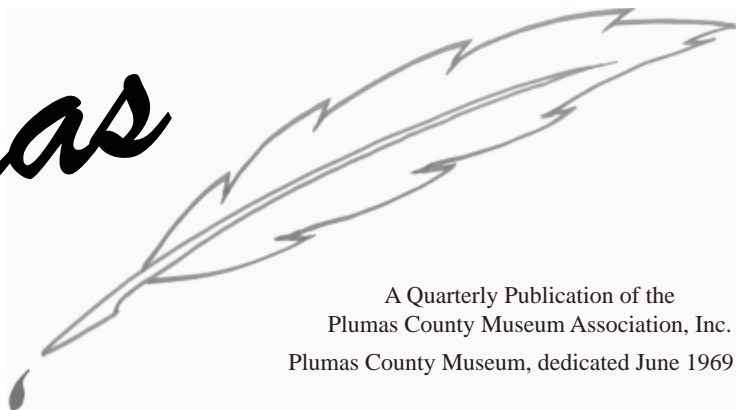


Las Plumas



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B.M. Bower - Western Author

In recognition of *March is Women's History Month*, Delaine Fragnoli, Managing Editor of Feather Publishing Company's six papers, will give a presentation on one of America's most prolific and highly accomplished Western genre authors. Fragnoli will cover author B.M. Bower's early years as she struggled to break into the male-dominated Western writing and publishing industry as well as her subsequent rise to fame.

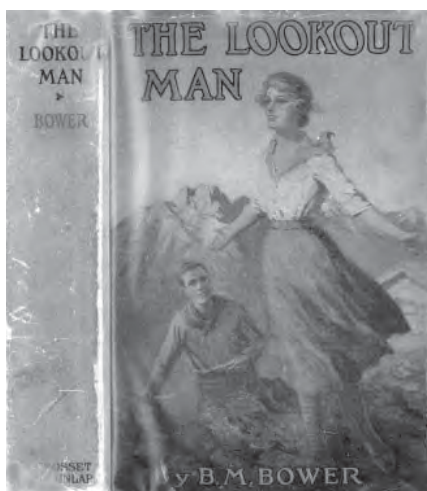
Yes, we did say "she." Bertha Muzzy Bower, born in a log cabin in Minnesota in 1871, moved to the Big Sky country of Montana in 1889 where she lived the ranch life. She married in 1890, and by 1904 was a published author in short story magazines. In 1906, her first full-length novel, *Chip of the Flying 'U'*, was released. Maintaining the pattern of two full-length books each year, and numerous short stories, Bower began publishing with the Dillingham Company, and then in 1912, landed a contract with the

prestigious Little, Brown & Company for the remainder of her career. Although admonished to maintain her somewhat illusory name in order to perpetuate the façade of male authorship in a field where no female dared tread, Bower became one of the foremost and most popular writers of the time, finding herself amongst such notables as Zane Grey, Max Brand, and Rex Beach. Her novels however did not always follow the standard "Western" theme of killing, robbing and general mayhem. She developed complex story lines and personalities for her subjects, ranging from fun-loving cowboys to sinister mine operators to rustlers to the almost supernatural, with bootleggers, archaeologists, forest rangers, moviemakers, airplane pilots, and sheep herders thrown in for good measure.

In real life, Bower had her own tribulations. She divorced her first husband, Clayton Bower in 1905, and married Bertrand Sinclair, soon to become a famous author in his own right. In 1907 they moved to Santa Cruz, California, but by 1912 were divorced. In late 1914 Bower purchased the Pocket Ranch along today's

Oakland Camp Road and over the next few years built it up into the American Valley's show place. It was here that she penned at least four books, with one, *The Lookout Man*, set on Mt. Hough. In keeping with her restless character, Bower moved on in 1918; traveling the Southwest and then moving to Nevada where she and her third husband, Bud Cowan, operated the El Picacho Silver Mine.

Over the span of her long career, B.M. Bower published 69 hardcover books and hundreds of short stories. Many of her books have been reprinted and are still available for purchase today, with several of them being made into movies.



Dust jacket, *The Lookout Man*, 1917.



B.M. Bower, c. 1920 (Estate of B.M. Bower, courtesy of Kate B. Anderson)

She passed away in Los Angeles in 1940 at the age of 68. Four of her novels were issued posthumously.

With their attractive dust jacket art and quality printing, Bower's books have become very collectable, some commanding prices of \$300 or more per copy. Charles Russell was one of her illustrators as was Anton Fischer, and a number of other western artists. So be sure to look closely in your dusty attics or in the dark corners of some back shelf; you never know; you might have a Bower treasure hiding there!



This seated luncheon program will be held at the Mineral Building at the fairgrounds on March 31. Seating is limited. To reserve your space call the Museum at 283-6320. Tickets are non-refundable after March 24.



Left, dust jacket for *Tiger Eye*, 1930. Center, Bower's Pocket Ranch near Oakland Camp, 1915. Top, dust jacket for *Open Land*, 1933.

BLACK BART

Speaking of the Wild West ... Return with us to those thrilling days of yesterday when masked bandits roamed the mountain highways and the call of “Driver, throw down that box!” was a stage driver’s worst nightmare!

Join us on Sunday, May 2, 2010 as we proudly host members of the Law Dawgs and Pistoleros of the Old West as they present a first-person account of the daring stagecoach robberies of the infamous “Po8” bandit, Black Bart.



Old west historians and re-enactors, Lee Dummel and Keith Morris portray stagecoach highwayman, Black Bart and his nemesis, Wells Fargo Chief Detective, James Hume in this lively recounting of the life and times of Black Bart and his days as a gentleman thief. Credited with 28 stagecoach robberies between 1877 and 1883, Black Bart was active in this area for many years (robbing at least two stages in Plumas County), and the Museum has on display a Wells Fargo box recovered from one of his nearby hold-ups.

Come listen to the tantalizing story of the double life of Charles E. Boles – the man who was a popular San Francisco well-to-do and who was also the famous stagecoach robber, Black Bart – and his mysterious disappearance. Come learn of his transformation from miner, family-man, soldier, to miner to stagecoach robber. Experience what it was like to be on both sides of the law in the days of the wild and woolly West.

This special fundraising afternoon with Black Bart and James Hume will take place on the lawn of the Variel home just behind the Museum from 2 – 4 PM on Sunday, May 2, 2010 and a \$5.00 per person donation is requested.

Refreshments will be served. (In case of rain the event will be held at the Veteran’s Hall on Lawrence Street in Quincy).

Volunteers Needed!

We are in need of volunteers to paint the Variel Home Garage and the Wagon Shed this spring. We'll supply the paint and brushes, you supply the labor, and we'll even throw in a barbecue lunch! Call the museum to sign up now.

The Peppard Cabin and the Pioneer School will need volunteers for the County Picnic on June 5th. If you would like to share these historic sites with your fellow county residents, please contact Paul at the Museum.

The Spanish Peak Lumber Co. Railroad Project is looking for good, solid timbers for railroad ties. They must be at least eight inches square or greater, and a minimum of six feet long (we will cut to length). We can pick them up, so if you have, or know of some old lumber around that fits our need, please call us at the Museum.

New Museum Trustee

We would like to welcome Jerry Thomas as our newest member of the Plumas County Museum Association Board of Trustees. He will fill the seat recently vacated by John Larrieu. Jerry is a member of one of Plumas County's pioneer families, as well as a descendant of a Maidu family from the Belden area. He retired as Vice-Principal of Quincy Jr.-Sr. High School in 2008. We look forward to working with him and to the enthusiasm he brings to the Museum.

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

Our Annual Gingerbread House Contest saw the greatest number of entries to date - 24! We would like to thank Zona Morgan of Quincy for her initiative and direction in once again putting on this popular contest. Visitors enjoyed seeing the efforts, and everyone who was involved had a great deal of fun.

We are starting to prepare for our 4th Grade Living History Days held in late May, when fourth grade students from all over the county come to the Museum and the fairgrounds to learn heritage crafts including butter making, candle dipping, washing clothes with a washboard and tub, and gold panning. We can always use volunteers for this program. If you would like to be a part of this fun event, call the Museum at 283-6320.

Budget Woes. The Museum continues to provide valued services to our members and visitors, but we are feeling the financial crunch even more. Although it seems we have always worked under the pressure of reduced budgets, the past two years have been especially tough, and it does not look like things are going to get much better within the immediate future. We have lost a full time employee, and reduced or completely cut out some service and supply items such as office supplies, printing services, archival supplies, and similar items. As Museum members, you have always come to our aid in these tough times, and once again, we are pleading with you for your help. Any amount that you can spare to the Museum beyond your annual membership dues is greatly appreciated. Donations are tax deductible and will go to good use.

New Books for Sale at the Museum.

North Lake Tahoe resident and historian Mark McLaughlin has put into print years of research on the history of winter sports in Northern California in his new book *Longboards to Olympics - A Century of Tahoe Winter Sports*. This 277-page definitive work not only has a section on the history of longboard skiing in Plumas County, it also features a full color cover photo of Plumas Ski Club's longboard racers and supporters.

VARIEL HOME TOURS

We would like to plan a meeting for mid-April for our Variel Home Docents. The house will need a good cleaning, as well as some yard work to spruce it up after the winter. The Black Bart program is scheduled to be held outside the house on the lawn on May 2, so we would like to have everything in good shape by that time. Please call Paul at 283-6320 to sign up for the spring cleaning and docent Variel Home training.

2010 Exhibits on the Stella Fay Miller Mezzanine

January – February: Plumas County Museum Historic Artists
March – April: Same
May & June: Pam Trebes, Lake Almanor; “The Perfect View” - Photography
July & August: Lovetta Held, Quincy; Watercolors
September & October: Betty Bishop, Chester; “Catching My Eye” - Photography
November & December: OPEN Please call if you would like to host a show.

Hours: Tuesday - Friday 9-4:30, closed Sun., Mon., holidays.

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If you would like to receive your newsletter by email, please let us know at pcmuseum@digitalpath.net.

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