

HEADTOWER NEWS

BOOMTOWN MUSEUM NEWSLETTER
by the Shasta Lake Historical Society
Volume 21 #63 November/December 2024

Wrapping up this year with a few pictures from the October Membership Appreciation Dinner, the November Veteran's Day Parade and the Community Holiday Bazaar. Volunteers at the Boomtown Museum are sending good wishes for a Merry Christmas and the very best in the coming New Year!



Let's party!
October Membership Dinner



**Volunteer of the Year
Karen Fox**



THANKS to our VOLUNTEERS and GUESTS,
the dinner raffle exceeded \$1700!

THANKS to our VOLUNTEERS, our candy
and gift shop sales exceeded \$2000!

Thank you all for keeping the museum doors open!



*We try to be accurate but we are not liable for any additions, omissions, errors and/or corrections that may occur in this publication. Any photographs or material used may not be reprinted or reproduced without contacting us for permission of use.
Thank you, Darlene V. Brown, Editor and Pete Droesch, Assistant Editor.*

THE MECHANICAL MULE

(FYI - The Mule will be leaving as a display after the museum closes for the holidays.)



I recently acquired a U.S. Military M274 Truck, Platform, Utility 1/2 Ton, 4X4. What kind of military jargon is that? Today most people just call it a Mechanical Mule, or Mule for short. The Mule was primarily known as a Vietnam era vehicle.

They are becoming more popular as a collector vehicle over the past ten years. I am happy to have it, and to be able to display it in the Boomtown Museum for Veteran's Day and beyond this year.

The Mule is a very versatile and utilitarian vehicle. Following is basically everything one needs to know regarding the history of the Mule:

The M274 Mule was introduced in 1956 to supplement both the 1/4 ton trucks (Jeeps) and 3/4 ton trucks (Weapons Carrier Series and M37 series) in airborne and infantry battalions. The Mule evolved from improvements to a vehicle designed at the end of World War Two by Willys-Overland to be a medical evacuation litter carrier in areas and terrain that would be a problem for the standard light vehicle of the period (the Jeep) to access.

U.S. Patent 2457400 for the original design was applied for on December 2, 1944, and issued on December 28, 1948. No patent appears to have been issued for the later production model. Further tests by the US Army at Eglin Field, Florida proved it also useful as a platform carrier for both supplies and men.

In 1948 the US Army purchased a small number of these test vehicles with the designation of 'Jungle Burden Carrier' for evaluation in jungle warfare and with airborne forces.

The Mule had two variations when it came to steering and engines. Both a two-wheel steer and four-wheel steer variant were built. Additionally, they were initially produced with a four-cylinder air cooled engine, but were changed to a two-cylinder air cooled engine later in production.



Overall, there were 11,240 Mules produced between their introduction in 1956 and the end of production in 1970. They were used throughout this period as platforms for various weapons systems and for carrying men, supplies, and weaponry/ammunition during the Vietnam War and in other U.S. military operations through 1980. As a completely open and exposed vehicle, they offered absolutely no protection to the driver, yet that was relatively unimportant as they

were mainly used as cargo carriers and medium-range infantry support vehicles, rather than tactical vehicles.

The driver's seat could be removed and the steering column moved forward and the vehicle driven in reverse to accommodate more cargo. If under fire the steering column could be moved further forward and down, so the operator could operate the vehicle while crawling behind it. They were phased out from military usage in 1980 with the introduction of the HMMWV (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles). The HMMWV was, however, unable to fulfill the role of the Mule, so the M-Gator, a military variant of the popular John Deere Gator vehicle, was introduced.



As they say, nothing runs like a Deere...or in this case a Mule!
Story by John Duckett



WWII Mark II Bomb Trailer - by John Duckett



I'm excited to display my 1944 Anthony WWII Mark II Bomb Trailer and 1,000 lb inert practice bomb in the Shasta Lake Heritage and Historical Society's Boomtown Museum. I recently completed a restoration of the trailer to show how it was used in WWII. I discovered the trailer a couple of years ago near San Diego. The trailers are highly sought after, so I was happy to find it.

Believe it or not, I found the 1,000 lb. practice bomb along the alley in the City of Shasta Lake near the Pizza Factory many years ago. The bombs are really hard to find, so I was happy to find it so close to home to go along with the bomb trailer.

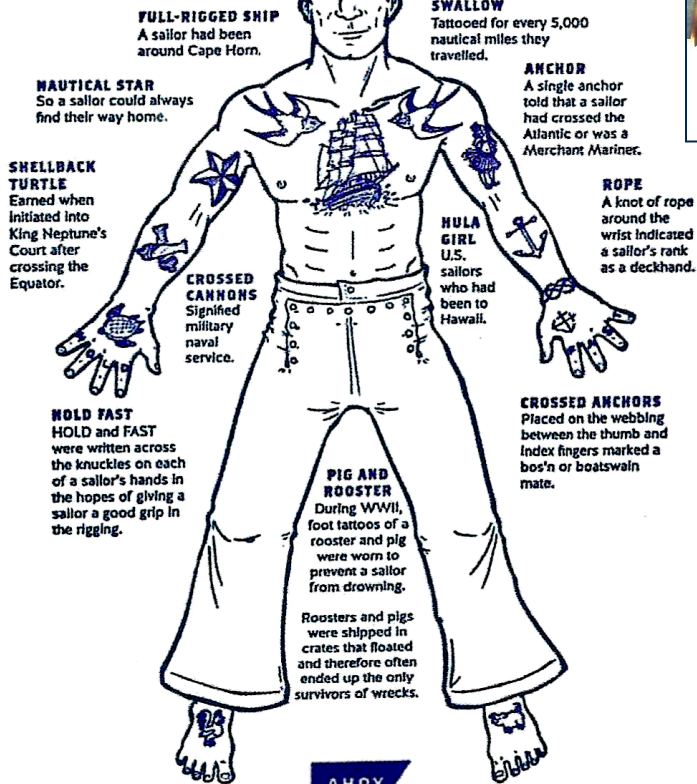


The trailers were used to move the bombs from the bomb storage areas to the aircraft for loading. The trailers had slides that allowed the bombs to be slid onto the trailers. Although rare today, they were an integral piece of equipment used at airfields, primarily in the Pacific Theatre of Operations, to load on the bombers during World War II.



• HOMEWARD BOUND •

the Art of the Sailor



Some of the tattoos and their meanings

THE TIN CAN SAILOR

Winter Issue 2024

Submitted by Navy Veteran
Pete Drosch



A Patriotic Photo in Time

John Milton Mudron
c1910



His name was changed from Miloslav Ján to Milton John when the family moved from the city to a farm in the country and Dad started school for the first time. In Newark they lived in a Slovak community so Slovak was his first language. When he went to school in the country

no one spoke that language so the teachers re-named him...

Story by Nancy Mudron Garr (A Dam Kid)

Kirch Family Joins Depression Era Westward Migration

NOTE: The photos shown, unless captioned, are from the National Archives since the Kirch family did not have family pictures during this time but the photos depict what their life journey was truly like. The story was told to Lena Locke by her mother, Mary Kirch Rader



In 1933, Jacob & Rose-Etta Kirch and their seven children, like many Midwestern American families, made the overland journey, in their old battered pickup truck to the western United States to look for work. Work was scarce in Kansas during the dust bowl and depression years. Many roads were not paved and deeply potholed on the journey west, but they bumped along, camping as they traveled, next to rivers when possible. Many other families were on same trip, tent camping was the mode of the day. The travelers were “neighborly” sharing what they had along the way, which wasn’t much. Maybe a pot of stew or beans, a quilt, but rarely anything of great value.

The Kirch family arrived in southern California and immediately started working picking fruit, vegetables & cotton at the local farms. The seven Kirch children lived in a tent at one orchard, while Jacob & Rose-Etta lived in a tent at a different orchard. Jack, the oldest son, would cook pancakes on an open fire with a cast iron skillet, adding cocoa to make it seem like a treat for the younger children. They had little in the way of food, but the kids never complained. For a “birthday cake”, he would take a slice of flatbread browned over the fire and spread it with jam made from the overripe fruit at the orchard. There was very little play time on the farm, as all ages worked in the fields.



Eventually, the Kirch family worked their way up the valley, finally arriving in northern California. The Kirches settled down to stay, about a mile out of Kennett in an old house with no running water or electricity. As there were no jobs at that time, Jacob used his sluice box or panned for gold on the Sacramento River. Jacob was able to gather enough gold to pay for groceries, which kept the family going till 1938 when he found work running a construction crew building the Good Year Tire conveyor belt that began at Turtle Bay on the Sacramento River in Redding. The aggregate rolled & tumbled the 9.6 miles on the massive conveyor belt to the Shasta Dam construction site where it was used in the cement. (Today, the Monolith at Turtle Bay Exploration Park is a remnant of that construction.)

After the construction of the conveyor belt, Jacob found work as an ironworker on the construction of Shasta Dam. He had been an ironworker on other dams. Leaving the area of Kennett which would eventually be submerged by the water of Shasta Lake, the Kirch Family bought property and built a house on Deer Creek Road in Boomtown (having been renamed Central Valley.)

When WWII started, the family moved to San Francisco where their 3 oldest sons joined the Navy. Their youngest son, 18 year old “Dude” Kirch joined the Army and was killed in a motorcycle accident during the war. When the war ended, the Kirch family moved back to Central Valley and sold their home on Deer Creek road. With that money, they purchased one of the “Dam houses” being sold and moved it onto 25 acres they purchased on Pioneer Lane in the south Redding/Bonneyview area. Over time, they added onto all four sides of the Dam house to accommodate the 6 Kirch siblings still living at home.

Note: When the construction on Shasta Dam was finished, so was the need for the worker’s housing. The houses in Shasta Dam Village south of the construction site and the houses in Toyon where the US Bureau of Reclamation employees had lived, were sold on the market. To this day you can find them all over Shasta County.



L/R: Mary, Bill, Fred, Jacob & Rose-Etta, Rosetta and Jack. Front: Verna with her doll and “Dude”

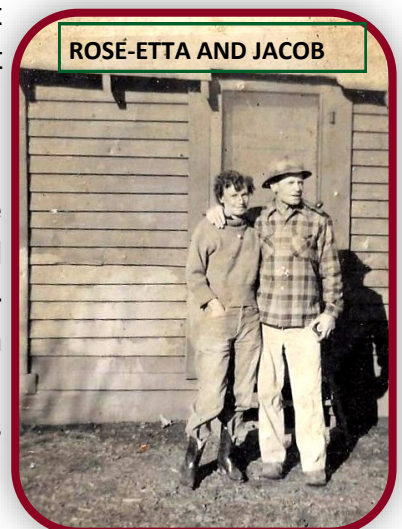
As the 3 sons & 3 daughters married, the Kirch Family helped each couple build a house on the acreage so that eventually there were 6 houses in a row, each with a large orchard and horse pasture behind. They poured a cement sidewalk from Jacob & Rose-Etta’s house the whole length of all the houses so the 13 grandchildren could ride their tricycles from one end to the other. Potlucks on Jacob and Rose-Etta’s front lawn were a weekly occurrence including all the neighbors!

After the building of Shasta Dam, the Kirch family invested in several business ventures around the north state. They leased a ranch in Weed in the late 1940s, built Kirch Steel in south Redding in the early 1950s and bought the Jones Valley Resort in the early 1960s. The men built the Jones Valley store and renovated the docks while their wives ran the store. The entire family was active; all rode horses, hunted and fished, and spent their time outdoors hiking and camping in northern California and southern Oregon.

Jacob & Rose-Etta eventually retired to their family farm, selling English walnuts from their orchard and vegetables from their truck garden. Jacob spent his later days fishing for salmon on the Sacramento River that was within walking distance of their home. Many days he came home empty handed as he said he did his best thinking along that river bank, and most times didn’t care if he caught fish or not. Rose-Etta spent her retirement baking pies, sewing quilts, and watching her 13 grandchildren grown up, marry and have children of their own .

Shasta Dam not only stopped the constant flooding on the farms in the Sacramento Valley, but the building of that world class structure, turned the lives around for many migrating Midwest families during the Depression years, and it brought many skilled construction workers to the north state. And, like my family, many of those families stayed after the building of Shasta Dam to build the North State into the wonderful communities we all call home.

Story by Lena Locke, A Dam GrandKid



ROSE-ETTA AND JACOB

1943 Steel Cent and 1944-46 Shell Case Cents

Have you ever discovered old pennies as collectibles? During World War II, pennies produced in 1943 had a unique color. We are pleased to showcase these coins in the Boomtown Museum thanks to one of our members, John Gibson, from Fountain Hills, AZ. John visited the museum with Director Rick Fox and generously donated these collectibles to enhance our military display.



Due to wartime needs, Copper was deemed essential for ammunition and other military equipment. This demand led to a shortage of Copper for other uses, such as the One Cent piece. The Philadelphia, Denver, and San Francisco Mints produced 1943 Lincoln Cents. The coins were Zinc-coated steel with some of the various nicknames, such as *wartime cent*, *steel penny*, *zinc cent*, and *steelie*.

Problems arose with the steel cents. The coins were made from large galvanized steel ribbons and then stamped-out. The edges of the coins were not galvanized. This exposed edge of steel would corrode or rust from sweat. Freshly minted, the bright Zinc coating was mistaken for dimes. Magnets in vending machines would pick them out as a steel slug.

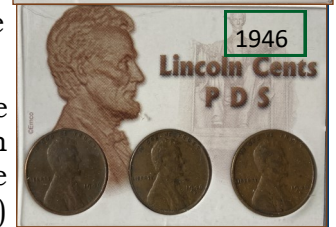
After public outcry, the Mint developed a process whereby salvaged brass shell casings were alloyed with pure Copper. This resulted in a penny close to the composition of the 1941-42.



This new alloy was used for the 1944-46 dated cents. After 1946, the prewar composition was resumed. After the war, the Mint destroyed large numbers of the 1943 steel cents.

As an aside, the Mint did learn a lesson from the 1943 Steel Cent with its corrosion problems. When the Silver in the dime became worth more than the face value of ten cents, the Mint issued the dime (presently in circulation) with a Copper sandwich (no corrosion).

Stories by Rick Fox



SHORT SNORTER

Around 100 years ago, a "Short Snort" was a slang term for less than a full shot of liquor. The barkeeper could enjoy a little extra profit and the customer could claim to his moderation. Friends could get together, pass around the liquor bottle and have a "snort".

Before World War II, pilots started the tradition of signing bank notes (usually a Dollar Bill) and exchanging signed bills with fellow pilots and crew members. If they met again, they could be challenged to produce the signed bill, "Short Snorter." If they could not produce it, the next round of drinks was on them!



This bill is part of the military memorabilia on display in the Boomtown Museum honoring Veterans. *Looking closely*, you will see the signatures on this "Short Snorter". It was also donated to our collection by John Gibson, Fountain Hills, AZ.

The longest "Short Snorter" was reportedly assembled by Captain John L. Gillen, a stenographer in the U.S. Army Air Corps (present-day U.S. Air Force) in the early 1940's. His assembled bills measured over 100 feet!

Shown is picture from the National WWII Museum archives showing a collection of Short Snorter bills - visit their site for more information on this military tradition.

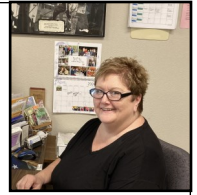


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE -

Joan Fackrell

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Looking back on 2024, I feel so blessed for all that has happened. We took part in these events or we created them:



Valentine's Day cookie sale, Damboree Parade & festivities, tours for local schools, tours for senior living establishments and several service clubs, presentations to local organizations, promotional events for our book, Empowered Women of Shasta County, Halloween children's party, our annual membership dinner, Veterans' Parade, Community Holiday Bazaar and the lighting of the City Christmas Tree.

Thank you to our docents and helpers who donated so much of their time and talents to keep our museum up and going. Thank you to the people who came into the museum and donated items of local interest and whose membership helps to keep the vision of our museum.

We will see you in February of 2025 and lots of planning will be taking place for the New year!

Joan

THANK YOU FOR NEW & RENEWING MEMBERSHIPS *You are why we are!*

Received since our last newsletter in August:

THANK YOU for the "extra donations" - a most gracious amount in memory of her mother, Mary Kirch Rader by Lena Locke, "a little extra as he said" from Bob & Chic at Bella Vista Farms, and a thoughtful amount from Denise Denham in memory of Ruth Ann Kobe.

THANK YOU new members! Chris Mayer - Edward Jones/Redding; Robert Kennealy CVHS 1961; Pat and D'Lorah Hurton, Larry & Nanci DeNayer, Joan Beaver Wilburn and Johnny & Rhonda Bishop.

THANK YOU for renewing memberships: Benefactors- Kwanis Club of Shasta Dam; Ron Stone; Sharon Clairmont, Dave Bellone, Lynda Hays, Loss White Jr., and for individual and family memberships: Don Mills & Lynn Pascoe, Joe & Karen Pascoe, Renee & Bob Murray, Pizza Factory, Adrienne Parker, Patricia Burell, Lena Locke, Denise Denham, Nancy Shaw, Annette Nelson and Scott Stinson.

Plans are for the first newsletter in 2025 to have a list of memberships current and due.



Please patronize our supporting BUSINESS members!

In Shasta Lake: Farmers Marketplace*; Heritage Coffee House; Ji Zhibin, DDS/Dental Office*; Kirkland Realty*; Kobe Chiropractic*; Living Stone Electric*; Pizza Factory; Ridgetop Cellars; Shasta Barber Co.; Shasta Dam Kiwanis*; Shasta Lake Physical Therapy; Shasta Lake Vacation Rentals; The Dam House Sweet Treats and TriCounties Bank.

In Redding: California Safety Co.*; Eaton House Museum*; Heritage Plaza Board*; KIXE TV Channel 9*; McDonald's Budget Printing; Rustic Signs and Spartan Sports*.

In the Surrounding Area: Bella Vista Farm Animals* and Lake Shasta Caverns.

*Also are Benefactors

BOOMTOWN MUSEUM HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT THIS YEAR!



THE MUSEUM WILL BE CLOSED FROM MONDAY DECEMBER 16TH UNTIL IT REOPENS ON MONDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2025.

WE WILL BE BUILDING NEW DISPLAYS, ORGANIZING FILES, UPDATING COMPUTERS AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE!!!

PLEASE THINK ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN 2025 AS WE MAKE PLANS FOR THE NATION'S 250TH CELEBRATION IN 2026! WE HAVE A GREAT TIME AND HAVE BECOME A FOCAL POINT OF INTEREST IN OUR WONDERFUL CITY OF SHASTA LAKE!

Shasta Lake Heritage & Historical Society
P.O. Box 562 Shasta Lake, CA 96019
Visitors Center: *Boomtown Museum*
1525 Median St., Shasta Lake
530-275-3995
501c3 non-profit organization

IN MEMORIUM



Ruth Eleanor Fish 1922-2024. Ruth lived to the wonderful young age of 102! Ruth was the wife of the late Elmer Fish - whom some of you may remember as the Shasta Union High School bus driver many years ago. Thanks to their son, Michael one of our benefactors, we have many items from the Fish family on display in the museum. Just the other day Mike walked in carrying a painting of the barn on the old Fish property. Hopefully soon, we will have a story following from Mike and his family.

Love history? Become a member.

Membership dues are renewable January of each year.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

NEWSLETTER - ☐ email ☐ OR paper?

Please check the applicable boxes:

Individual \$10 ☐ Family \$25 ☐

Business \$25 ☐ Benefactor \$100 ☐

Board of Directors:

President: Joan Fackrell 530-941-8145
Vice President Interim: Charlotte Bailey
Secretary: Darlene Brown 530-604-7771
Treasurer: Kay Kobe
Directors: Mike Daniels, Pete Droesch,
Sandy Estes and Rick Fox
Director Emeritus: Del Hiebert

CHRISTMAS MEMORY - PUD putting up a Christmas tree in Central Valley

