



Log deck at Spanish Ranch.

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SPANISH PEAK / MEADOW VALLEY LUMBER COMPANY SAWMILL

A BRIEF HISTORY & REMINISCENCES

Although immense portions of early Plumas County were covered by forests, and small logging and sawmill operations had sprung up in several communities as early as the 1850s, most of Plumas County's early timber industry was very localized - most sawmills were portable affairs, and production was often undertaken only when ordered by a consumer. However, with the completion of the Western Pacific Railroad through the Feather River Canyon in 1909, Plumas County's lumbering industry was changed forever. The railroad offered an easily accessible, fast, and reliable mode of transporting lumber (and other goods) to market - sparking a boom in the lumbering industry. Large industrial logging and sawmill operations were established throughout Plumas County to take advantage of the area's vast natural resources as well as the ever-widening markets served by the railroad.

In western Plumas County,

one such area was in the vicinity of Spanish Ranch. In mid-1915, the Spanish Peak Lumber Company began construction of an extensive lumber manufacturing plant at Spanish Ranch, some 7 miles west of Quincy in hopes of harvesting an estimated 150,000,000 feet of lumber from a local tract of 4,500 acres (with another 250,000,000 feet available from its own holdings).

The new sawmill, with equipment salvaged from the recently dismantled California White Pine Lumber Company in Loyaltan, began its sawing operations in 1916, with an expected output of 6 to 8 times any previous sawmills of the area. The most unique feature of this sprawling mill was the use of an aerial tramway to haul lumber cut in the Meadow Valley basin to Grays Flat, on the East Branch of the North Fork of the Feather River, where the rough-cut lumber was processed (the company had a planing mill,

dry kiln, and box factory at Grays Flat), loaded on Western Pacific railcars, and shipped to market.

This aerial tramway was a unique solution to the problem of getting lumber from Spanish Ranch to the railroad, for even though aerial tramways were common enough at that time in the mining industry for hauling iron ore, coal, limestone, and even salt, this was the first aerial tramway to be designed and built for the purpose of carrying sawed lumber for commercial purposes direct from the sawmill and yard, over a mountain range, and to a connecting railroad. At almost 5 ¼ miles, it was second only in length to one used by the Saline Valley Salt Company in Bishop, CA that ran nearly 13 ½ miles. (Today, the longest aerial tramway in the world runs a mere 3 ½ miles).

The tramway, built at an estimated cost of between 40 and 50 thousand dollars, was



Spanish Peak Lumber Company, August 1920.

an engineering marvel. Some 49 towers (plus 14 specialized structures) supported the operation, and it took several months to build. From a starting elevation of 3600 feet at Spanish Ranch, the tramway ran up and over the nearly 4800-foot mountain and back down to Grays Flat at 2700 feet in a nearly perfect straight line. Over its first fourteen years of operation, it hauled over 150 million board feet of lumber at a

cost for transportation and maintenance not exceeding 75 cents per thousand! Such was its success that engineers and builders from around the world came to inspect its workings.

Prior to the mid-1920s, logs were hauled out of the forest and to the sawmill by large, steam-powered, donkey engines along an 11,500-foot chute, by “high lead” logging, and by log trucks. In 1926, the trucks were replaced by a company owned, narrow-gauge

railroad. In 1933, the lumber company once again switched to hauling cut timber to the sawmill by trucks. Once at the sawmill, logs were kept in the sawmill’s log pond until ready to cut. When hauled out of the pond, they were sent through the mill and reduced to boards. From there, the boards were sent down an inclined ramp and either put in the drying yard or sent directly to Grays Flat via the aerial tramway. The Pelton wheel powered tramway provided an expeditious way to haul lumber over the 5 ½ mile distance - traveling from mill to shipping point in approximately 1 hour.

The Spanish Peak Lumber Company ceased operations toward the end of 1933, and in June 1935, the mill and tramway began operating once again under a new company, the Meadow Valley Lumber Company. This mill continued to use the aerial tramway until 1939, when (perhaps partly



Meadow Valley Lumber Company Sawmill, c. 1949.

because the company director also owned a trucking firm) it was deemed more economical to transport lumber to Grays Flat by truck via the Feather River Highway which had been completed in 1937.

In 1941, Meadow Valley Lumber Company bought a parcel of land in East Quincy and established a planing mill, box factory, dry kilns, and equipment sheds and shops there, effectively ending the need to transport lumber from the Spanish Ranch facility to Grays Flat by 1942. The company continued hauling its rough-cut lumber from Spanish Ranch to its East Quincy facility for processing until 1964.

On Tuesday, April 14, 1964 at 11:20 AM, the last log (an old water-soaked 35-inch cedar pond barrier boom) was run through the Spanish Ranch facility and five minutes later, the cut lumber cleared the green chain. With that action, the Meadow Valley Lumber Company ceased operations and closed its historic mill at Spanish Ranch. Dismantling of the mill began that afternoon, with most of the equipment being installed in the company's new sawmill built adjacent to its American Valley facilities in East Quincy.

On the night of June 25, 1965, the old abandoned sawmill was engulfed in flames (caused it was said, by a spark from a dismantler's torch), and completely razed, thus ending the 50 year history of the Spanish Peak / Meadow Valley Lumber Company Sawmill at Spanish Ranch.

Don Charles Johns transcribed the following reminiscences in 1976 after re-sorting his notes and reworking a version he had begun in 1941. His full-length article can be found in the Plumas County Historical Society's *Plumas Memories*, no. 43, June 1978, pp. 42-49, available at the Museum.

On March 1, 1936, I started work at the Meadow Valley Lumber Company. I was not alone, as my brother Waldo, Reuel Cameron, Nick Farnsworth, Wendell Bates, Lloyd Johnson, and Jim Tupin, all from my hometown of Gridley, also were there. In fact, there were so many of us, that we jokingly called it "Little Gridley." Some of us stayed for a while in the company bunkhouse – a bug-infested, two-story structure with ten rooms upstairs, five on each side of the hall, and eight rooms downstairs, four on each side of the downstairs hallway. Also, downstairs was one large room furnished with a couple of wooden tables and chairs used mostly for card playing. The place was heated only by a large cast iron wood heater in the main room. That old stove, which was lined with water pipes, would take four-foot chunks of wood, and it didn't take long to heat water for showers. Saturday night was almost a riot when each of those lumberjacks wanted the first shower!

Most of us ate at the company cookhouse. A Mrs. McFarlan had the cookhouse lease and charged \$1.00 a day for three meals. There were always two kinds of meat, vegetables, milk, coffee, cake, and pie. It wasn't unusual for me to finish off my meal with a whole peach pie. I could see that Mrs. McFarlan was not at all happy about the

amount of food I stowed away, and one evening she had Mr. Adams, one of the owners, sit next to me. I wasn't about to back down, so as usual, I finished off my dinner with a whole pie. Mrs. McFarlan expected Mr. Adams to criticize me for this, but instead, he just got up, patted me on the shoulder and said, "I don't believe it!" The next season, the board was raised to \$1.25 a day, and everyone said it was because of me. Something worth mentioning is that the milk and butter used at the cookhouse came from a small dairy herd also owned by Mr. Adams. A couple of brothers, also from Gridley, by the names of Glenn and Jay Moody, did the milking and took care of the barn and the feeding of the cows. Later, Jay and I became brothers-in-law.

The mill wasn't originally the Meadow Valley Lumber Company. Later, I found that this had been the Spanish Peak Sawmill, and that the Truckee Lumber Company, under the supervision of Duan L. Bliss and O. C. Haslett, had begun work on it on July 15, 1915. According to Jimmie Jenkins, whose parents were early-day settlers in Meadow Valley, this was the first bandsaw mill in the area, and many problems had to be overcome before everything worked as it should.

The permit for a fifty-foot wide right of way, for the tram line, between the mill and Grays Flat was issued August 24, 1915 by the United States Forest Service and was signed by Dave Rogers, Forest Supervisor. The tram itself started operating September 29, 1916. There were several advantages to shipping the lumber that was cut at the mill to Grays Flat. The elevation there was lower, so the snow

didn't stay as long. Summers arrived earlier, and it was hotter for drying the lumber. Also, the railroad was located there. The big advantage for using the tram line was that it was only 5 ¼ miles from the mill to Grays Flat, over Hambly Ravine, as compared to 25 miles to the Flat by a rough road via Quincy.

My first job that spring, which according to my original work sheet paid me \$20.40 for a 48-hour work week, was helping to repair the penstock from Silver Creek to the tram house. This was done under the direction of Ben Tilden who was maintenance foreman for the company. All leaks in the penstock had to be repaired as all available water pressure possible was needed to start the tram every spring. Art Swanson, who was boss on our end of the line, said that in earlier years of the tram, horses were used to help get the line moving every spring. However, the last few years the tram operated, which were the years I worked with the shipping crew, an old Dodge truck was used. One small "fringe benefit" was that any of us that worked for the company could use the truck any time it wasn't in use at the mill.

The tram line operated on gravity and waterpower. The loads going down the mountain on the other side of Hambly Ravine into Grays Flat would pull the loads up the mountain from the tram house at the mill. If all loads were of about equal weight, we didn't use any waterpower at all. But, if the loads going uphill were too heavy, we used waterpower and sometimes even manpower. When the heavy loads finally reached the top and started down, the line would pick up speed and

start to run away. Then we would turn off the waterpower and set the brake on the finger wheel. The finger wheel, as I remember it (there was one at either end of the line), was 8 feet thick and 8 feet across. It was anchored horizontally on a large axle and was completely surrounded with parts that we called, "fingers" because as the power cable came into it, they gripped the cable and released it as it went out the other end.

The green lumber which was cut at the mill came down a 1200-foot gravity rollway to the bottom of the green chain by the tram house. The dry kiln was there also, sort of a separate unit from the mill. When the lumber reached this point, it went onto a table where it was, in turn, picked up by a revolving chain and carried to the top of the grading table and then down to the loading table where it was loaded for its trip to Grays Flat. It took two men to make up the loads. One year, the company took a contract to cut ties for the Western Pacific Railroad. The ties had to be shipped at night after the regular working day was over. Some nights it would be as late as eleven o'clock before we finished. No overtime in those days, just the regular 42 ½ cents per hour.

When the tram started operating in the spring, the loads of lumber would consist of around 150 board feet. The loads gradually would be increased until they were approximately 400 board feet, some less, some more, depending on the weight of the lumber. The loads had to be fairly close in weight as the weight controlled the speed of the power cable. When lumber that was dried in the kiln was shipped, it was loaded as high as possible and still have the

chains of the hangers fit over the load. These loads were made up of a lot more lumber than the loads of wet lumber, which were, of course, much heavier, so as to keep up the balance of weight from one end of the line to the other.

The loads were spaced a little over 1200 feet apart, and the fourth tower from the tram house was our marker. Every time the last load out passed this tower, we pushed another load onto the line. This way, the loads were spaced about three minutes apart. If the line was operating at top efficiency, it moved 415 feet per minute. The platform the lumber was loaded on was 4 inches wide and 39 inches across, one at either end of the load. Each trolley had two ten-inch wheels that ran on the cable, and from the top of the wheels to the bottom of the lumber platform, it was six feet, nine inches and weighed 213 pounds. By comparison, the Walker Mine trolley and ore buckets weighed 403 pounds each.

The tram operated on three cables, two stationary and one revolving, as I guess all trams do. The large cable that supported the loads was 1 ¼ inch steel. The cable that the empty hangers returned on was 7/8-inch steel. The revolving cable, or power cable, was 5/8-inch steel. The cables were supported by 27 towers and seven exchange structures. The exchange structures were the ones where the hangers came in off the cable onto a track and out onto another long section of cable. Two of the structures were tension structures. They each had two large weight boxes filled with rocks and the ends of the cables were fastened to these boxes by anchors. This kept the cables always taut. The weight boxes worked up and



Shipping out lumber on the tramway at Spanish Ranch.

down in cement silos.

During this time, and until the tram line operation was discontinued, Reuel Cameron, who was head loader, Nick Farnsworth, Waldo Johns, and I made up the shipping crew. My brother Waldo was hanger tender. His job was to keep the lumber hangers greased and to have two hangers ready for every load. He also was a relief loader. The last line riders on the tram line were Bill Stover of Reno, Nevada, and Jim Tupin. Their jobs were to keep a lookout for broken strands in the cable, grease and oil the trolley wheel (or sheaves, as we called them), and to just keep an eye on things. There were three old crank-style telephones situated at different points between the tram house and Grays Flat so the riders could keep us informed of any problems that might arise.

Art Swanson was the hard-headed Swedish boss of the tram house. He also did all the cable splicing. The water pressure that we used at the tram house and the drinking water used at the company houses came from Silver Lake

– no swimming allowed there! Many times, Art Swanson and I cleaned the ditch (both summer and winter) between the lake and the dam where the water was diverted into a pipeline that carried it to camp.

Although the job was demanding, we always managed to mix some fun with our work. One day, Jim Tupin called the tram house and asked me to have Reuel Cameron make up a load of lumber with a board standing on edge in the center of the load and wide enough for him to hide behind. He also wanted his rifle put on the load and the load marked with a white cloth so there would be no chance that he'd miss it. When the load got to where Jim had called from, he got on and rode out to Camp Four where he'd seen a deer standing in some brush close to the tram line. I should mention that Camp Four was a camp that had been situated about half-way between the mill and Grays Flat. It had been used during the construction of the tram line and had its own cookhouse, cabins, grease and oil shed,

and outhouses. Anyway, the deer was still there, and Jim shot it from where he was riding on the load. A little while later he called and asked us to shut the line down for a few minutes so he could load the deer on a hanger. I doubt very much if any other crew used the line to transport a deer!

Lloyd Johnson and I used to ride the line a lot. We'd ride it just for fun, or as a means of transportation to get us out to where we wanted to start hunting. Of course, no one other than the line riders on duty were supposed to ride the line, so we'd walk out behind the mill and climb up on a tower. Lloyd would get on one load and I would catch the next one. The line at some places was so close to the ground that we could jump off it we wanted and catch another load going by. Sometimes, we would pick up some rocks and see which one of us could drop one into the stream in the bottom of Hambly Ravine. I would guess that it was close to a half mile across the ravine and eight or nine hundred feet deep. It was deeper than any ravine on the Walker Mine tramway. It was a beautiful ride across the ravine and a little frightening too, as there was always the chance of an unexpected shutdown, or of a hanger opening, as it did every once in a while. Even if a person had his eyes shut, he would have known when he started across, as the hanger wheels picked up a different sound, and the air felt different coming up out of the bottom of the ravine.

In 1939, the last year the tram operated, two new men, Amos Marble and Bob Reid from Arkansas were hired. They didn't have their families with them yet, so they pitched a

tent and set up housekeeping by a stream about a half-mile behind the mill. One night after dark, Lloyd and I were riding the hangers back to camp. We were about a hundred feet in the air above their camp when there was an explosion that almost blew me out of the hanger and almost rocked the hanger off the line. Lloyd, riding the hanger behind me, was pretty badly shaken too. We got off at the next tower and went back to see what happened. There were Bob and Amos looking at a dead bear that had been ransacking their camp. They had put a stick of dynamite in a bacon rind and connected it to a plunger. When I was straight overhead, the bear took the bacon, and Bob had pushed the plunger! We walked the rest of the way back to camp. We had had enough of the tram for one night.

During the first summer I worked for the Meadow Valley Lumber Company, Mr. Adams, who knew we were from Butte County, told Reuel and me that he was curious to see if bullfrogs could survive the mountain climate. We were



A load begins its journey.

friends with a Mr. Claude Moore who was manager of the Tule Goose Gun Club on Butte Creek, just west of Gridley. Claude arranged to take us out frogging one night along Butte Creek. He furnished the boat, the lights that we wore on our heads, and the clamp poles for catching the frogs without hurting them. We caught 82 frogs that night, and some of them were huge. In the meantime, Mr. Adams had placed two large wire chicken crates behind the house where he and the other owners of the company stayed when they were in Meadow Valley. The crates were on a slope so that the bottoms were in water and the top parts were on dry ground. In six to eight months, the wire that was in the water rusted, and the frogs ended up in Spanish Creek. For years, we could hear those big frogs at night with their big bass voices, but no more. There are still frogs around, but they don't grow as large, possibly because they don't live as long because of the cold winters.

A tragedy that occurred about this time left a lasting impression on us all. One night, while we were eating dinner at the cookhouse, we heard a loud moaning and then stumbling steps coming along the wooden porch toward the door. It was such an eerie sound that all the men had stopped eating and were watching the door. Suddenly, a man stumbled inside and stood with his legs spread apart to keep from falling. His shirt was burned almost off, as was his hair. Ribbons of skin were hanging down on his arms where he had broken blisters on the brush. He was a miner that lived in a small cabin on Wapaunsie Creek up toward Snake Lake. His gasoline lantern had blown up while he was lighting it, and

he had walked over two miles for help. He died that night in the old Plumas Industrial Hospital.

After the tram line and dry kiln were shut down in 1939, I went to work in the mill where Jimmie Jenkins, who was going to take over the night oiler's job, taught me to operate the resaw. I ran the resaw for one year, and then Buster Christy asked me to take charge of the green chain (sorting finished lumber). The chain crew was Lloyd Johnson, Bob McCullough, Lester Dodson, Jack Johnson, and of course, me.

Orval Myers was timekeeper and bookkeeper at the mill. His office was in the Wells Fargo building which had been built in 1866 and 1867 because of the mining and for use as a stage stop. Their gold scales were still there in 1942 and were so accurate that they would become over-balanced with a cigarette paper with only a name written on it. I understand that now they are in a museum in San Francisco.

A man by the name of Bloom and his son, Forest, were saw filers. One day, during deer season, the mill had shut down early, so a bunch of us, including the Blooms, went hunting around Camp Four. That evening, well after the time agreed upon to meet back at the car, the elderly Mr. Bloom hadn't shown up yet, so we all went looking for him. The next morning, we found him less than a quarter mile from the car sitting in a tree. He had died of a heart attack.

It was a well-known fact that our timber cruiser, Herman Gootch liked venison the year round. One winter, I was snowshoeing back in

Deans Valley when I heard a couple of shots, and a deer ran around a turn in the road and died right in front of me. I stepped behind a tree and waited to see who would show up. Sure enough, it was Herm. He was a little startled when he first saw me, but recovered his composure immediately and said, "Don't just stand there, help me with this thing and I'll give you some."

In those days, when there was a forest fire, the mill would be closed, and the men were transported to the site of the fire and issued a shovel or an axe. We fought the fire by hand mostly, and as a rule, by not many men either. Most of us worked like hell and not much money. There wasn't enough heavy equipment, and they were slow getting it on the fire line. The sack lunches furnished by the Forest Service didn't amount to much. Many of us worked as much as 12 to 14 hours with only a cheese or bologna sandwich, a couple of cookies, and an apple or orange – no steaks or coffee like today.

After the tram line shut down, the lumber was hauled from the mill to the company yard in Quincy by new bob-tail semis. These trucks were leased in 1940 from a Truck Sales Agency in Berkeley. Don Pauly, George Bell, Bob Cotter, Ed Thompson, Barney Darr, and a young fellow we knew only as "Whitie," were the truck drivers. There were others, but these are the ones that worked mostly on the day shift.

Occasionally, Johnnie Kennedy and I worked night shifts pulling chain to make a little extra money. One night, the mill was cutting an unusual amount of the same grade lumber, and we didn't have any more empty bunks to

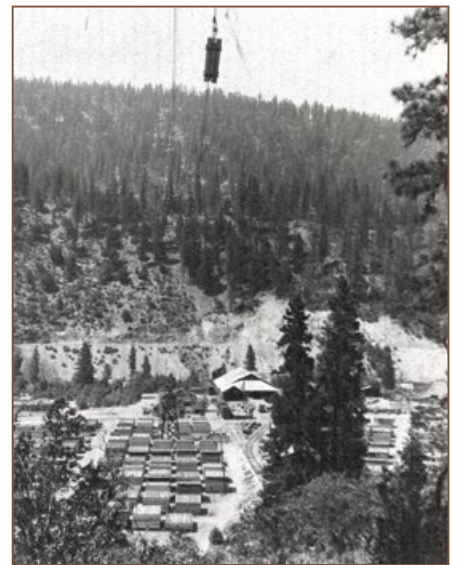
start another load, so Johnnie and I just kept building on the same load until the truck arrived to haul it away. That load was so high that when driver Ed Thompson was passing the old Hotel Quincy, the telephone line caught under the top boards, and Eddie, without knowing it, had cut off about 25 percent of Quincy's telephones! We would have been in a lot of trouble over that episode except that when the load's height was measured, we were in the clear by about four inches. The telephone lines had sagged. No more high loads after that!

We did have a lot of fun in those days. During the summer, the families of the men who worked for the company would go to Deans Valley on picnics. The men would play horseshoes and baseball. The women would have a good time just visiting, while the children played in the creek. In the winter, we would have dinners and dances in the old Philomathean Hall (in Meadow Valley) that was built in 1892. Some of the timbers used in the construction of this hall were brought down from the Monte Cristo mine on Spanish Peak.

We also held parties at the cookhouse. Mrs. McFarlan was no longer in charge of the cookhouse, and a young woman by the name of Dorothy had taken over. Dorothy was well liked by everyone. She would let us push the tables and benches down to one end of the room for the party or dance, and after the fun was over and everything had been put back in place, Dorothy would bring out all the food that was left over from the day's meals for everyone to snack on. She was the last cook at the cookhouse.

I believe it was closed in 1940, as by that time, most of the employees were married men. When I started there in 1936, most of the men were single. The company was glad to hire married men. As a rule, they were more dependable.

I have been asked several times what happened if a load of lumber hit a tower or an obstruction of some kind. This didn't happen very often, but when it did, one of three things would happen: the friction grip on the hanger would release; the unloading trip on the hanger would release; or if it was a hard enough jolt, the hangers would be thrown from the line. The only time the line came to a complete stop was when a load would hang up in a structure, and that was very seldom. In the fall, we would repair all damage to the line and towers and pick up all the hangers. The lumber was left, as it warped and twisted in no time at all. I have the only two hangers left from this line. They are set up in my back yard with lumber in them so that anyone looking at them can see how they worked in the early days of the Spanish Peak Lumber Company and the line's final days on the Meadow Valley Lumber Company.



End of the line, Grays Flat terminal.

News Around The Museum

After being closed to the public for most of July and all of August (typically a couple of our busiest months), the Museum once again reopened to both inside and outside visitors on Tuesday, September 1st. Although visitation has been somewhat slower than normal, there are visitors, and we are taking every precaution to ensure that the Museum is a safe place to visit during this time.

At the end of September, we had our first “in-person” researcher on site since the pandemic. Scott Prior of the Western Cover Society, where he serves as secretary and contributing editor of the Western Express section of the Society’s journal, was here looking through the Museum’s collection of western express covers and scanning them for the Museum’s records and archives. Interestingly, Mr. Prior was able to provide us information on the possible source of our covers and found several which showed early express company imprints that



Western Express Covers.

were only the second or third examples known to exist!

Members of the Western Cover Society collect and study early western (United States) postal history including covers (simply put, envelopes), expresses such as Wells Fargo, territorials, town cancellations, postmarks, and stamps, and most anything pertaining to the early mails west of the Mississippi River. As a member of this worldwide group of well-informed experts and enthusiasts, Mr. Prior is always ready to share information, always adds to our knowledge of the items in our collection, and always leaves us with a better understanding of their role in the history of Plumas County. Thank you, Scott.

Other requests and questions this season have had us hunting down Indian enrollment and allotment records, naturalization papers, and cemetery and death records, as well as providing information and photos of our exhibits to a Colorado actor/producer who portrays Jim Beckwourth, Bass Reeves, and other historical black characters of the west, sharing information about several old houses in Quincy, clarifying the details of a marriage, and even discovering a town that wasn’t!

In May, the Goodwin Law Office served as a quiet place for Ham radio operators taking their qualifying tests, and in

July, a portion of our carriage house storage annex siding was replaced by a county work crew. New concrete siding was installed to replace a few of the wooden boards that had sustained termite and water damage over the years. The concrete boards were cut, placed, and painted to match the existing siding and the job not only looks great but should last the building for many years to come.

More recently, the Museum received a much-needed computer hardware and software update with the addition of a new server and system upgrades to Windows 10. We’re still working out a few kinks in the system due to this upgrade, but the Museum is happy to move into the future.



Scott Lawson, 2017.

And, finally, if you haven’t already heard, Museum Director Scott Lawson has decided to retire. Scott has served as Museum Director for 25 years and first started

working at the Museum in 1970 while still in high school. Under the watchful eye of the Museum's first Curator Robert Moon (who also served as the Manager of the Plumas County Chamber of Commerce), Scott became a part-time Museum Assistant, helping organize and catalog the Museum's photograph and negative collection and helping put together exhibits with then Assistant Curator, Linda Brennan.

In 1985, upon the retirement of Bob Moon

and the promotion of Linda Brennan to Museum Curator, Scott served as Assistant Curator during the '80s and '90s. With Linda's retirement in 1995, Scott assumed the role of Director/Curator and has served in that capacity ever since.

Over the last 25 years, Scott has guided the Museum through a period of rebuilding, growth, and development, steered the Museum through the ups and downs of county politics, and set a standard for historical excellence that

permeates the Museum, its employees, and volunteers. With his focus and dedication always clearly on the importance, and preservation, of Plumas County history, Scott leaves behind a Museum whose reputation for historical honesty and integrity is second to none.

We thank Scott for his years of service to the Museum and to the history of Plumas County and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Monetary Donations

Your generous monetary contributions and continued support help us continue to operate at the high level our residents and visitors have come to expect.

Thank you.

Up to \$99: Dorris Beck; Robert & Janet Cameron; Myron & Ruth Cataldo; Richard Clemons; Eldora Duniphin; Mel & Donell Duvall; Les & Coleen Ede; Paula Foster; Bryan Hansen; Reed Hilliard; Michael & Sue McCourt; Wayne Monger; Marge Murray; Britt Peter; Kathy Peters; Helen Roberti; Jane Roix; Rob Russell & Deborah Whittaker; Thyra Russell; John & Margaret Schmidt; Terry & Sherilyn Schwartz; Roger Settlemire; Kent & Lena Stokes; Tom & Diane Uchtyl; Walley & Dee Walker; Chuck Weidner; Richard Williams.

\$100 - \$199: Leslie Arlett; Hal & Cheryl Babb; Carol Bordeaux; Jack & Bernadette Brumit; Susan Christensen; Kathy & Leland Cotter; Marilyn Cotter DeMain; Jim & Lynn Dow; John Farris; Barbara Ferrerra; Jann Garvis; Graeagle Store; Fred & Susan Howe; Wendy & Lois Jones; Syd & Judy Kahre; Diane McCombs; Thelma Olson; Anthony O'Rourke; Sarah Pahlow; Patricia Paule; Gerald Pauly; Michael Rodriguez; Elizabeth Schramel; Allan Shields; Altalee Stout; Valerie Vann.

\$200 - \$499: Jim & Billie Bequette; Grant and Cynthia Edwards; Tati Erickson; Norm & Diana Jacobsen; Elise Kroeber; Ruth Reid; Ted & Mary Trafton; Ray & Nancy Wise.

\$500-\$999: Janna Cook; Marc & Diane Coventry; Lawrence Ferderber; Michael Hardin & Eileen Kortas; Rebecca Herrin; Guy McNett & Linda Batson.

\$5000: Arizona Community Foundation; Harrison Family Fund.

MEMORIALS

Since our last newsletter, Memorial Donations have been received in memory of the following:

Barry Bailey, Quincy, Concord; **Roger Borrell**, Yuba City; **Patrick Cook**, Graeagle; **Bonnie Cotter**, LaPorte; **Janet Kane**, Meadow Valley; **Edith Kingdon**, LaPorte; **Betty McCombs**, Martinez; **The Porter Family**, Twain.

Volunteer Activities



Rich checks his work.

Although our volunteer activities have been somewhat limited due to the restrictions on the sharing of office spaces and the requirement to personally distance, our volunteers have managed to invest their time wisely here at the Museum.

Volunteers Sally Nichol (and friend), Rich Knoettgen, Faith and Piers Strahley, and Bill Shelton all have contributed to cleaning up our Museum grounds, including



the Variel gardens, the Museum's exhibit yard, and our front entrance landscaping, while John Walker continues to oversee our Variel Home rose bushes and keep a fine eye on our watering systems. As the pin oaks daily drop hundreds of tiny acorns, trees are now shedding their fall leaves, and the sequoia tree sheds its spikey, scale-like needles, there is much work to be done cleaning up our outside exhibit areas before winter comes, and we can always use a helping hand.

Rich Knoettgen also finished his latest project, that of constructing two brick pads so that our outdoor equipment can be properly displayed without sitting directly in the dirt, mud, or grass. The pads are wonderful additions to our exhibit yard. Thank you, Rich!

While there were no tours of the Variel Home this year due to COVID restrictions, Denise Russell gave a helping hand in sprucing up the inside of the Museum and doing some fine-tune dusting so we were ready to open to the public.

Lisa Hopman is still hard at work inventorying and

cataloging our Coroner's Reports and Inquests. The Museum's records go up to March 1980, and since Lisa's now at work on the reports from the mid-1940s, she only has roughly 40 more years to go (and with all the interesting details to read about, it may take her that long to get



through them)!

New member Jeff Wallace volunteered some of his work on our new computer upgrades and will continue to volunteer any needed refinements, while Trustee Linda Wallace continues to keep track of all our memberships and monetary and memorial donations and send out thank you letters.

A huge THANK YOU to all our dedicated volunteers – we couldn't do it without you!

Artifact Donations Since April 2020

Robert Bailey: Two square nail spikes, one war ration book, 1943 belonging to Hazel Lively; **Ron Barker:** One photograph of the last Western Pacific train w/ crew out of Keddie, 1966; **Rebecca Beavers:** One ladies walking stick, one “Studebecker’s Tailors’ Square” c. 1885; **Don Clark:** Five framed b&w photographs of Plumas County snow scenes; **Bob & Mary Edwards:** Two pairs of longboard skis originally owned by Sam & Annie White and family of Johnsville; **Jack Greenspan:** Collection of Feather River Inn items, including bingo cards, luggage tags, welcome brochures, and a shipping label, c. 1950, two Portola Railroad Days pins; **John Heavin:** One “Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce” bottle, c. 1935, one “Sanford’s Solvener Type Cleaner” bottle, c. 1935; **Kathryn Kasch:** One b&w real photo postcard of Quincy from Hospital Hill, c. 1914; **Kathleen O’Byrant:** Five photographic enlargements of Eastman postcards of various logging and railroad scenes; **Edie O’Connor:** Collection of color photographs of Clover Valley, Onion Valley, and Port Wine by donor and Marilyn Bergum; **Margie Oropin:** One amber crown-cap beer bottle, c. 1900; **Connie Penland:** One candidate card “Alice Rees for Coroner and Public Administrator of Plumas County” 1938; **Diane Lawson:** One hand

operated embossing machine for embossing official seals, ownership attributed to Louis Peters, c. 1913, one rock with naturally formed “footprint”



Footprint Rock.

in it, one copper frying pan souvenir from the Panama Pacific Exposition, 1915, one copper bookmark from Golden Gate International Exposition, 1939, one framed Pat Kurtz watercolor painting depicting a tree with Taylorsville Methodist Church in background, c. 1974, one Pat Kurz watercolor painting of a field scene, one collection of items from the Fisher and Stampfli families of Indian Valley including one watercolor painting, five fraternal and sororal medals and pins, three



Fraternal and Sororal Medals.

Bibles, two watches, two pocket flasks, one stereoptic viewer and cards, one crock, one whittled chain, one baby book, one shaving mug, and other personal items and photos; **Scott Lawson:** One collection of books by Plumas County authors, one collection of books owned by Plumas County historic figures, one curry comb, four blasting cap tins, 1880 -1900, one sample of rock with fossilized leaves, one hand-forged meat hook; **Kay**



Altimeter and Debris.

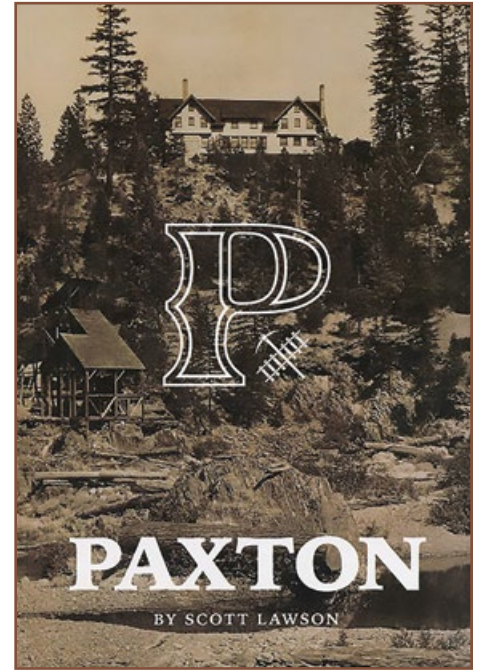
Pierson: One book, *Poems of the Feather*, 1932 by Elsie Evans; **Lee Riffel:** Six xerox copies of Abstracts of Title for J.B. Jones and O’Rourke lots in Blairsden; **Scott Russell:** Small collection of items from an airplane crash in the Four Hills Mine area, including fuel petcock, piece of fabric skin, piece of aluminum controller, 1932-1946; one US Army Air Service altimeter, 1918-1926; **Bill Shelton:** Three copies of photos showing survey crews for original highway 70 construction, c. 1930; **Jeffrey Soucek:** Four framed photos of QHS football teams, 1987-1993; one framed photo of Pop

Museum Store

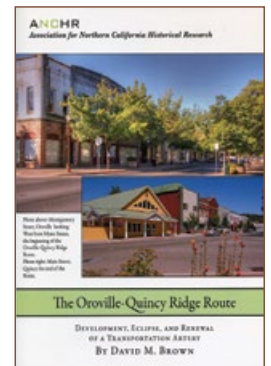
Warner football team, 1998; one framed photo/trophy combo of QHS football team, 1983 from the collection of Paul Whiting, one 16mm film, *The Village Blacksmith*, 1962 from the collection of Bill Henwood; **Paul Violet:** One “Billings, Clapp & Co. Chemists” medicine bottle, c. 1870; **Vernon Wisdom:** Three pieces of local petrified wood; **Nancy Yeager:** Two children’s rocking chairs with cane seats, two Chico high school *Caduceus* yearbooks, 1919, 1920, one *Webster’s International Dictionary of the English Language*, 1891, one antique salt, pepper, oil, and vinegar castor set with four glass cruets, one collection of family genealogy records, newspaper clippings, letters, cards, and photographs covering the Pulley and Yeager families of Chico and Quincy; **Louise Young:** One oak coat rack and Superior Court Justice robe of Stanley C. Young; **Vesper Bailey Zelei:** One school bell from the old Quincy Grammar School.

As the holidays approach once again, please remember that the Museum Store carries a vast array of local history books and items to either while away the long winter evenings, or to gift to those history lovers on your list.

If you’re needing to catch up on the history of the communities in Plumas County, we have several titles that will help you do just that. Our latest is the recently published *Paxton*, in which author Scott Lawson recounts the story of that area from its beginnings in 1856 (as Iron Bar) to the building of the majestic lodge in 1918, through its heyday in the 1930s and ‘40s, to its later decline and ultimate rebirth and renovation in the modern era. *Paxton* joins other titles such as *History of Rich Bar, Sloat and Cromberg, Nelson Point, Quincy*, and *Back to Greenville*, which recount histories and stories of their namesake communities, and titles that cover larger areas and the towns in them, such as

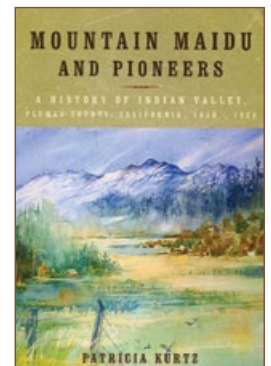


California’s Beautiful Mohawk Valley, Indian Valley, Big Meadows and Lake Almanor, Saga of a Mountain Meadow (covering Bucks Ranch & Bucks Lake) and *The Oroville-Ridge Route* (which covers many



lost and forgotten towns such as Spanish Ranch, Tollgate, Letter Box, Buckeye, Merrimac and others).

If you’re fascinated by history-making people, we have that covered as well. Several titles, including *Mountain Maidu*



Museum Guests

USA: Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Washington.

INTERNATIONAL: Guatemala.

Some comments from our guestbook include, “Great outdoor exhibits,” “We love it here!” “Divine,” “Great,” “Very Impressive,” “***** 5 Star,” “Awesome as Always!” and

“What a Find!” And, proving that people go great lengths to visit our Museum, one guest from Rocklin, wrote, “I hiked here!”

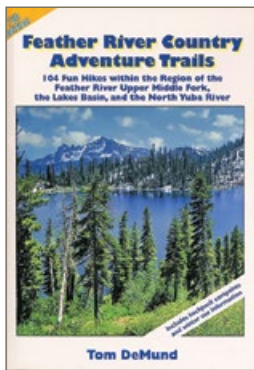
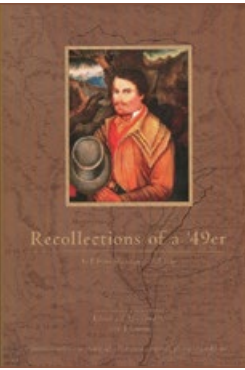


and *Pioneers and The Northern Maidu* recount local Native American history and stories, and titles such as *Jim Beckwourth, Recollections of a '49er* (Edward Washington McIlhany), and *Black Bart: Boulevardier Bandit* highlight the

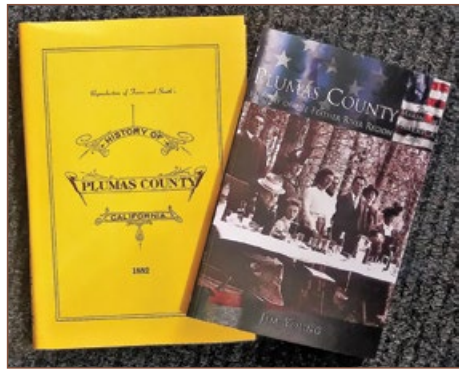
adventurous men who once plied their trade in Plumas County, while *Picking Willows* (featuring Daisy and Lilly Baker), *Diary of Sarah Dean*, *The Shirley Letters*, and *Crossing the Plains: The Diary of Mary Alexander Variel* feature the lives of those women of indomitable spirit who once called Plumas County home.

While titles such as *Lost Sierra: Gold, Ghosts & Skis*, *Canoeing the California Highlands*, *Plumas National Forest Trout Fishing Guide*, *Trails of the Feather River & Yuba River Region*, and

Feather River Country Adventure Trails feature classic Plumas County



outdoor recreation adventures to get your mind off the winter doldrums, our shelves are also stocked with many other local history titles featuring railroading, mining, logging,



aviation, and other history-making ventures, while for an overall history of the area, the *History of Plumas County* (1882) and *Plumas County: History of the Feather River Region* (2003) make a great pairing.



The Museum Store also carries a selection of Plumas County Museum logo hats, shirts, and mugs as well as fine gold jewelry featuring real nuggets pulled from the frigid waters of Nelson Creek.

Shop today for the best selection on these and other one-of-a-kind items found only at the Plumas County Museum. Many of our titles and other items are also available through our online store at www.plumasmuseum.org.

Director's Message

Scott Lawson, Museum Director

It is with mixed emotions that I pen this letter to you, the Museum's membership. After 32 years full time with the Plumas County Museum, I am retiring on December 30 of this year.

I first cut my teeth here in late 1970 as a high school miscreant that then-Museum Director Robert Moon took a shine to. Somewhere deep inside me he recognized a glimmer of worth I guess, and took a chance on me, hiring me to work part time during holidays and vacations. The following spring, along with good friends Michael Ellwood and David Mitchell and a group of some 20 or so other interested folks, we became the first Plumas County Museum Docent graduates, the diploma of which still hangs proudly on my bragging wall.

Bob Moon provided me the ability to look to the long term view of the museum, the symbiotic relationship of the County Museum with the Museum Association, and most importantly, the need to show each and every visitor and donor to the museum that they are the most important part of the museum.

Although I enjoyed working at the museum, in the late 1970s I took another path for about ten years, going to work in the woods as a logger. During the winter season, while laid off from logging, I would continue to help at the

museum.

During this time, Linda Brennan worked for the museum and followed Bob as director in 1985 upon Bob's retirement. Linda did a wonderful job of developing a donor base and building up the assets of the Museum Association. She gave a warm, personal touch to the museum that it had not had and brought in many new faces.

At the end of 1988, I left logging and was fortunate to be hired as her assistant in January of 1989. Working under Linda for the next five years, I learned a great deal about the facility management functions as well as the political side of it, although there are at least a couple of county supervisors, past and present, who probably think I don't get the politics....

In 1995, with the retirement of Linda Brennan, I was appointed Museum Director. The following year I was very fortunate to hire Evelyn Whisman as my assistant. Evelyn provided wise counsel and was wonderful working with our volunteers. Along with her, and JoAnn Filippi, who came over from the courthouse, we were able to develop a number of community outreach programs, give docent trainings, and provide many public programs. Evelyn and JoAnn both retired in the early 2000s and after that we had several assistants

until the county unfunded the position due to budget cuts around 2010.

Paul Russell was hired as Assistant Director in 2009 and then cut in 2011. Since then he has continued to work part time when funds were available and also for the Museum Association when needed. He has stuck with the museum and is now going to be in charge when I leave. I wish him the best and hope he finds the job as rewarding as I have.

Over the years we have refined the museum's collections and developed and increased its photograph and archival holdings to a point where they are considered one of the finest in the state. None of this could have happened without the generous support of you, the museum's members and the outstanding support from both the Museum Board of Directors and the Museum Association Board of Trustees, particularly the latter under the stewardship of its perennial president, Don Clark. I sincerely hope you will continue to support the museum, particularly in these turbulent times we are now experiencing.

I hope to continue my historical research, and perhaps finally finish a few of the numbers of books I have been trying to write. In closing, be sure to come in and see YOUR Plumas County Museum soon!

President's Message

Don Clark, President PCMA

The Plumas County Museum will never be the same without Scott Lawson. Scott has made the decision to retire and will be missed by all of us.

Scott has served Plumas County and the Museum as a full-time employee for 32 years, 25 years as the Museum Director. There is no greater authority on the history of Plumas County than Scott, and over the years he has shared his expertise with many people, both visitors and locals alike.

Speaking for everyone associated with the Museum, we wish Scott the very best of everything in his retirement.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers, docents, trustees, and directors for their support and assistance, and thank you, our Museum

members, for your outstanding support this past year.

In this time of ever-changing norms due to COVID restrictions and intermittent closures, your continued financial support and assistance is now more important than ever. You can rest assured that along with your help, the Plumas County Museum Association Board of Trustees is dedicated to preserving the integrity and viability of the Plumas County Museum and its programs and collections, and we are working hard to maintain the high quality offerings our visitors have grown to love. Thank you for entrusting us as Trustees and stewards of your Museum. With your continued support, I look forward to the continued health and growth of the Museum.

As the Museum heads into a time of transition, with new challenges, ideas, and opportunities, I look forward to your continued support and assistance, and I encourage each and every one of you to help us grow our Association by encouraging your friends and acquaintances to become members as well. The stronger our Association, the more we can accomplish – our future depends on it.

On a lighter note, I would like to wish you all Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for the new year and hope you are able to take advantage of your member discounts at our Museum Store this holiday season.

Thank you again for your continued support of YOUR Plumas County Museum.

New Members

We sincerely thank all our renewing members and welcome the following new members (and those who have upgraded their annual memberships):

Individual: Alan Baitinger, Quincy; Kristine Ebersole, Corralitos; Tom Fregulia, Graeagle; Bryan Gould, San Rafael; Ellen Halteman, Davis; Ken Koonter, Laingsburg, MI; Arianne Nichol, San Francisco; Jim Oster, Graeagle; Jeff Wallace, Quincy.

Family: Dennis & Alaine Flynn, Reno, NV; John &

Lydia Freeby, Davis; John & Diane Giller, Quincy; Bryan Hansen, Blairsden; David & Nancy Heaslett, Graeagle; Ramon & Julie Hernandez, Applegate; Dave & Diane Kantoff, Quincy; John & Linda Keating, Hayward; Larry & Norma Maciel, Quincy; Norm & Carol Miller, Clio; Joseph & Margaret Munoz, Quincy; Walley & Dee Walker, Blairsden; Barbara Wanish, Roseville; Gary Weeks, Clio; Chuck Weidner, Castro Valley.

Patron: Heather Alexander, Meadow Valley; Richad & Ann

Castaldini, Quincy; Chuck & Cathe Franck, Clio; Jan & Hilary Hedman, Grass Valley; Joanne Kibbee, Quincy; Gary Kinkley, Graeagle; Jeff & Patty Monaghan, Reno, NV; Chris Murray, Quincy; James & Cheryl Nelson, Danville; Jane Proctor, Chandler, AZ; Scott & Suzanne Stirling, Meadow Valley; Ann Zeller, Davis.

Corporate: Graeagle Store – Steve & Nancy Harding, Dale & Gina Lambert, Graeagle; Quincy Mini Storage – Joanne Sargent, Quincy.


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Diane Uchtyl, *American Valley*
Linda Wallace, *Quincy*
Sam Wilbanks, *Beckwourth*

STAFF

Scott Lawson, *Director*

SUPPORTED BY:
Paul Russell

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Tandy Bozeman, *District 3*
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Norman Lamb, *District 2*
Helen Roberti, *District 1*
Richard Short, *District 5*
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors

Please check your mailing label for your membership EXPIRATION DATE. Due to increased printing and postage costs, we cannot send newsletters to non-renewing members.

Individual Membership \$25.00 - Family \$35.00 - Patron \$100.00 - Sustaining \$1000.00 - Corporate \$150.00 Please mail your check to **Plumas County Museum, 500 Jackson Street, Quincy, CA 95971** or pay online at the Museum e-store: www.plumasmuseum.org.

Hours: Tue-Sat • 10:00 - 4:00

Closed Monday & Holidays

Call (530) 283-6320 to confirm.