

Museum Matters

January February March 2022

Volume 2022 No. 1



Douglas County Historical Society

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Monday - Friday,
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Happy New Year

On behalf of the Douglas County Historical Society's Board of Trustees, we wish to extend our best wishes to our members and friends for a prosperous 2022.

Though the past two years presented new challenges and obstacles, we have been extremely rewarded by the outstanding efforts of our members, volunteers and staff who worked diligently to keep us up and running during the pandemic. As we enter 2022 we'll be facing new challenges. We know things will never return to "normal" as we knew it, but this is how history works. Each element of time redirects us down a new path and we don't know where this will lead us. We do not know what this will be, but we're confident with your continued support and encouragement it will bring even greater things to our museums.

Though our 2021 community programs were reduced from previous years, staff made the most of this time and accomplished many projects at our museums.

- Staff has been working diligently in staging the Edwin L. Wiegand Ranching & Agricultural Heritage Exhibit with many new artifacts reflecting the rich agricultural legacy of our valley.
- Staff installed five hundred linear feet of shelving in our storage rooms creating space need to properly catalog, box, and safely store the many artifacts, exhibit items and supplies needed to run our programs.

Our goals for 2022 include:

- The completion of the repairs and restorations at the Courthouse Museum in Genoa, funded in part a generous grant from the Nevada Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation.
- The repair of the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center's flag pole surround and lighting.
- The initiation of a program to systematically replace the carpeting in the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center including the possibility of the repair of the original hardwood flooring in select exhibit rooms.

As we face the future we thought it would be interesting to review our past. Our feature article for this edition looks at the founding of the Carson Valley Historical Society and our first sixty years of history.

DOUGLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEE MEETINGS

Trustee meetings are held 3:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of every month at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center.

Members and friends are always welcome to attend.

January 20, February 17, and March 17, 2022

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

Carson Valley Historical Society 1961 - 2021

~ by Debbe Nye, DCHS Volunteer Researcher

On 7 May 1961, Grace Dangberg, Anna Heise and Anna Neddenriep Dressler co-founded an organization designed to “promote interest in the history of the upper valley of the Carson River.” About thirty women from pioneer families had been invited to a luncheon at Gardnerville’s now-demolished Pyrenees Hotel. Their guest of honor was a student who had been sent by the University of Nevada’s history department to collect Carson Valley stories. The amount of interest shown by the community in preserving local history at that event led to the creation of a new group, the *Carson Valley Historical Society* [CVHS].

As the name suggests, the focus was not on a county---but rather on the geographical feature that just happens to be split between two counties in two states. The Tahoe region was not included, but portions of Alpine county were. In time, the emphasis would change to a more conventional county organization, with the current name adopted in 2004.

The first CVHS event was a potluck picnic held in August at Minden Park. Over one hundred people attended, including descendants of the early settlers along with other residents interested in local history.

REMARKS* Father's name was *John Dangberg* until he married the widowed mother of Wilhelm who was possessed of the estate of her husband; the married name of the couple then became Dangberg and the children of the marriage bore the name Dangberg, the name of the estate.

After ~~his~~ moving to Minden and building a ~~home~~ there in "Uncle William" became the "mayor" of the village, by courtesy.

When the armistice was proclaimed in 1918, it was "Uncle William" who raised the American flag and had the town children salute and sing "America".

The University of Nevada librarian spoke of the importance of collecting and preserving written materials, which led to the first project—assembling detailed biographies of the early Carson Valley pioneers, especially the European immigrants.

Families provided the details of their ancestors' lives in both the "old country" and America. As

genealogists are aware, this information can be difficult to obtain, even with today's digitized records. In some cases, anecdotes were shared that otherwise might have been lost forever.

This significant undertaking was a priority, so by the fall of 1962, Grace Dangberg was able to share with the University of Nevada the records of about 120 people. The University used this information, along with other compiled data, to discover previously unknown facts about immigration trends in Carson Valley.

Unsurprisingly, in the 1960s, CVHS became a significant force in the community, successfully tackling other major projects: leasing the old court house in Genoa, creating the Van Sickle collection and obtaining non-profit status.

But there is still one question about the founding that needs to be addressed.

The question: Why did it take 110 years to form a local historical society?

The answer: It's complicated. But it's not because the residents were uninterested or hadn't tried before.

In the East, state historical societies were largely operating before the mid-1800s—and often funded by established residents whose families had lived in the area for many generations.

The situation in the West, however, was different. Preserving the past was not a priority—many, if not most, residents were mainly concerned with their personal futures. They had to worry about simply surviving, physically and economically. A large percent of the people were transients who planned to return home after making the fortunes of their dreams. Without a permanent population, there was little sense of a community with a shared history worth saving.

This was especially true in the Silver State. While most of the other western states had established official historical societies shortly after their statehoods, the Nevada Historical Society (NHS) wasn't founded until 1904. What Nevada did have—along with most other western states—was a “pioneer society,” a social organization limited to people who had settled in the area by a certain date.

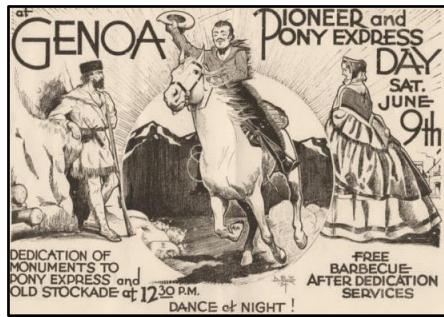
Continued from Page 3: Carson Valley Historical Society 1961 - 2021

In 1872, the Nevada chapter of the Pacific Coast Pioneers was founded in Virginia City. While at times it appeared to be mainly a men's drinking club, stories were told of the old days and documents and ore samples collected.

One notable accomplishment, before it disbanded in the late 1880s, was starting the tradition of celebrating Nevada's Admission Day. Interestingly, in 1914 the NHS started another such group, the Society of Nevada Pioneers, to ensure their stories, documents and artifacts were preserved.

This emphasis on honoring pioneers continued, and in 1946, the remaining territorial pioneers, including Carson Valley's oldest resident Cerissa Mott Fettic, were recognized in the Admission Day events in Carson City.

Pioneer gatherings were held in several locations around the state, including Genoa. According to the 16 April 1926 Record-Courier, all pioneers were urged to attend a picnic the next day, as "*a large number of students of the University of Nevada*" were traveling to Genoa, wishing to meet the old settlers.



Pioneer Day picnics were sometimes combined with other celebrations, as this 1934 poster by Lew Hymers depicts.

Along with preserving stories, the NHS Secretary took many collecting trips throughout the state, bringing back to Reno important documents and significant artifacts. Early trips to Carson Valley led to numerous items leaving the area including relics of Stephen Kinsey and a gun purported to belong to "Lucky Bill" Thorington.

Where did these historic books, documents and artifacts belong—a central location or close to where they originated? At the time, NHS was the only

repository for these items, and a better choice than the California museums and libraries that already had a significant amount of Nevada-related items in their collections.

In 1948, the reconstruction of Mormon Station was finished--there was finally a museum in Carson Valley.

The next year, the first local organization, the *Genoa Historical Society* [GHS], was formed to gather and preserve historical information for future generations by placing them in the new museum. The oldest pioneer, Cerissa Fettic, was named honorary president.

Newspaper articles mentioned the group was involved in preserving old Genoa buildings, as well as handling the inquiries about the 1951 Genoa centennial celebration.

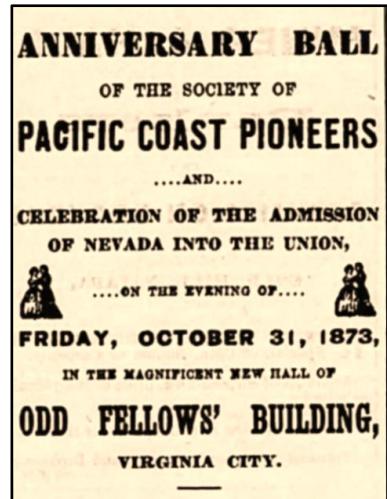
There are no mentions of GHS in the newspapers after 1951. It appears that its activities, along with improving the grounds at Mormon Station and keeping its museum open—were assumed by the American Women's Voluntary Services, Carson Valley unit [AWVS].

Two weeks after CVHS was formed at the May 1961 Pyrenees Hotel luncheon, AWVS announced it was considering "reinstating" the GHS, perhaps to assist with the State's new plans to restore the former Court House for use as the Mormon Station visitor's center and expanded museum. But that apparently never happened.

One last item of note--CVHS was not the first county historical society in the state. In the 1950s, Elko, Lander and Nye-Esmeralda formed groups. And Clark County had already established one in 1926!

But CVHS was the first one in the immediate area, and many of the surrounding counties would soon follow in its footsteps. The organizations arose from centennial celebrations of their county (Alpine, Churchill), attempts to save endangered buildings (Carson, Lyon), a need to run a museum (Lake Tahoe) and one to preserve "true history" (Storey).

CVHS/DCHS was created as a traditional historical society to function as a library, an archive and a museum. It has helped bring our community together through education programs and shared celebrations of historic events, such as the bell ringing on November 11th. It has erected historical markers and published local histories. And through its acquisition of two historic buildings in Genoa and Gardnerville--and transforming them into its two museums, it has directly preserved Carson Valley history that might otherwise have been lost.



Happenings at the Museum

2021 Holiday Gala and the winners are...



Gallery of Trees:

Do. Co. Democratic Women
Do. Co. Republican Women
Chamber of Commerce
DCHS Pioneer Christmas
DAR, John C Fremont Chapter
Carson Valley Woodturners
Carson Valley Quilt Guide
Empty Bowls of Do. Co.
DCHS Gingerbread Tree
Santa Tree
Friends of Snowshoe
Soroptimist International



Gingerbread House Winners:

"Hometown Giving" 1st Place Family Division by the Petter Family
"Christmas Cottage" 2nd Place Family Division by the Gracza Family
"Welcome to Winterland" 1st Place Adult Division by Linda Lemley
"Sleep in Heavenly Peace" 2nd Place Adult Division by Kathleen Petter
Shown: The People Choice Awards went to the Petter Family

FAMILY DAY AT THE MUSEUM

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday, February 5

Join us for our Valentine Tribute. Scavenger Hunt! Follow the clues and correctly match a dozen red hearts to artifacts on display at the Carson Valley Day Museum and Cultural Center and win a prize. Free Admission!

VOLUNTEER COFFEE at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center

9:00 a.m. February 7 & March 7

The DCHS hosts a coffee social for our volunteers and those wishing to learn more about volunteer opportunities and the latest Happenings at the Museum.

HERITAGE LECTURE SERIES: 6:00 p.m. Thursday February 10

\$5 at the Door / DCHS & Alpine County Historical Society members free.



WOMEN IN HISTORY

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Nominations for our 2022 Woman in History Remembering Project are now being accepted. Inspired by the National Women's History Project and the Nevada Women's History Project, the Historical Society collects the stories of Douglas County women who might otherwise be forgotten. All information collected will become property of the Douglas County Historical Society and archived in the Van Sickle Research Room at the Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center in Gardnerville and also with the Nevada Women's History Project in Reno. This is your opportunity to commemorate a member of your family or a community woman who has contributed to the rich heritage of our community. Nomination packets are available at our museum or can be downloaded online at DCHS@HistoricNV.org. Nominations must be received by February 11.

BED TURNING: 10:00 a.m. Saturday, March 19

Hosted by the Carson Valley Quilt Guild: Doors Open 10:00 a.m.

Bed Turnings at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Free Admission

Our sincerest thanks to all who participated in our annual Holiday Gala. It was a delight to see so many friends and new faces at the event. Only \$22 separated the top two trees. Of course, in our books all entries were winners. Thanks to their efforts \$1,318 was raised to help promote museum programs. We were sad the current conditions prevented us from hosting Santa's Cookie Shop, but we're already working on plans for this December.

Volunteer's Corner

By Linda Lechien, President, DCHS Board of Trustees

Sharon Hennessy-Bonas is much more to our two museums than the definition of "Museum Housekeeper." Sharon is our first alert to things going wrong with maintenance issues or exhibits that need repair. She is also integral with our fundraising events to ensure our museums are in top shape prior to community events. Though Sharon works afterhours once we have locked up, you will often see her at many of our special events. So, we are pleased to present Sharon in her own words...

Sharon Hennessy-Bonas: Not many members of the museum know of me as my involvement with the museums is conducted when the museums are closed. I am Sharon Hennessy-Bonas and I have been the Housekeeper of the Carson Valley Museum and the Genoa Courthouse Museum going on 14 years. My work at the museums has provided me a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the rich heritage that is the foundation of this wonderful valley.

I was born in Bound Brook, New Jersey. Shortly thereafter, my family moved to the Jersey Shore where I was privately educated throughout my elementary and secondary school years. I graduated from Monmouth University with a BS in Education, and while teaching, earned a MA, also in Education from Kean College of New Jersey. Having reached my goals in teaching, I transitioned to being Director of Education for a trade association in New York City.

Marriage and family followed, with our family then moving west. The move west also redirected me from using my education in the secular systems to a more faith based venue. I've been Director of Religious Education for two catholic parishes, and after 34 years, am still teaching religious education, most currently at St. Gall. I was Dean of the Benedictine Oblates for 6 years and currently minister to the sick and homebound. The ministry most touching to me is being head of the Rosary Makers. This ministry has 24 rosary makers. We make and ship rosaries to the poorest of the poor in Africa and India. We have made and shipped 297,047 rosaries over the past 13 years. The ministry is financially self-sufficient, supported through raffles and private donations so as to not incur its expenses on the church. This ministry has taken on a life of its own. Requests for rosaries are constantly mailed to us from far off destinations. You can find supplies in my garage for 26,000 rosaries anytime throughout the year! I relax from the volunteering by making quilts and water coloring.

While engaging in all of the above, I became a widow, and years later, met my current husband at St. Gall Catholic Church. A stepdaughter was added to my three sons.

The one question that I am asked most often is: "Both museums are very old and are associated with historic events. Have you had any encounters with spirits that might inhabit the museums?" I have not. I am always comfortable in the museums while at the same time willing to share the space. Years ago, a professional group was brought in to evaluate if there was a presence in the museum. I was simply told by one of the investigators that the prior custodian was very pleased with the current housekeeper! I appreciate the approval.



Volunteer's Coffee Social Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center

The DCHS hosts a coffee social for our volunteers and those wishing to learn more about volunteer opportunities at our museums. Held 9:00 a.m. on the first Monday of every month (unless preempted by a public holiday) museum staff presents the latest information on the operation of our museums and upcoming programs. No need to RSVP. Join us on February 7, and March 7 to learn all about our operations and upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Lisa Selcer: Front Desk Volunteer Coordinator

CALLING ALL "MEN OF THE MUSEUM"

Keeping with tradition, we are looking for gentlemen to wait on our annual Ladies' Sunday Tea to be held on May 1. If you would like to join the "Men of the Museum" give us a call at 775-782-2555.

DCHS COMMITTEES: We have positions on the following committees and teams: Museum Docents, Young Chautauqua Classroom Assistant, Fundraising Committee, Marketing & Publicity Committee, and Assistant Event Coordinators for History Comes Alive & Barn Tour. Call our front office for more information 775-782-2555.

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
- 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:

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

To All Renewing Members: Please make sure we have your correct address, phone number, and email. If you move, change your phone or email, please let us know!

Last quarter gifts & memorials were made in Memory of

**Jim Summers
Jim Miller
Shirley Jones
Thelma Johnson**

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*



Douglas County Historical Society runs the Carson Valley Museum and Cultural Center and

the Courthouse Museum in Genoa. From Armed Forces Day to Labor Day every summer, both museums are happy to participate in the Blue Star Museums initiative, a program that provides free admission to currently serving US military personnel and their families.

Wish List:

- 1st Class - Forever Stamps
- Postcard Forever Stamps
- Promotional door prizes from local businesses, products, gift certificates, all are appreciated.

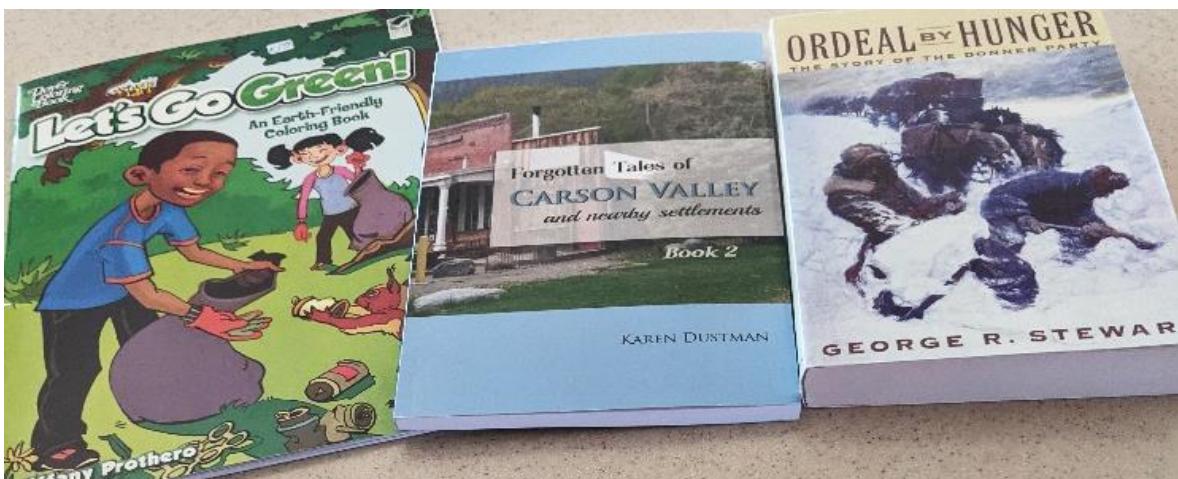
This publication was made possible in part by a grant from the Nevada Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

From the Bookstore

By Judy Conrad, Bookstore Manager



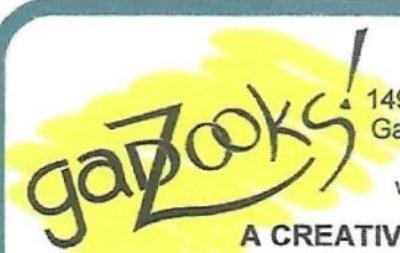
Good news as we begin 2022! Karen Dustman's Book #2 "Forgotten Tales of Carson Valley and Nearby Settlements" is in the bookstore, sitting right next to Book #1. It is great to have more stories of the early days here in our beautiful Carson Valley. For instance, the story of the Yellow House at the "S Bend" in Gardnerville or reading about the perfect hideout for Baby Face Nelson in the 1930'sat Walley's Hot Springs. Waiting for your enjoyment!

On a different note... it's Winter... an appropriate time to settle in with your favorite afghan keeping you warm and read "Ordeal by Hunger", by a Berkeley, CA professor. He writes the definitive history of the tragedy of the Donner Party in 1846 as they attempted a new overland route to CA. They reached the summit of the Sierras, and were trapped by blinding snow and bitter storms. Well written and one of our bestselling books.

For the children, we carry a number of Dover books. They "teach a lesson" while having fun. This review is a coloring book, with each page showing a way to be "earth friendly". Ways for children to help save our planet. *DCHS Members receive at 10% discount on bookstore merchandise. Become a member and save!*



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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)
Business Card	\$20	\$ 65
Quarter page	\$35	\$120

To purchase an ad please contact us at:
775-782-2555

Monday thru Friday 10 a.m. to 4 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 Highlights

Don't miss a moment of the fun!

Family Day at the Museum

Saturday, February 5 – Free Admission!
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Games, puzzles and prizes for kids.

Volunteer Coffee

9:00 a.m. February 7, 2022
Carson Valley Museum & Cultural Center
Come learn about our volunteer opportunities

Heritage Lecture Series

Thursday February 10
Door Open 6:00, Lecture at 6:30 p.m.
\$5 at the Door / DCHS & Alpine County Historical
Society members free.

Women in History

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Bed Turning

Saturday, March 19, 2022
Hosted by the Carson Valley Quilt Guild
Doors Open 10:00 a.m.