

Museum Matters

January-February-March 2021

Volume 2021 No. 1



Douglas County Historical Society

1477 US Highway 395 N. Suite B
Gardnerville, NV 89410-5214

Monday-Friday,
11 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Closed Saturday & Sunday

Phone: 775-782-2555
Fax: 775-783-8802

Website: www.HistoricNV.org
Email: DCHS@HistoricNV.org

DCHS OFFICERS

Linda Lechien, President
Janice Beerwinkle,
Vice-President
Linda Avance, Secretary
Guy Proto, Treasurer

TRUSTEES

Linda Avance
Janice Beerwinkle
Dale Bohlman
Frank Dressel
Marlena Hellwinkel
Mike Henningsen
Linda Lechien
Pat Maebe
Tom Mc Manus
Mary Orr
Guy Proto
Curator: Gail Allen

Museum Matters is the official newsletter of the Douglas County Historical Society ©2021

The Life of a Basque Sheepherder



Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba's Basque Exhibit at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center

DOUGLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEE MEETINGS

Trustee meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center at 3:00 p.m. Members and friends are always welcome to attend.

January 21, February 18, and March 18, 2021

"The Douglas County Historical Society seeks to enrich lives by preserving local history and making it accessible to our communities and visitors."

From the Basque Country to the Sheep Camps of the Carson Valley

or in Basque: "Eskual—Herritik Carson Valley—ko Artzain Kanpamendurat"



Many first-generation immigrants were still alive when the local Basque Club "Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba" came together in 1981, dedicated to the promotion and preservation of Basque culture.

When the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center opened in the old Douglas High School, the club created the "Tribute to Sheepherders in Carson Valley" exhibit. Headed by Anita Izoco, the exhibit committee not only collected the artifacts and photographs on exhibit, but also the tales of Basque pioneers and their challenges facing a new home in a land with languages and customs that were completely foreign to them.

The Basque are among the most ancient people of Europe, living continuously in the region known as the Basque Country "Euskal Herria". Their language has no known link to any other, giving rise to numerous

theories and speculations surrounding the mystery of their origins. Leaving their homeland that straddled the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, they arrived with a deeply ingrained work ethic. Along with their ability to learn quickly, adapt to new circumstances, and remain loyal over time, this allowed these early settlers to prosper. Starting out working as sheepherders, most went on to open their own businesses.

They either bought their own ranches after a few years of saving, or went into the hotel business. These hotels were at the heart of a Basque immigrant's life. They went to the hotels to look for work, have social gatherings, to attend weddings, christenings, funerals, and even play in handball tournaments. Many women would come to the Overland, French, or East Fork hotels to have their babies, with the hotel operator's wife acting as midwife.

The 1848 gold rush in California lured many Basques, and from there they moved into Nevada and other states. Although they had never herded sheep in their native land, they became highly sought after because of their skill and dedication. The payroll records of Dangberg Land and Livestock Company here in the Carson Valley show the first Basques working for them in 1896. It was a time when there were huge herds of sheep roaming our landscape and the surrounding mountains.

Running sheep was not for everyone. Going for months on end without seeing or speaking to another human being was challenging. It was a lonely and demanding life, testing the limits of personal tolerance and abilities.

In the earliest times, they would have just a bedroll, but the museum exhibit shows the elements necessary to survive in a typical summer camp set-up that developed from that. Over the years, pick-up trucks, water storage containers, and lanterns have changed, but the basics have remained the same.

Two animals accompanied the shepherd: a donkey to carry his saddlebags and supplies, and a dog (usually a border collie) to help herd the sheep and keep the extreme loneliness at bay. At first candles were most often used, being lighter and easier to carry. The fire pit and Dutch oven provided warmth and sustenance. The unexpected snowstorm, a typical occurrence in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, could easily take your life. It was a job filled with hardships and danger.

Many sheepherders left their mark, documenting the endless hours and days on their own, by carving into the bark of the noble aspen trees. Etching their name and the date in a lyrical handwritten script, they proclaimed, "I am here!" Many drew pictures of the women they missed and loved, prize fighters and other people who were notable at the time, or even simple images like a running deer. The exhibit contains a section of a tree, donated by the United States Forest Service, that shows these arboglyphs (or tree drawings). The groves of aspens provided a welcome and sheltering shade for the herder during the high heat of summer.

The shepherds hook was most often used during lambing and shearing times back at the ranch. They would grab the back leg of the sheep to guide it. It took special observational and empathetic knowledge to understand and handle a herd, keeping it safe as it moved to new pastures.

The mural backdrop is by artist R. K. Sutherland. It captures the feeling of the landscape. Although the sheepherder was surrounded by breath-taking grandeur and beauty, it was the closeness of the families and Basque community in Carson Valley that gave the herder the support system he needed. The Club maintains this popular exhibit.

Happenings at the Museum

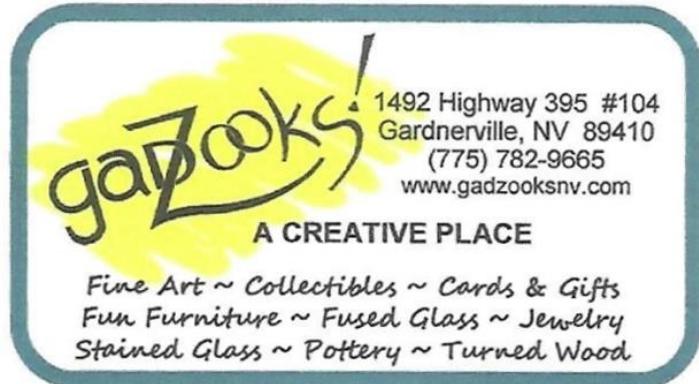
Finding creative solutions during turbulent times



Though 2020 was a disastrous year for our annual fundraising and special programs, we were fortunate that 2019 and 2020 were great years for grants! The Douglas County Historical Society completed the repair of the front entry steps at the old Douglas High School. We received \$35,400 of the total cost of \$37,470 from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Centers & Historic Preservation.

We also completed the Edwin L. Wiegand Ranching and Agricultural Heritage Exhibit. Through their challenge grant of \$229,500 and \$210,000 in member contributions this new exhibit is now open. The installation of the artifacts will be an ongoing project throughout 2021. Donations for this and other ancillary items would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, the entrance to the Courthouse Museum in Genoa will get a facelift with a \$53,000 grant from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Centers & Historic Preservation. This project will begin early spring.



Please Support Our Friends and Sponsors:

A Wildflower Florist
A.B.E. Printing & Copy Center
Barbara Smallwood, Peak Real Estate
Bently Enterprises / Bently Heritage
Borges Sleigh and Carriage Rides
Carson Now!
Carson Valley Community Theater
Carson Valley Inn
Carson Valley Lion's Club
Carson Valley Literary Club
Carson Valley Small Business Services
Clairitage Press
C.O.D. Casino, Minden
Douglas County Elks Lodge #2670
Douglas County, Nevada
Douglas County High School Class of 62

ECV Snowshoe Thompson Chapter
Friends of Snowshoe Thompson
Gadzooks!
Genoa Company, Roger A Falcke
Harrah's/Harvey's Resort Casino, Lake Tahoe
J. T. Basque Bar & Dining Room
Jacobs Family Berry Farm
Main Street Gardnerville
The Record Courier
Sierra Chef, Genoa
Starbucks
Three Castle Engineering
Town of Gardnerville
Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC, Minden
Western History ALIVE
Woodett's Diner

Contact the DCHS at 775-782-2555 to advertise in our newsletter or for other sponsorship opportunities.

DCHS Volunteers

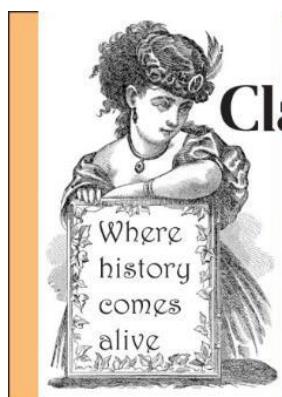
2020 Volunteers of the Year at Genoa Museum and CCM&CC

by Linda Lechien, DCHS President

The Genoa Courthouse Museum Volunteers of the Year for 2020 are a special duo: mother Carol Hall and her daughter Meaghan. Carol and Meaghan prefer to work together and have been volunteering since 2013. Carol always knew that when the time came to retire, she would be moving to Carson Valley where she and her family often visited on vacations. Carol says she loves being a part of sharing our Valley's rich history with visitors because in Genoa the pioneer story is very much alive.

Meaghan grew up in the Bay Area, vacationing every year with her family in the Tahoe area. She moved to Gardnerville in 2014, taking a once a week drive all around the Valley. Most often, she ended up in Genoa and says she loves the smell of pine trees, our majestic mountains, and the history found here. Since her mother was already a volunteer, it was only natural for her to join her mother there. Her first day happened to be during Candy Dance in 2015 and she was so proud to be part of something so special.

Joanne Blessing is the Gardnerville Museum Volunteer of the Year for 2020. Before graduating from Chapel Hill School for Girls in Brookline, Massachusetts, she used to visit her grandfather in Amsterdam, New York. It was there she developed a love for history and how it influenced and shaped her family. After graduating from Chamberlayne Jr. College in Boston, she was hired by the Boston Hospital for Women as secretary for their clinic. In the late 1960s she and a few of her friends decided to leave their jobs and move west. In 1970 Joanne settled in Gardnerville and in April 2011 she started volunteering for our museum. Joanne began researching her family history in 2019 and became a member of Daughters of the American Revolution, followed by membership in Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.



Clairitage Press
Find our books at the
DCHS Book Store
www.Clairitage.com



**TRUST REALTY
GROUP**
NRED #S.0015253
775.720.9767
smallwoodsells@aol.com



**BARBARA S.
SMALLWOOD**
REALTOR®



JACK ZA
P.O. Box 31624 - St. Louis, MO 63131
Tel: (314)973-5099
Email: jzamusic12@gmail.com
WWW.JACKZAMUSIC.COM

Jack Za is creating a historical musical about the Carson Valley
For more information: jzamusic12@gmail.com
www.jackzamusic.com

The Douglas County Historical Society seeks to enrich lives by preserving local history and making it accessible to our communities and visitors.

**Help keep your history alive!
Join the Douglas County Historical Society**

Membership Benefits:

- Free admission to both museums
- 10% discount at Museum Bookstores
- Bimonthly DCHS Newsletter & member updates
- Invitations to special events
- Discounts on special programs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Free admission to our DCHS Lecture Series

Annual Membership Dues:

____ \$ 20 Student
____ \$ 30 Individual
____ \$ 40 Couple
____ \$ 40 Family - Parents & Children under 17
____ \$ 20 Senior Individual (60+)
____ \$ 30 Senior Couple (60+)
____ \$500 Lifetime Individual
____ \$750 Lifetime Couple

Name(s):

Mailing Address:

E-mail Address:

Phone: (_____) ____ - ____

Return this page along with your dues to:

Douglas County Historical Society
1477 US Hwy 395 N, Suite B
Gardnerville, NV 89410-5214

I am interested in volunteering at the museums.
Please call me.

To All Members:

Please make sure that the Museum has your correct address, phone number, and email. Thank you!

The Membership Committee

**Gifts & Memorials
In Memory of**

**Kenneth D. Gardner, Jr.
Mahlon Hussman
Barbara Kowalski
Louis "Louie" Micheo
Joyce Neddenriep
Patricia Martin Rahbeck**

The Douglas County Historical Society accepts monetary gifts as memorials to honor your loved ones.

To make or discuss a donation, please visit or call our front office.

*Donations may also be mailed to:
Douglas County Historical Society
1477 US Highway 395 North, Suite B
Gardnerville, NV 89410*

V&T Exhibit Funding Campaign

Our new Virginia & Truckee Railroad Exhibit continues to grow. We are seeking related artifacts, ephemera, and paraphernalia in addition to cash donations to enhance the items already here. If you have a donation to contribute, please contact us at 775 782-2555 from Monday through Friday between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. You can also email DCHS@historicnv.org.

DCHS Wish List – Can You Help?



- White Printer Paper
- Forever Postage Stamps
- Metal 5-Bike Rack

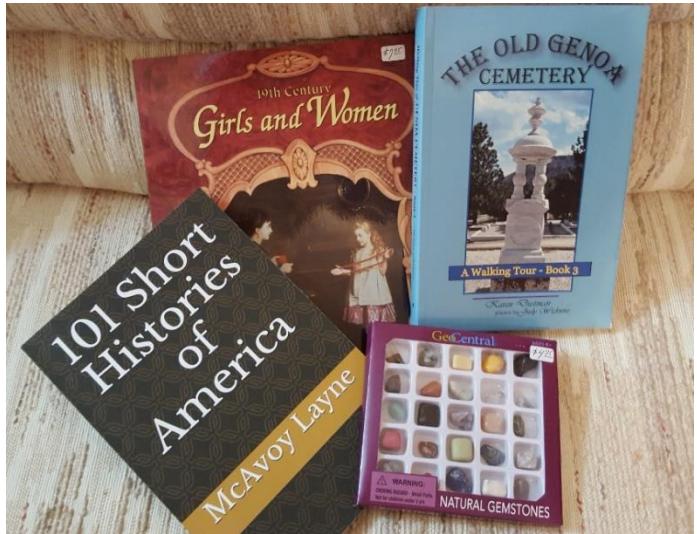
Correct Address



The United States Post Office has advised us we need to use our full street address. Correspondence not having the full address, will be returned to sender. Please be sure you are using:

Douglas County Historical Society
1477 US Highway 395 N, Suite B
Gardnerville, Nevada 89410

From the Bookstore



Winter is a good time to read about our local history. We have two new books by local authors, hot off the press, ready for you to buy and enjoy. You will be supporting our museum with your purchases.

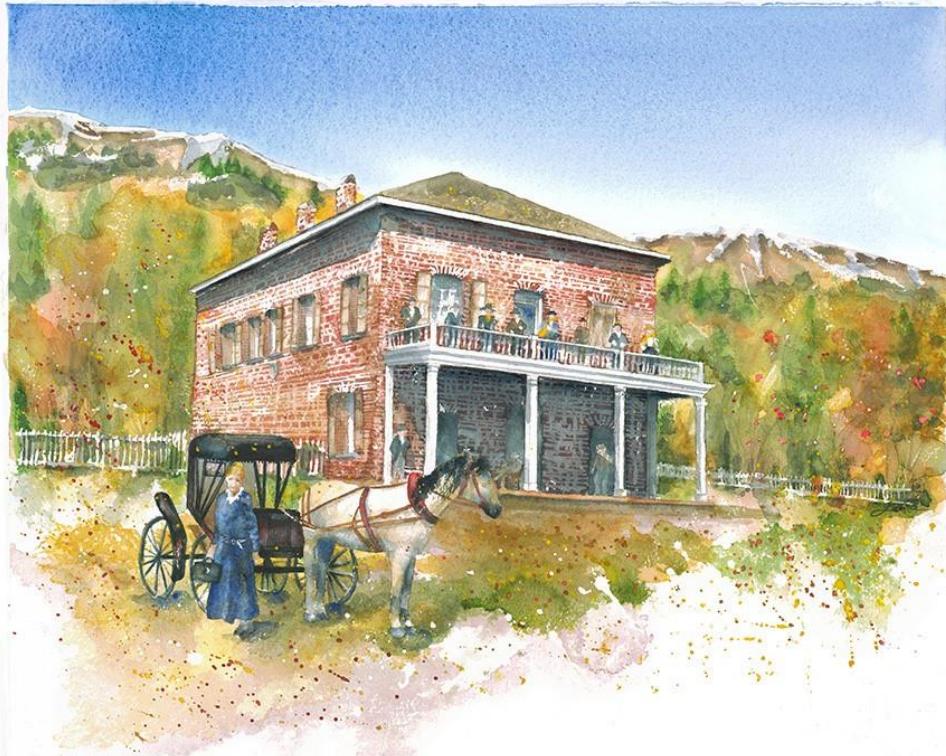
Karen Dustman's ***The Old Genoa Cemetery: A Walking Tour--Book 3*** is now selling, along with books 1 and 2. This is an excellent cold season read, as Karen has stories about the people whose graves she visits, along with fascinating footnotes and often pictures.

McAvoy Layne lives in Lake Tahoe. Many of us know him better as Mark Twain, as he has portrayed him for over 30 years with 4,000 plus performances. His book, ***101 Short Histories of America*** is enjoyable and funny. It has a real Twain sense of humor. Read a story a day. It will leave you laughing, (or at least smiling), regardless of COVID or the weather!

For the kids, we have another book by Bobbie Kalman, a favorite children's author. This one is ***19th Century Girls and Women***. It is sure to be enjoyed, with pictures and stories that make learning fun. For older children we also have boxes of polished natural gemstones to enjoy. Each gem name is on the back of the box. Come visit us!

DCHS Members receive 10% off their purchases from our bookstores.

End of Year Giving



Our End of Year Giving card is now available for purchase in our bookstores.

We sincerely thank the following parties for their work and contribution towards this campaign.

Original Watercolor
by LaVonne LaTulip Vasick
nevadartbylavonne.com

Art Gallery At Prism
ArtGalleryAtPrism.com

FastFrame Carson City
FastFrameCV.com

R & S Optimum Offset
775-267-4553

Friends & Family of
Dennis Robert Little

TREASURES FROM THE VAULT

Basque Artifacts from the Overland Hotel & Bar

In 2021, the Douglas County Historical Society will be focusing on the different cultures which have been part of creating Douglas County as we know it today. This issue we are highlighting exhibits that relate to Basque culture. We recently received several interesting items from the Overland Hotel in Gardnerville. This Basque Hotel was a central gathering place for locals.



This wooden sign with red and green lettering on a white background was one of the restaurant's exterior signs. After so many years outside, it shows deterioration from the weather. It is on exhibit in the downstairs hallway at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center in Gardnerville.

Nearby is an exhibit with Jai Alai baskets and a carved image of a man dressed in traditional Basque clothing playing the game. There is a signed poster of the professional 'Pelota' player, Ruben Beloki. The autographed message reads, "Para Overland Hotel con afecto, Ruben Beloki". Basque Pelota is the name for a variety of court sports played with a ball.

Upstairs at CVM&CC near the large Basque Sheep Camp exhibit, are a traditional drum and flute used in Basque music. The musician holds and plays the drum or 'tamboril' with one hand, and plays the flute or 'txistu' with the other hand. There is also carved wooden figure showing how the two instruments are played together.



These local artifacts were received through the generous donations from people just like you. Donations like this permit us to continue our commitment to our organizational Mission Statement, which reads, "***The Douglas County Historical Society seeks to enrich lives by preserving local history and making it accessible to our communities and visitors.***"

If you have artifacts that you would like to donate to DCHS, please contact the Curator, Gail Allen, at 775-782-2555 or Curator@HistoricNV.org.

DOUGLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1477 US Highway 395 N, Suite B
Gardnerville, NV 89410-5214



DELIVER TO:

*The Douglas County Historical Society
seeks to enrich lives by preserving
local history and making it accessible
to our communities and visitors.*

Advertise in This Newsletter

Advertising space is available to the community for promoting businesses, services and special events. Not only will you be helping support the Historical Society, but your business will benefit as well. Funds received from this effort help defray costs of printing and postage for this newsletter.

AD SIZE	ISSUE	YEAR (4 Issues)
Standard Business Card	\$20	\$ 70
Quarter page	\$30	\$100

To purchase an ad please contact us at:

775-782-2555

Monday thru Friday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
or email your information to
DCHS@HistoricNV.org

*Please give us a call if you wish to
sponsor or host a DCHS event or activity.*

DCHS Upcoming Events

Per governmental directives regarding attendance we have temporarily suspended face-to-face events. We are in the process of moving our programs to online social media. DCHS members will receive email blasts detailing our programs and social media links, lectures and other special features as they become available. We also encourage you to follow us on Facebook

Douglas County Historical Society, Nevada
for a listing of all our upcoming events.

Visit us www.HistoricNV.org
Email us DCSH@HistoricNV.org
Call us 775-782-2555