

Shasta Lake Heritage & Historical Society

Head Tower News

A "Boomtown Memories" newsletter

Museum: 1525 Median St., City of Shasta Lake

Museum Hours: 9-1 M/T/W and 2nd Saturday Closed on Holidays: Call 275-3995

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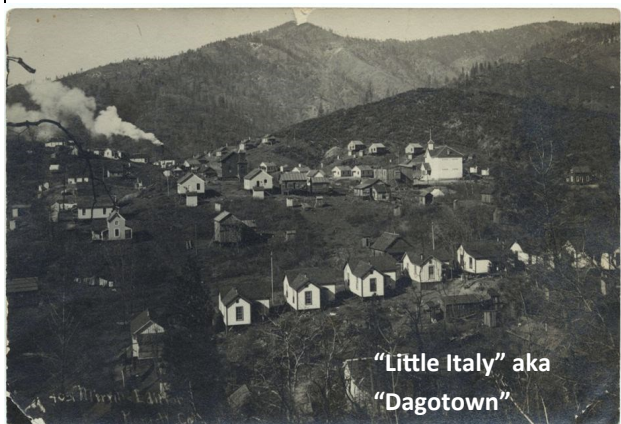
www.shastalakehistorical.org— FB Shasta Lake Heritage & Historical Society

Volume 16 issue 1 # 50

HISTORY DOES REPEAT ITSELF

May 2020

The doors are locked, the museum is dark and lonely. All of our pictures and stories are quietly awaiting the day we can again welcome guests. Wandering through the displays, one wonders what must have taken place a century ago when the nation was in the throes of the dreaded Spanish Flu that killed so many. We began searching our files for recorded memories of the time when the world was hunkered down in fear of that deadly disease. We came across the interviews conducted for a Shasta County school project in 1977....



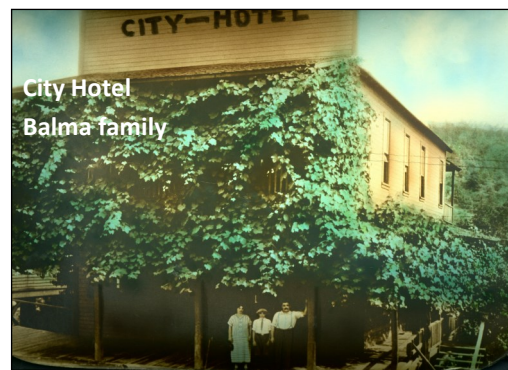
It was the pre-Boomtown era. The copper mines were in full swing, with Kennett being the largest community around, with approximately 5,000 residents.

The Balma brothers, Jas, Tog, John and Rudy, all grew up in Kennett. Their parents came from Italy in the early 1900's and settled in "Little Italy" (a suburb of Kennett) also known as "Dagotown" around 1915.

Mr. Balma worked in the smelter for a short time and then he and his wife managed a boarding house at the Holt & Greg Lime Quarry. After this, they moved into downtown Kennett and operated the City Hotel and bar until the construction of Shasta Dam forced them to move.

Mike Bellone spent much of his early life in Kennett and was also a friend of the Balmas. His father (like the Balmas) came from Italy. Around 1900, his father arrived in Kennett with \$40 in his pocket. A friend from the "old country" convinced him to open a business around the mines thinking it would be profitable. It was. Eventually they bought the Corona Hotel.

Mike was employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad and earned \$4.88 a day removing slag from the tracks. Afterwards, he got a job in a local store for \$145 a month and stayed there until he left Kennett in 1926. He and Jas Balma, his delivery boy and some 10 years younger than he, shared their memories of life in Kennett for the interviews.



In one transcribed interview, Jas recalled that scary time of the Spanish Flu. Jas thought he was about five years old when the Spanish Flu epidemic struck in 1918 and killed so many people. "Everyone in "Dagotown" and Kennett wore masks, and I can remember watching from my parent's porch as they brought dead bodies by in baskets. They were just regular baskets covered with a lid."

Yes, even then—in the wilds of northern California, no one was really safe. But, just as we ultimately suffered many other tragedies through the years, life did go on and we have survived as a human family. This current virus crisis has us in its grip right now, with many tragedies, inconveniences and life-style changes.

However, the lights will come on little by little, and we so look forward to the day we here at the Boomtown Museum can once again open our doors and welcome YOU!



Rick at work!

Now that we have your attention, let's talk about our movie projector or as Deb calls it, “the elephant in the room!” The projector was gifted to us by Laura Hall Parks & her siblings from the Hall Estate in 2018. Their father had recovered the two projectors from the fire destroying the Shasta Theatre on New Year's Eve 1966. He refitted & rewired the two salvaged projectors into one. In storage for years, besides in need of a good cleaning, the wiring had disintegrated. It needed a complete overhaul to see if it could become operable again.

OMG, to the rescue is SLHHS board member, Rick Fox! Untold hours spent, it is looking shiny and new! On the display, Rick has numbered the various parts¹ and explained its relation to the projector. *All that remains to have it operable is replacing a gear.* No small feat, as there is no replacement to be found but luckily, Del Hiebert, SLHHS Board member has a nephew who hopefully can reproduce one for us in a machine shop in OR after the COVID 19 quarantine is lifted.

We asked Rick to tell us about the 35mm Movie Projector (as unless you were a projectionist like Don Cross and Bill Polf or old enough to remember when film would “burn up” or a picture “fluttered and the screen went black”) you probably don't know a lot about this kind of projector which consists of three parts or sub-assemblies: (A) *The Light Source* (B) *The 35mm film assembly* (C) *The Sound Pickup & Amplifier.*

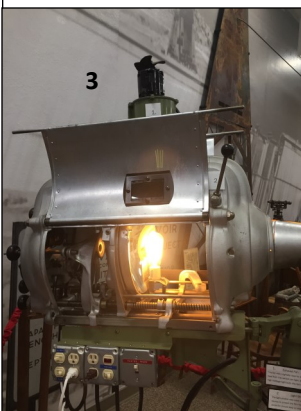
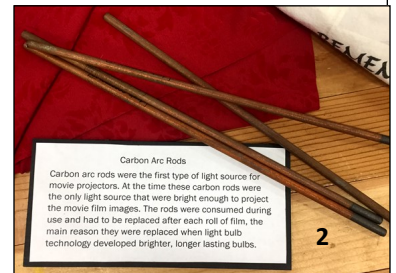
The projector *light source* is a really bright light, usually 500-1000 watts. This projector light house was made by the Strong Utility Company of Toledo, OH. It was

originally a “Carbon Arc Type”. In the late 1890's, Carbon Arc was developed and used for movie films because it was the only light powerful enough at the time to project the picture to the screen. Some projectors used carbon rods up and into the late 60's.

Two carbon rods² about 30-40 amps, were used and consumed to maintain the arc light needed by the feed mechanism controlled by the projectionist. *Too slow, the arc went out. Too fast, the rods would jam. The projectionist was kept very busy.* Each full length reel lasted about 20 minutes, the rods a little bit longer. *They produced lots of heat and smoke hence the fan³ at the top of the light house.*

The projector has a light shutter to shut off the light when changing the reels so the movie appeared continuous. If the film stopped and the light wasn't blocked, the film would get a “hot spot” (think magnifying glass in sun) and burn the film. As technology improved, the carbon arc projectors were retrofitted with light bulbs. This light house was converted to use a light bulb (also ran hot) and the fan was still needed. The bulbs lasted 40-50 hours, lots better than the 25 minutes of the carbon rods and no adjustments needed. For display purposes, the incandescent bulb has been replaced with an LED bulb (cooler) in our projector.³ It does not have enough wattage for film projection but it gives you an idea of how the light traveled through the projector.

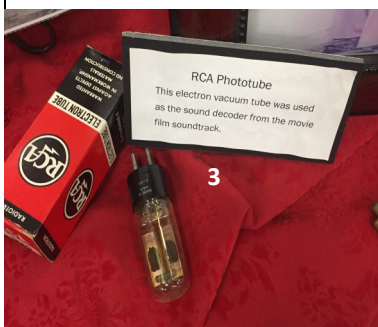
This *35 mm film assembly* made by Simplex is the Standard model. As the model name implies, it was the most affordable unit used by a majority of the small movie theatres. 35mm refers to the width of the film (about 1.38”). The film has sprocket holes⁴ (rectangular shaped) along both sides and the film is advanced by these sprockets holes. **Note: the film assembly actually stops the film 24 frames a second, however your brain converts this into a continuous picture!**





The film frames are actually individual pictures, each frame slightly different which is what produces movement. (*Note: precursor to “motion pictures” began with Chronophotography¹, a series of photographic technique from the Victorian era, which captures multiple phases of movements.*) Older projectors were slower than 24 frames which showed up as a “flicker”. The film could go faster, but this would put undue strain in the sprocket holes and strip them out.

The first film stock was “Nitro-cellulose”, highly flammable and very unstable. The glass window on the film holders have wire in them², an early type of “safety glass”. *If a fire should occur, the wire in the glass prevented the glass from breaking and vacating the opening, allowing the fire to escape.* Nitro-cellulose film was replaced by “Cellulose Acetate” which was slow burning aka “safety film”, however, it would deteriorate with age and that’s why some of the old movies were lost over time.



The **sound pickup and amplifier** is located below the Simplex projector. This sound unit was made by RCA. Western Electric was the second manufacturer of sound units. When you look at the credits on old movies, you may notice RCA or Western Electric sound listed.

So how does the sound work with the film projector?

The film moves continuously past a light source and focuses on a light sensitive surface in an electron tube³. The film has loops in place to allow slack between the projector (remember a section started & stopped 24x a second) which allows continuous movement past the light source. If these loops were not in place, the sound would have a “halting” quality. Movie film has a soundtrack between the picture and the drive sprocket

holes. Soundtrack is referred to as “sound on film”. *The signal from the electron tube is amplified and fed to the speakers – that is the sound you hear.* First attempts at movie sound used a phonograph record that was “synced” to the movie. You can guess what problems that caused...

In summing it up, this is pretty much how movies were shown from the 30’s up into the ‘90’s. In the Shasta Theatre at times, it was the cowboy movies—with Roy Rogers and cartoons with Porky Pig and Popeye, the Sailor Man. Every couple of days, there was a new movie. Nickel or dime popcorn, candy, cracker jacks and usherettes with flashlights telling the kids to stop throwing popcorn, no feet on the seats in front of them, and warning the “older kids” that there was no “smooching” during the movie...they knew your parents.



Film size increased to 70mm and stereo sound, 3D was tried—It was popular in the early 50’s. Remember the “House of Wax” with Vincent Price? Oh what memories we have!

Now it is super large IMAX in the movie theatres—unbelievable sound and with special seating—the seats are even heated and lean back like an easy chair!



No more film to break, stop or burn. The movies are digitally computer controlled, that is..... until the next new wave of technology.

So, when we re-open, come take a look at “the elephant in the room” and share your movie-going memories with us.



This is Bert Boothroyd's story. (As you read this, picture the adventures of a young boy, or this might even remind you of your own young adventures.)

Shasta Lake was filled to the brim. People left their doors unlocked, looked in on each other, and felt good about their country. The story opening is reminiscent of a Norman Rockwell poster.



Some things one never forgets, it was Christmas morning in 1946..... the excitement of finding under the glitter of the multi-colored tree lights and tinsel was a princess doll for my sister, Alice, *and a red scooter for me.* I was six years old.

I can still recall the smell of fresh red paint, seeing rubber handgrips, fat tires, and a rear wheel foot brake...*it was beautiful.* On flat sidewalk, with a couple of hard kicks, I could glide freely with the wind rushing in on my ruddy freckled face. *This two-wheeled miracle was my ticket to freedom and adventure.* My favorite thing to do was to ride from our house on 3821 Willow Street to visit mom and dad (Hazel and



Tom, the Postmaster) at the Central Valley Post office¹, located just north of the Big Dipper and next to Campbell's hardware store.

The trip was nearly a mile and was always eventful, as I had favorite stops along the way. (Today, parents would never consider letting a six-year old ride in private backyards

much less this far alone.) *The route from our house was dirt except for two sections of sidewalk before and after the pedestrian tunnel² under the Southern Pacific railroad tracks, and a stretch of pavement across the street from Pikes Market. It was not*

until I reached the Backus Variety Store that I hit sidewalk again. People were friendly, for what must have been a heavy barrage of pestering questions amid interruptions to their business and personal lives.



The trip began from Rudy & Silvia Olson's dirt driveway directly across the street from our house, then bumping and braking downhill along the dirt path bordering Alice Woods's lower back yard. *The yard had two huge gray, wood lifeboats among scattered piles of heavy smelly rope, metal flotation tanks, moldy life jackets and long oars scattered among the brush and manzanita.*

Alice's husband "Woody" had recently returned from the South Pacific and like so many WWII veterans took advantage of a vast surplus of inexpensive boats, jeeps, and equipment to be admired as remnants of a hard-fought victory. Everyone was talking about the war.

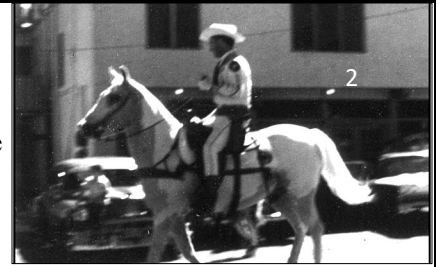
Our weekly Saturday matinee at Shasta Theatre often depicted naval battles with lifeboats just like those. *We boarded the boats and rowed to imaginative far off places in search of sea adventure.* Never once were we ever turned down for one of our voyages...it never occurred to us to ask permission of use from Woody, as by our standards, they were just adrift at sea collecting water from the rain.

Moving on, the dirt path ended at Red Bluff Street adjacent to Jake Berkland's *Public Market*³ which had an un-even sidewalk around the north and west side. As you entered the store, the *ice cream bars were to the left and candy to the right.* The butcher shop was in the back next to the walk-in coolers...the aroma of sawdust and fresh meat. *The butcher would give you a (free) hot dog, but you had to ask...*

Directly across the street was the *Volney Pharmacy.* Volney Bursell seldom smiled or talked and wore a blue smock. The store was not very interesting *except for the comic books stacked to the left of the north door entrance.* Volney always seemed to disappear from behind the counter in the back as he was busy filling small bottles with pills for the customer.



Next door and to the south was **Shasta Theatre** owned by Dorothy and Les Pancake. This was not a “scheduled” stop as there was not much going on—*except when they changed the marque; you might get lucky and get an old poster!* The Pancakes were very generous and civic minded. The Hell’s Gulch parade had a new convertible¹ transporting the queen and her court, and Les² riding one of his spirited horses. As part of the queen’s celebration, the new queen got to ride in the Pancake’s beautiful Chris Craft boat on Shasta Lake.



Dorothy was beautiful. She had long blonde flowing hair, and always had a smile at the ticket booth. A double matinee on Saturday and Sunday with two comedies cost 14 cents and popcorn a nickel! We had it all: Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers, Tarzan, Abbot & Costello, Gary Cooper, Randolph Scott, Jeff Chandler, Gene Autry; we even had Andy Devine visit our theatre one Saturday! Everyone would clap after the comedy and the main feature. Once a year the March of Dimes solicited for polio donations. The screen would begin with the ugly iron lung....and everyone gave something when the metal can was passed down each row.



The large gold nugget with bright radial gold rays painted on the roof of Charlie White’s auto repair garage next to the Shasta Theatre, was visible both ways along Shasta Dam Blvd. Along with Earl Stevens garage, together they kept the Central Valley fire engines running. Charlie was a good friend of Dad. ***This was my favorite stop!***

He had a boat and took my father and me on several overnight fishing trips from Bridge Bay to the McCloud arm. Charlie kept his “pride and joy”, a brand new 25HP Mercury outboard motor in the rafters of his garage. Charlie was jolly and entertained me with stories about dogs and fishing. ***He always made me laugh by wiggling his ears, and convinced me that he could talk to dogs! He had a gold Cocker Spaniel that he taught to burp after drinking beer.*** I knew his box number and drew pictures of us fishing and slipped them into his post office box.

George Backus was a nice man and his **Variety Store** had everything: candy, magazines, clothes, toys and was fun to wander around. Comic books were Red Ryder, Superman, Captain Marvel, Rubber Man, Spiderman, Roy Rogers & Boys Life. ***You could buy BB’s but George limited the amount of caps you could buy for your six shooter since they were in short supply.*** There was an authentic wood logging truck model that he liked to show me that I would love to have had, but it was too expensive. George had a leather leg from the knee down from serving in the war.

As soon as you entered **Louie’s Shoe Shop**, you could smell leather and glue and hear the hum of his sewing machine. The first thing I did there was to ask Louie if my cowboy boots were still there. On the right wall of the shop on the top shelf, ***was a pair of my mother’s black cowboy boots; I was promised that when the day arrived that they would fit me, I would get a horse!*** The promise was never fulfilled but the desire never diminished....

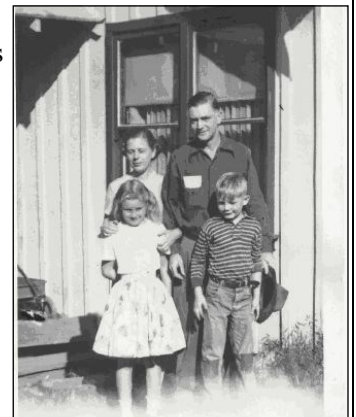


If I swept the Post Office floor, Dad would give me a nickel and off I’d head across the street for the Big Dipper³. I had the choice of buying a donut, ice cream or a glass of chocolate milk. The owners, ***Mr. & Mrs. Racki made delicious homemade ice cream.*** Whenever “Cookie” drove up in his ice cream truck, the neighborhood kids would run out, line up and ***“Cookie” gave each of us a free dixie cup!***

One warm summer day, my playmate Anita McJunkens and I were walking along Montana Street near Earl Steven’s garage when we came across a recently (ran over) dead black cat alongside the road. ***WHY we picked it up,*** I really don’t know but we did and holding it lengthwise by its tail and paw between us, continued merrily on our way swinging it back & forth. ***We must have made quite an impression as my parents received several reports from the neighbors NOT condoning this unusual behavior.....***

In looking back today, I realize how blessed I am to have grown up in the wonderful town of Central Valley and to have parents that had enough trust in me to allow the freedom to explore on my own those places and people who lived there.

Bert Boothroyd



MUSEUM COMMUNITY WALL FEATURE: LAKE SHASTA CAVERNS

Our story begins in 1872, when the first federally funded fish hatchery was to be built on the west coast. Livingston Stone (United States Fish Commission Deputy) was assigned the task of finding a suitable location. He traveled to San Francisco, where he met a railroad worker that told him about the large amount of salmon spawning where the Pit and McCloud rivers joined in Shasta County.

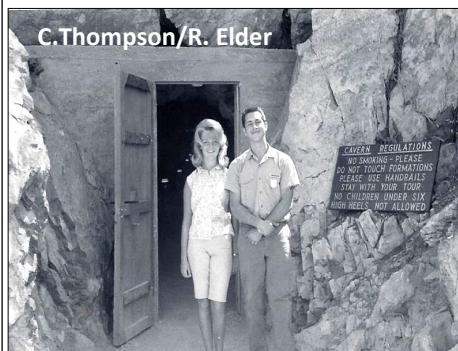
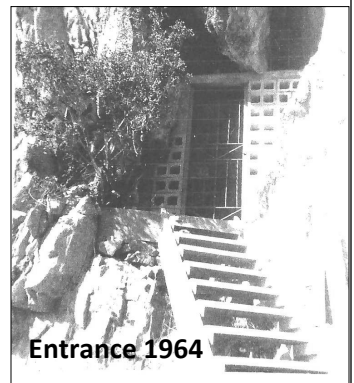
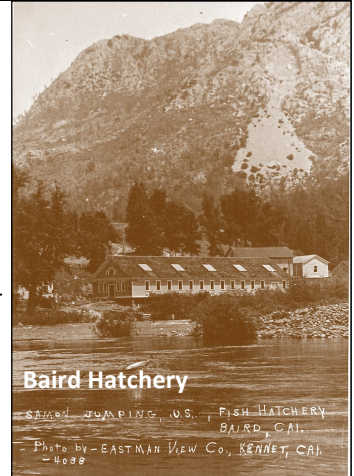
Stone took a train to Red Bluff (at that time the terminus of the railroad north), a stage-coach to Redding, and then rode horseback to the Pit River. Upon his inspection, he knew he had found the perfect place. *The fish hatchery was quickly built and named Baird, for Spencer Baird, the Fish Commissioner of the United States.*

The mountains above the hatchery are known as the *Grey Rocks*, and are home to multiple caves. The largest and most well-known though is Lake Shasta Caverns. The Caverns have gone through several names through the years. The first was Stoneman, for some human bones found near the entrance but for the most part, the Caverns were best known as the "Baird Caves" for the fish hatchery.

Employees at Baird spent their free time exploring the cliffs above them. *New research* has found an earlier documented entry date into the caverns. *A journal entry dated Sunday, August 2, 1874 by Livingston Stone reads "Nearly all the camp turned out to-day, it being Sunday, in search of another cave in the mountain, of which we had heard rumors. The cave was found after some difficulty, and extending through a long, winding, passage-way, which ended in a chamber 50 feet high, 150 feet long, and 40 feet wide."*

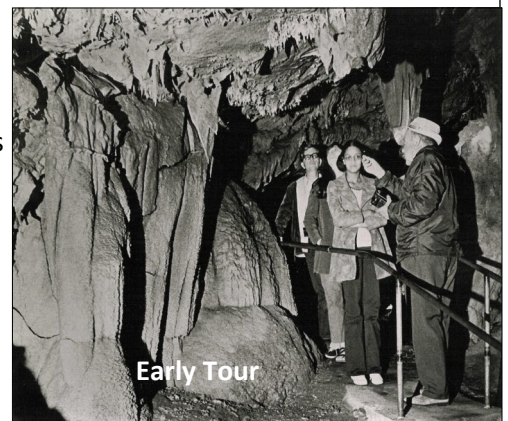
In 1877 Charles Morton, a Wintu Native American, rediscovered the Caverns. In 1878 Morton and hatchery employee James A. Richardson descended into the Caverns and left their names on the wall with soot from their carbide lamps, which are still visible today. Many other people subsequently visited the Caverns and left their names on the walls of the cave as well, before the cave was secured and construction for tours began in 1959.

The original recorded ownership of the area in which Lake Shasta Caverns is located, was held by the Central Pacific Railroad. This was deeded to the railroad by the United States Government. The railroad sold this land to Cora L. Moxley in 1905. Upon Cora Moxley's death in 1935, a portion of the estate was sold to a Mr. Wood and a Mr. Gerard. Lake Shasta Caverns, known then as Baird Caves, was carved out of the estate and in 1944 sold to Grace M. Tucker. In 1960 Mrs. Tucker interested Roy, Glenn, and Edward Thompson in the development of the cave system as a show cave. The Caverns are now privately owned.



The first tour was held in May of 1964. Since then, more than 2.5 million guests have come to visit the Caverns!

In 2012 Lake Shasta Caverns was designated a *National Natural Landmark*, a site that possesses exceptional value as an illustration of the nation's natural heritage and contributes to a better understanding of the environment.



We hope you'll come and "Cave into your Curiosity!"

By "Cave-in Dave" Mundt

(FB or www.lakeshastacaverns.com to learn about the dinner cruise and cave tours)

The future brings unexpected things, would be an understatement.

We had just reopened the Boomtown Museum to the public after repairing our water damaged wall. *Channel 7* gave promotional coverage on the evening news, and after that we had many visitors who came to share our history. We were so excited. New interviews were recorded, school field trips scheduled, and we received donations from local Dam Families.

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic and the activities at the Boomtown Museum (like everywhere) came to a screeching halt. When we were closed for repairs in the Fall 2019, volunteers continued to work in the office completing projects, and plans continued to evolve. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, we closed the office, turned out the lights and went into a holding pattern. As with everyone else in the world, our future plans hinged on the end of this horrible virus.

As activities slowed and people remained at home, our volunteers maintained a positive attitude. We used the time to enjoy our beautiful spring, reflect on our lives and look forward to the time of being together again. So until the day arrives that we can reopen our museum and greet you, stay healthy, stay positive and be supportive to those around you. We are a strong bunch of folks – We are Dam Strong! *Deb*



THANK YOU – for your donations since our November newsletter, because of you—we are!

2019 Giving Tuesday: Benefactors: Kay Kobe, John Duckett, Carla Thompson, Bill & Darlene Brown, Del & Gerda Hiebert, Mike & Donna Daniels, Rick & Karen Fox, Matt & Carrie Kibler, Barbara & Don Cross, Pam & Steve Morgan, John Kenny. Kimberly Owens, Butch & Bonnie Hurlhey, Nancy Shaw, Cheryl Hull, Sandra Israel, Linda Speer, Ed VanVynct, Alice Scarbrough. Debbie Israel - "in memory of Chuck Israel who loved history and museums. Thank you all for what you do to keep the history of "OUR" town!"

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS and Donations

Individuals: Doug Russell, Dwain Harty; Ronnie Jean Nilson; Betty Smith; Eugene Leach; Ann Allison; Kim Smith; John Reynolds; Victor Russo; Kathryn Nowaski; Pat Harrison; Ruth Ann Kobe; Barrett Chilton-WA and Andrew Church-Carnelian Bay;

Benefactors: Ed Glacken; Marian Trapp; Steve & Pam Morgan; Deb & Earl West; Brian Bigelow-Manteca; Bert Boothroyd-Salinas, Nancy Brewold-Johnson-Medford OR; Scott & Karen Louis-Scottsdale AZ

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS Benefactors: Betty & Phil Leas-Weed Family: Darrin Sargent-Vacaville; John & Rita Dougherty-Redding and Individuals: Walt & Kaye Fehlman-Cameron Park; Dee Nelson-TX

~And to these Benefactors for choosing us as one of their "2019 charitable year-end contributions"

Gary Bohn – Omaha NE; Bill Polf – Pittsboro NC; Joe & Nicole Preston -Palo Alto CA

Do you want to receive your newsletter in paper or online?

We are trying to save costs on printing and postage but we want to do our best for you! So it is your choice.
If you prefer to read your newsletter online, email your address to: slhandhs@gmail.com and put it attention: Deb



Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th.

Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. *A day designated to honor and remember* those in the military who gave the ultimate sacrifice to our country, *their life*. A day to say we remember, "you are not forgotten"

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

Please check the date next to your name for membership dues renewal.

Thank you for helping us save on reminder postal costs. It is appreciated!

IN MEMORIUM

JOHN STROHMAYER 10/1946-11/2019

Donations by: Bill & Darlene Brown; Barbara & Don Cross
Darlene - *"John grew up in Central Valley, loved Baseball, made it into the Major Leagues and then returned home to teach and coach at CVHS and mentor students. A good friend, he is truly missed."*

MARVIN BEAVER 5/1940-4/2020

Donations by: Bill & Darlene Brown; Barbara & Don Cross and Bruce & Vicky Tavey. Bruce - *"Marvin was a Dam good kid from a Dam good town, Central Valley. Marvin was a Great grand friend"*.

PAUL STREMPLE 1931- 4/2020

A volunteer, Paul with his friends, Jack Trapp & John Ures, served wine at our annual "Dinner & A Movie" celebration for many years.



We try to be accurate but please, 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 scanned and/or reprinted or reproduced without contacting us for permission of use. Thank you.

Darlene Brown , Editor Alice Scarbrough, Asst. Editor

We are so grateful for photos and memorabilia from:
Michael Fish (Collection of items of the Pioneer Fish family/Bass School/CVHS), **Ed Glacken** (adding to the Gregory Pioneer Family collection), **Scott Louis** (Boy Scouts), **Jean Nilson** (Mecca Roller Rink/CV Cafe), **Connie Strohmayr** (Judge Tibbitts letter), the recorded interviews of **Joy McFate & Carl Benoit** and more.



Arrowheads

Boy Scout badges



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