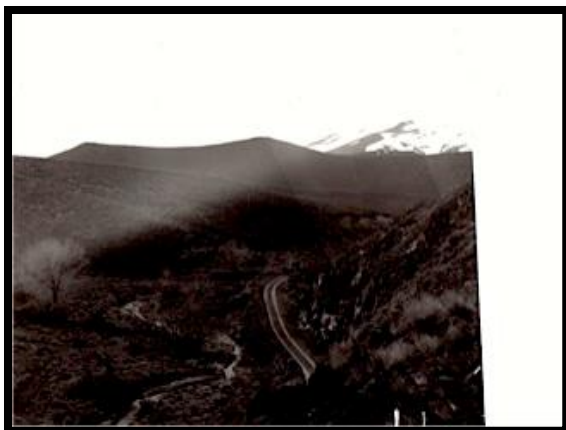
Residents received help from about 50 Civilian Conservation Corps workers that the government had hired to repair adobe bricks at Ft. Churchill, and assistance from the Nevada Highway Department crews assisted too. Main, Pike and River streets then were on the federal Lincoln Highway and were maintained by the state. When locals inspected the canyon when the storm subsided, they found the flood had cut a channel through the largest dam in the canyon to 75 feet deep to bedrock and that it measured more than 100 feet wide and 2,000 feet long.

Shery, at the Nevada State Historical Society in Reno, poses with some members of the HSDV PastPerfect team, Gloria Manning, Vicki Kinney and Mary Ann Sichak on April 19. Shery is helping the HSDV learn the tricks



of the trade on the new PP computer program that the Society bought to digitally archive all of the items donated to the Dayton Museum now and in the future and to coordinate the names of the settlers and other Dayton residents with the items their families' used here at one time. Shery gave us well over two hours of her time and was awesome and so informative and gave pointers on accessioning items as well. On the brief tour she gave us of the facility and the thousands of archived records, we realized how much the six employees there have to do. Shery is holding a copy of a scrap of paper with a handwritten note that is in the NHS manuscript collection. The note on the paper was written by Jennie Clemens, Mark Twain's niece.

Shery is also going to come to Dayton and give us more pointers. Soon, we will have one of the best genealogical research sites in Nevada. (Laura Tennant.)



The Gold Canyon Toll Road of 1863:

By 1862, there were 11 mills in Dayton that were processing gold and silver ore from the mines in Silver City, Gold Hill and Virginia City. The route the teamsters had taken then had followed the old Emigrant Trail that passed the cemetery and then turned off toward Silver City at the brow of the canyon. This roadway was too long and had washed out during the canyon flood of 1861, so, Daytonites were extremely pleased when F. Birdsall and B.F. Leete, surveyed and built the Gold Canyon Toll Road near the the mouth of Gold Canyon and established a toll house there too. The new roadway shortened

the distance and changed the percentage of the grade and therefore, expedited the milling process when teamsters hauling ore and wood back and forth from Dayton to the upper Comstock towns could make faster time and old-time settlers said it was less dusty in the hot, dry summer months. (Submitted by Laura Tennant from Fannie Hazlett's 1921-22 memoirs of Dayton. She arrived in Dayton in 1862 and kept a diary of the boomtown happenings until 1910.) Her book is on sale at the Dayton Museum for just \$10.00.)

Docent Letters
By Ruby McFarland

Never let the truth stand in the way of a good story
Mark Twain

Unfortunately, some of the written words we have to take with a grain of salt. But on the whole, the written accounts of the people traveling through and settling in the Dayton area are all we have to know about Dayton.

We do have accounts of the area as far back as 1849. Abner Blackburn did the first written account of the area. It also confirmed the presence of other people being here as a settlement. He was credited with having made the first gold discovery in Gold Canyon. He said he took a pan and butcher knife into the stream and panned out a few ounces of gold. His discovery led to other people looking for gold in the same area. If you choose to be a docent, there are a few basic facts you should become familiar with. Abner is the first one. He established the fact that there were other people here at that time.

Diaries were a way for us to know what was happening in the early days of the area. Lucena Parsons confirmed that Dayton was the first settlement. She arrived in the area on May 28, 1851. She noted that there were about 200 mines working along the Gold Creek area, and there were a lot of tents that housed the miners all along the stream.

Spafford Hall had a trading post where the main street now exists and served as a meeting place for all.

Mail was also an historic document. Letters found from the Grosh brothers, Laura Dettenrider, Spafford Hall, and others recorded the history of the day.

Alf Doten came to the area and noted in his journal that Dayton was a quaint little town. He didn't live here but went to Como where he became involved with people there. He was a true troubadour as he played a couple of instruments and drew a crowd. He also had a newspaper of sorts while living there. His journals recorded the history of Como, Virginia City, Gold Hill, Lake Tahoe and Austin. He worked for the Virginia City newspaper as a reporter.

Fannie Gore Hazlett came to the area in 1862. She recorded the history of the area. In papers of the Historical Society-Vol III, Fannie and her daughter Gertrude related history we now have in a book at the museum for sale called "History of Dayton."

Emma Loftus kept diaries that we now have in the museum and I'm hoping that someday they will be written into journals that the whole world can read. She wrote down all the names of the folks that lived in Dayton over a 50-year period. Those people are also a part of the history of Dayton. Her diaries represent the evolution of Dayton into modern day.

Laura Tennant set the history to pen writing in the "Reflection Magazine" of the Leader/Courier newspaper. Her accounts are just as important as those of Abner Blackburn.

You can spend a lifetime researching the history of this area. That's a whole bunch of great stories of people who shaped our country.