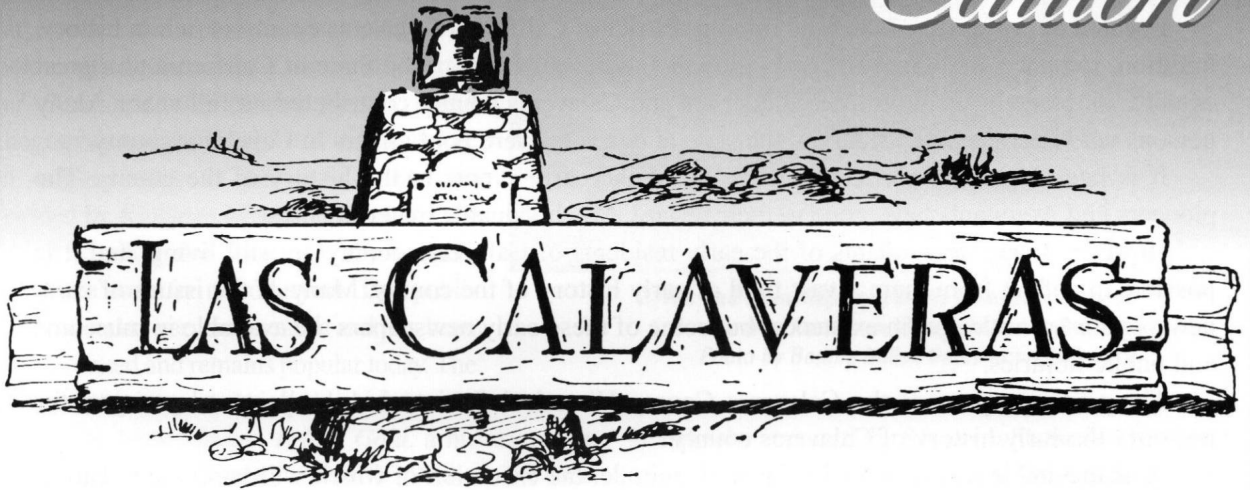


CALAVERAS
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Golden Anniversary Edition



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society

Volume LI

October 2002

Number 1

CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS



Judge James Alexander Smith, first President of the Calaveras County Historical Society from 1952 to 1964. Photo courtesy of the Calaveras County Historical Society.

The Calaveras County Historical Society was organized in 1952 as a result of efforts by the Calaveras Grange. A committee was appointed by the Grange that consisted of Dr. Richard Coke Wood, George B. Poore Jr., Amon Tanner of Murphys, and Mrs. Percy "Sadie" Hunt of Double Springs. Judge J. A. Smith was soon added to this group. Coke Wood acted as chairman to take the necessary steps to get an historical society organized. After several preliminary and planning meetings, the By-Laws were adopted and the Society was launched. The first officers were: President, Judge J. A. Smith;

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Written in 1952 by President J. A. Smith

History is a record of past events. Many county in the State of California have their past events preserved in a written history of the county., This is not true of the county of Calaveras as its history has never been written.

Located in the center of the gold mining district of California Calaveras county is rich in history, tradition, romance, and lore. The early growth and development of the State of California to a great extent took place in the gold mining districts and Calaveras county contributed its full share. Many persons who later became leaders in the state at one time were gold miners in Calaveras county.

It is late to get full particulars of many of the early events in the history of the county. The pioneers and Argonauts have gone to their reward. Much valuable material is lost.

However, many descendants of the early residents of Calaveras county are still living, and it is possible to collect from them a vast fund of early history of the county. Many of the issues of early newspapers are no longer in existence, but some of these early newspapers are available in museums and public libraries.

The prime purpose of the Calaveras County Historical Society is to collect and preserve for posterity the early history of Calaveras county.

It is inevitable that in a work of this magnitude, the execution of which will be in many hands, there will be many errors and omissions. However, it will be the constant aim of the Calaveras County Historical Society to discriminate between the true and the false, to the end that the work of the Society will reflect a true account of events in Calaveras county and that as much as possible of its history will be preserved.

Secretary, Sadie Hunt; Treasurer, Ella Thompson; and Vice-President and Editor, R. Coke Wood.

The first meeting of the charter members of the newly formed Society was held at the historic Murphys Hotel on the evening of October 23, 1952 (see first issue of the *Historical Bulletin*, October 1952). It was probably a heady occasion for all of the original committee members to see their dream come to fruition. The meeting was punctuated with party favors for all of the attendants. Square nails recovered from local buildings adorned each place card and "gold nugget" stick pins (popcorn painted gold) were given to all who attended. Perhaps the highlight of the evening was when a bench upon which most of the newly elected officers were sitting suddenly gave way tumbling everyone to the floor. Monthly meetings have been held regularly since that special day almost 50 years ago.

The purpose of the Society was clear from the beginning as noted in the *Statement of Purpose*: "The prime purpose of the Calaveras County Historical Society is to

collect and preserve for posterity the early history of Calaveras County". Judge Smith had the insight to observe that much of the early history of Calaveras County had never been written. He declared that "To reduce some of this [history] to writing and make it available for future generations is one of our goals." In 1953 the CCHS became the second society to join a statewide organization, the "Conference of California Historical Societies" to which Coke Wood had been elected as its chairman. After only one year, Judge Smith gave an inspirational address to the membership where he cajoled more participation from the membership in the interest of historical preservation. "Stories of the accomplishment of the Pioneers and Argonauts in Calaveras County and of those that followed them will be told in our future bulletins. Let us strive to make each coming year better than the last." We shall take a look at what the Society has accomplished in the next 49 years and see if in fact those goals have been successfully addressed.

—continued on page 6

Those present at Historical Dinner at Angels Camp Oct 22nd

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Calvin Wood | | Clifford L. Howard | |
| Evelyn E. Wood | | Lorraine Valente | |
| Elsie Flower KGM Stockton | | James Valente | |
| Naomi Hansen Dick - Stockton | | J. E. Roskin Hathaway Pine | |
| Nary Bess Norton - Murphys | | Adeline Rankin | |
| Edna C. Soos - Murphys | | John A. Hubert San Andreas - Guest | |
| May Todd Luxer Murphys | | Gene Darley San Andreas | |
| Elizabeth M. Kaler Murphys | | Fred B. Perkins Mokelumne Hill | |
| Rose Riedel Murphys | | Marion Perkins Mokelumne Hill | |
| Marie Marchette Murphys | | Adelle Martini Stockton | |
| Florence Martell Murphys | | V. Court Martin " | |
| Walter Martell Murphys | | Ida M. Wimer | |
| Gladys Larson Valley Spring | | Jody A Taylor | |
| Chester Larson Valley Spring | | Percy E. Hunt Valley Springs | |
| Rose E. Joseph San Andreas | | Harry G. Polley Angels | |
| Alice M. Eldridge San Andreas | | Alice E. Daniel Angels Camp | |
| Marcelle Avery Angels Camp | | W. Daniel Angels Camp | |
| Louise Avery Angels Camp | | Ed Leonard Angels Camp | |
| Marion Rasmussen Altaville | | Olga Leonard Angels Camp | |
| Carolyn Maltman Hilex Train Harte | | Mrs. H. L. Leonard - San Andreas | |
| CARRIE McKay Simpson - SONORA | | Harry Croshaw Angels Camp | |
| Rhoda Early Dunlap Sonora | | Katie Coontz | |
| Fred Dunlap | | Mildred Wilson, Angels Camp | |
| Joseph S. Smith San Andreas | | Dr. F. Rasmussen | |
| J. H. Harrison Stockton Cal. | | Frances Fontaine Mokelumne Hill | |
| A. James Lyle Angels Camp | | Mr. E. S. Pritchmer SANTA CRUZ | |
| Miriam Peterhonna Angels Camp | | Mavis Pritchmer Santa Cruz | |
| Jean Holladay Murphys | | Madelon Jack Bailey San Andreas | |
| William L. Holladay Murphys | | Edna Simonson Mokelumne Hill | |
| Rosie + Archie Howard Sonora | | Eloise Gaskill, Mokelumne Hill | |
| David Howard Angels Camp | | Harriet M. Marjorie Mokelumne Hill | |
| Mrs Anne Mallory Watsonville | | Evelyn Clyde - Mt. Diablo Park N. H. G. | |
| Uilda Hunt San Andreas | | Hayden Stephens Shepherd | |
| Ralph C. Treat San Andreas | | Esther Stephens - Shepherd | |
| A. Smith San Andreas | | Abel M. Squelati San Andreas | |
| Gene D. Vaden - Alameda | | John Squelati, San Andreas | |
| | | Coke Wood, Murphys | |

Rockwell Hunt, COP.

Sadie Hunt

The sign in sheet from the meeting held October 22, 1953 in Angels Camp one year after the Charter Meeting. Courtesy of the scrap book of Ella Thompson.

HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

One of the most visible contributions that the CCHS has made in preserving history is the construction of monuments and/or the placement of plaques to denote historical sites, buildings and landmarks throughout the county. The Society has also constructed or participated in the dedication of several monuments in conjunction with other historic organizations as described below.

The first monument noted in the records that the Society constructed was in May of 1956 at the old town of **Camanche**. The Society expended \$75 toward this project. Unfortunately the town was later inundated by Lake Camanche in 1964 but the monument was subsequently moved to higher ground. (See *Las Calaveras*, October 1990).

One of the best known monuments in the county was placed in Mountain Ranch on June 17, 1956 to commemorate the old townsite of **Eldorado**. (*Editor's note*: the original 1868 townsite map indicates that Eldorado was spelled as one word). This monument stood guard at the corner of Whiskey

Slide and Mountain Ranch Roads until it was vandalized and lost the beautiful bell which had adorned it. In 1996 through the diligent efforts of Bill Foster the bell was recovered and the monument restored. It was rededicated on August 2, 1996 in conjunction with the Mountain Ranch Community Club (see *Las Calaveras*, July 1956 and October 1996).

In 1957 the Society worked to place a monument at the town of **Rail Road Flat** under the direction of Mrs. Ruby Taylor who headed the Rail Road Flat Historical Monument Committee. (*Editor's note*: in Calaveras County, Rail Road Flat has always been spelled as three words!) This location was given the distinction as Registered California Landmark No. 286. The monument was dedicated at a ceremony held on August 4, 1957, however the actual placement of the bronze plaque was delayed until October 5, 1957 due to a machinists' strike at the factory (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1957).

In recognition of the **County Courthouse** having once operated in Mokelumne Hill next to



Dedication of the monument on January 12, 1963 commemorating the Attempted Stage Robbery alongside Mountain Ranch Road. Agnes Filipini Gerard (left) survived the incident. Louis Domenghini (center) and Judge Smith (right) look on.

Photo courtesy of the Historical Society.

where the Hotel Leger now stands, a monument was dedicated there on June 14, 1959. The California State Historian participated in that ceremony (see *Las Calaveras*, July 1959).

Alongside Mountain Ranch Road a monument was erected to commemorate the location of the **last stage robbery** in Calaveras County. The monument was constructed and dedicated with along with E Clampus Vitas on January 12, 1963. Agnes Filipini Gerard, a survivor of the deadly incident, joined the dedication ceremony (see *Las Calaveras*, April 1964). The monument has since fallen in to disrepair and is scheduled for refurbishing in the spring of 2003.

Fourth Crossing was recognized both locally and at the state level. On October 23, 1965 a monument was dedicated by the Calaveras County Historical Society in conjunction with the State of California where it is listed as California Registered Landmark No. 258 (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1965 and October 1990).

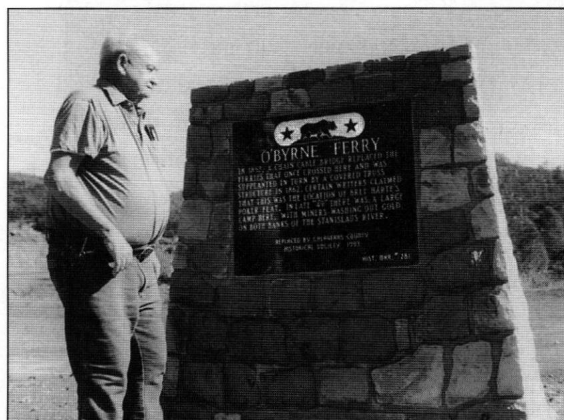
By 1965 the Society had placed six monuments around Calaveras County. The Historical Landmarks Committee continued to meet regularly (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1966) however no further activity occurred for several years. In 1993 it was observed by the society's Vice President, Bonnie Miller, that many of the monuments were vandalized or appearing neglected and she suggested renovating them. This suggestion launched a new flurry of monument activities such as the refurbishment of the original Mountain Ranch site as previously described. President Charlie Stone adopted the monument effort as his passion and saw through the restoration or establishment of several monuments over the next few years. One problem with the early monuments was the fact that the plaque on the face of the monument was cast bronze. The plaques were beautiful but costly, and unfortunately were easy targets for thieves and vandals. Charlie introduced the idea of engraved granite which is less costly, very attractive, and in keeping with the relationship between history and geology for Calaveras County.

A monument had once been erected recognizing **Poker Flat** but it had been heavily vandalized. The Society was unable to determine who had constructed the original monument, but under the direction of Charlie Stone the Society worked to restore it to honor. A new monument was created commemorating the alleged Poker Flat site as well as the **O'Byrne's Ferry** and its subsequent bridges. On February 5, 1994 the monument was successfully rededicated (see *Las Calaveras*, January 1994).

The Native Daughters of the Golden West had erected a monument commemorating **Sandy Gulch** in 1941. Unfortunately the monument was subsequently vandalized four times over the next thirty years. In 1995 the Society was able to successfully restore it (see *Las Calaveras*, April 1995).

In 1996 the **Rail Road Flat School** celebrated its 100 year anniversary. A joint project was undertaken by the Historical Society, the Rail Road Flat Community Club, the Rail Road Flat Parents' Club, The Rail Road Flat Elementary School Teachers and School Alumni, and the Taylor Park Committee. A monument which included the school's bell was dedicated at a grand ceremony held on August 24, 1996 (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1996).

The Historical Society continues to explore sites of interest which may warrant a landmark.



Society President Charlie "Sonny" Stone at the rededication of the O'Byrnes Ferry monument in 1993.

Photo courtesy of the Historical Society.

Membership and Meetings

The original membership consisted of 35 charter members and organizations. The cost of membership was only \$4.00 per year which included an annual subscription to the bulletin. Of those 35 original members, only Carmenne Poore is still with us today, along with two organizations that retain active memberships, the Calaveras Grange No. 715, and the Native Daughters of the Golden West Ruby Parlor No. 46. In the early years memberships were offered for individuals, families, and juniors. Later the family and junior memberships were dropped in favor of one single membership which still entitles the member to the annual subscription to the bulletin. Today the annual membership dues have grown to \$16 per year, but this is still a bargain by all means.

Membership varies from year to year. The original 35 charter members immediately grew to over 80 members by the second meeting and has since grown to as high as 900 members plus, and today averages around 700. Several past officers have been awarded lifetime memberships in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the Society. In June of 1999 the Board of Directors voted to open this style of membership for purchase, and now sells a Lifetime Membership which has proven to be a wonderful gift for graduates and retirees. Today we have forty Lifetime Members on our rolls.

In the early 1990's the CCHS created the category of Honorary Member which carries all of the benefits of a Lifetime Membership and is given by the Society in recognition of those few major players whose contributions to the Society have been instrumental in the formation or direction of the success of the organization. The first honorary membership was bestowed on Willard P. "Bill" Fuller, Jr. for his many years of dedicated service. Bill has served in every director's position except president and served as the editor of *Las Calaveras* for twenty-two years. Bill's personal attention was behind the development of the society's extensive history library. Other Honorary Memberships have been awarded to Carmenne Poore, Lillian Filipini, and Dick Barger.

In addition to the benefit of receiving the quarterly bulletin *Las Calaveras*, the membership enjoys regular meetings which highlight a variety of interesting topics. The original intent was to hold monthly meetings and dinner meetings quarterly and keep the cost to \$2.00 per person. Inevitably the cost rose over time. In 1955

the Society held its first Christmas party, launching a tradition which has been observed every year since.

The Archives and Office of the Historical Society

The Historical Society's "office" had modest beginnings in the home of Secretary Sadie Hunt where she faithfully maintained the Society's business for fifteen years. By 1974 it became evident that the CCHS needed permanent diggins', so they negotiated with the County for a twelve foot by twelve foot space in the first floor of the old Odd Fellows building on Main Street in San Andreas (in the building that houses the Calaveras County Arts Council today). The office was staffed only by part time volunteers and operated there until it had to be closed due to the renovation of the Hall of Records in 1979. Upon the successful renovation of the complex, the Society reopened offices across the foyer and has remained in that location since 1980. The first employee, Ella Hiatt was hired that year. In 1983 upon his retirement from the Calaveras Cement Plant, Willard P. Fuller, Jr. began work as the Office Manager, and added a third employee, JoAnn Gardiner. Between the three of them they operated the office at least two days a week. By 1989 JoAnn had left and Ella had moved on to the Angels Camp Museum. The office needed a full time staff and Dee Tipton was hired. Eventually she hired a part time assistant, Sheryl Waller. Although there have been personnel changes over time, the office staff has settled at one full time office manager and one part time assistant. Additional part time employees provide bookkeeping services, assistance with the Museum, and as Editor of *Las Calaveras*. Besides running the business of the Society, the office houses the archives, artifacts, photograph collections and family files collected by the Society. The office also provides research assistance to visitors.

The Calaveras County Museum

Almost since the Society's inception it has maintained a close relationship with the Calaveras County Museum. The original County Museum was established in 1937 in the Zwing Building on Main Street San Andreas at the bequest of Desire Fricot. Fricot donated the building at his passing to the County for the purpose of a library, museum and chamber of commerce (see *Las Calaveras*, July 2000). From 1937 to 1965 the museum was operated in the front of the building, while the County Library operated in the back of the building. In

the early 1950's Mrs. Juanita Flock became the museum's curator. The museum and library operated side-by-side until 1965 when all of the museum's artifacts were placed in storage while the building was renovated.

As early as 1964 the Society began to voice their reservations as to the quality in which the county was maintaining its museum. The Historical Society was determined that the Museum not be overlooked for its importance by the County. In 1967 after the Calaveras County offices moved to their new Government Center out on Mountain Ranch Road, the old Hall of Records was vacated. Through the efforts of George Poore, the hall was refurbished. George personally provided the labor, with donated materials, to reconstruct the county's museum in the second floor of the old Hall of Records. The newly reopened museum flourished in its beautiful, and very appropriate, surroundings. George ran the museum until that building was closed for renovation in 1978 and again the Museum was packed away in to storage.

In 1979 the County hired Judith Cunningham as curator to "modernize" the museum and improve the records. The museum was once again reopened in the newly refurbished Hall of Records. The County also hired a weekend attendant to assure full time staffing of the facility. During Judy's tenure the museum saw restorations of previously neglected artifacts, and the proper cataloging of the county's possessions. In the mid-1980's the museum received a government planning grant for reorganizing the displays. These new displays were much more simplistic and easier to understand, but were met with mixed reviews. A second grant created the front room into the new format as we see it today. Unfortunately the grant monies and the County's matching funds ran out before completion of the project, but not before implementing the large mural of Main Street San Andreas. Then in 1989 in County budget cutbacks the curator's position was eliminated. The County Archivist assumed some of the responsibilities of the curator, but the museum itself was thrown in to turmoil. Public outcry, plus a concerted

effort by the Historical Society, kept the County from closing the doors of the museum, but only after the Society agreed to voluntarily staff the museum thereafter.

The CCHS entered a new era as custodians of the county's museum. By contractual arrangement with the county, the Society provides the personnel to staff the museum at no charge. The county allows the Society the freedom to manage the museum as appropriate, but continues to fund the weekend position.

Most successful museums house a gift shop and



President Charlie Stone greets Charter Member Carmenne Poore at the fortieth anniversary meeting held at the Murphys Hotel on October 22, 1993.
Courtesy of the Historical Society.

that is true as well for the Calaveras County Museum. As an extension to operating the museum, the Society opened a small gift shop allowing visitors to purchase local publications and souvenirs of their visit. This gift shop quickly outgrew the small confines in which it originally opened upstairs in the former curator's office, and in 1999 it was moved downstairs right off of Main Street San Andreas. In recognition of the contributions of Bill Fuller, the Society

expanded the gift shop to include a room named the "Willard P. Fuller Book Room". It is a comprehensive book room where history books about Calaveras, the gold rush, and California history can be purchased. Local residents and visitors alike can easily drop by the store and book room at 30 Main Street and purchase information or mementos of Calaveras history.

Cornerstones

Who were the most significant people in the founding and development of the Calaveras County Historical Society? Four of these certainly were "Coke" Wood, Judge J. A. Smith, Sadie Hunt, and George B. Poore, Jr. Each of these special people made their own unique and significant contribution to the establishment and success of the Historical Society. We cannot possibly mention all of the individuals who have contributed significantly to the society over the years, but we cannot dispute that the following four were undoubtedly the ones who most influenced the Society to what it is today.

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LAS CALAVERAS

FIFTY YEARS OF RECORDED HISTORY IN OUR BULLETIN

Perhaps the greatest contribution that the Historical Society has made on behalf of Calaveras County's rich history and in pursuit of their stated purpose "to preserve the history" is to record historical articles in their bulletin. *Las Calaveras* is the quarterly bulletin of the CCHS that has enjoyed 50 years of life alongside the Society. Despite the somewhat erratic numbering and occasional delays, the bulletin has been published continuously since its inception with the Society in 1952.

The first issue contained greetings from the California Historical Society as well as the "Statement of Purpose" of the newly formed Calaveras County Historical Society. The early issues of the journal were originally called the "Historical Bulletin" until October of 1953 when the name "*Las Calaveras*" was adopted. The first masthead for *Las Calaveras* was introduced in the January issue of 1954. It was



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**First masthead of the historical bulletin named
Las Calaveras, as it appeared between 1953 and 1993.**

drawn by Mrs. Dave Matthews of Stockton and Murphys. The familiar stone monument masthead has graced the covers of the bulletin since then, although it was slightly redressed in October of 1993.

The journal was an immediate success. Clearly there was a strong interest in the stories being recorded by the CCHS. Subjects pertaining to early Calaveras County history have been recorded ranging from pioneer families, mines and mining, early ranching, old buildings and stage robberies, just to name a few. Many new members have joined the Society over the years just so they could regularly receive *Las Calaveras*, although all issues have been available for purchase through the office.

In 1964 the CCHS decided to solidify its accomplishment and offered a very limited bound edition of all of the journals. The first bound editions contained the first twelve years of issues and were dedicated to Judge Smith. The bound editions were immediately out of date as new journals were issued every quarter

HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Number 1 October, 1952 Volume 1

CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY San Andreas, California

Judge J. A. Smith, PresidentSan Andreas
Coke Wood, Vice-PresidentMurphys
Sadie Hunt, Secretary Valley Springs
Ella Thompson, TreasurerSan Andreas
Board of Directors: George Poore, Mountain Ranch; Amon
Tanner, Murphys; Frances Lombardi, Mokelumne Hill;
John Squellati, San Andreas.

Editor of Bulletin, Coke WoodMurphys

**Title block from the first issue of the newly formed
Society's Historical Bulletin.**

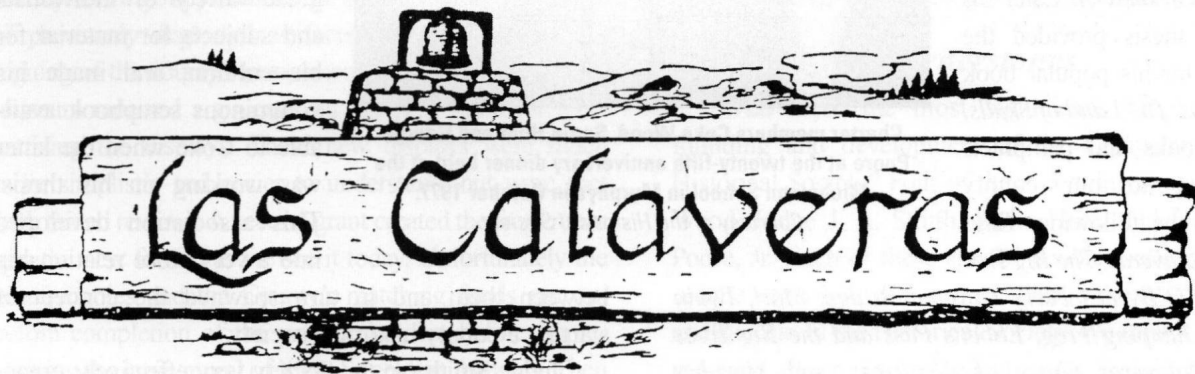
thereafter. Today the bound editions have grown to three large volumes and are available for purchase. This lovely set is often awarded to outstanding members who make exceptional contributions to the Society. It has proven to be a popular item and makes a fine gift for any history buff. In 1998 the Society further enhanced the collection and developed an index of the subjects to assist researchers on locating articles on a specific topic.

Only four individuals have served as editor of *Las Calaveras*. Coke Wood was the first editor and served from 1952 until 1964. In 1964 Willard P. Fuller, Jr. took up the task and served faithfully for the next twenty-two years. Bill Fuller's work with *Las Calaveras* was clearly a labor of love. He voluntarily generated more than 80 carefully researched issues of the journal for which he received no pay. In 1986 Bill retired and turned the helm over to George Hoepfer who held the position until his passing in 1997. After George's passing, the position was awarded to Bonnie Miller who continues to serve as editor today. When George began work as the editor he requested a stipend for his efforts which the board of directors of the CCHS voted to provide. Today

the editor's position continues to receive a modest monthly stipend for the work

The second issue of the journal contained a detailed account of the Native Americans of Sheep Ranch. That single issue proved to be one of the most popular early issues. Its popularity was only surpassed in 1987 with the special issue commemorating the 75th Anniversary of Angels Camp. Over the past few years the Society has explored some of the members' favorite articles and found that it is difficult to definitively determine just which one is the most popular. What we do know is that visitors to the Society's office who are researching Calaveras County are often pleased to find at least one article that *Las Calaveras* can contribute to their family history collection.

Las Calaveras has had its share of foibles over the years when it has accepted the misstatement of contributors, however no inaccuracies have ever been intentionally perpetuated. For the most part it remains the best record of historical minutiae available in the county today. Contributions to the journal are still encouraged and willingly accepted. The material is not copyrighted in the interest of generating use of the material.



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society

Volume L

July 2002

Number 4

Dr. Richard Coke Wood

It was somewhat by accident that Coke Wood became so involved with Calaveras County and its history. A native of Oklahoma, in 1918 Coke moved with his father, brother and sister to the Owens Valley where he was educated through high school at Bishop. He then worked in a grocery for five years before enrolling at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, receiving his BS in 1932 and his MA two years later. He began a teaching career in Bishop, however ill health from tuberculosis soon put him in a sanitarium for a while. In 1936 he married Ethelyn Edson whom he had met at UOP. He returned to teaching but it was not long before he had to re-enter a sanitarium, this time at Murphys, thus he became a resident of Calaveras County. Coke then taught for nearly a decade at Bret Harte High while working toward his doctorate at USC. In 1949 the Woods purchased the old Travers building in Murphys and set it up as The Old Timer's Museum. After receiving his PhD in 1950 Coke was invited to join UOP's history department where he taught for the next quarter of a century as well as at Delta College, then just across the street.

Coke was extremely active in a large number of historical organizations in California, and even gave a course over television. He authored a number of books, articles and pamphlets. His master's thesis was the basis of his publication *The Owens Valley as I knew It*. Later his doctoral thesis provided the impetus for his popular book *Calaveras, The Land of Skulls*. Those books and pamphlets pertaining to our county included the following: *Tales of Old Calaveras*, *The Big Tree Bulletin*, *O'Byrnes Ferry Covered Bridge*, *Mark Twain and the Jumping Frog*, *Ebbetts Pass and the Big Trees Road*, *Calaveras Grove of Big Trees*, and *Murphys Diggins*. He also edited and published several other works on Calaveras history authored by others.

In the early days of the Society Coke was elected first vice-president and took over immediately as editor of the

Society's bulletin where he served for the next twelve years. When we look at his long list of accomplishments, it is a wonder that he had time for the Society, yet he faithfully attended most meetings and major activities. Coke's constant presence at the Society's affairs and his enthusiasm was a great stimulus to those who were active in keeping the Society going as an effective organization. In 1969 he received the title "Mr. California", quite an honor indeed for a man not born of this state. He also received the state's highest award for history from then Governor Ronald Reagan (see *Las Calaveras*, January 1980). For more information on this fascinating man, see Bernice Lamson's book *There's Only One Coke*.

Judge James Alexander Smith

Unlike Coke, Judge Smith was a native of our county, the son of the prominent Thomas Smith family of West Point who had arrived in Calaveras County in the late 1850's. The "Judge", as he was later called, actually began his career as a teacher, his first post being at Hodson. He married Idell Parsons of Murphys who also was a teacher, teaching at the Old Gulch School. Ultimately he served as a Superior Court Judge for 40 years. The Judge began his recording of the history of

Calaveras County some years before the founding of the Historical Society with his weekly column "Days of Old in Calaveras County" which ran for 30 years in the *Calaveras Prospect & Weekly Citizen*. He researched county records and newspapers on a great variety of individuals and subjects for material for his column, and made his voluminous scrapbook available to Coke when the latter was working on his thesis. This association developed into a very close relationship

between them and in turn spawned the concept of starting a county historical society.

Judge Smith ran the Society very effectively, organizing the monthly meetings on a wide range of subjects in various localities. He persuaded many persons, members or not, who were knowledgeable about these subjects, to

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Charter members Coke Wood, Sadie Hunt and George Poore at the twenty-fifth anniversary dinner held at the Michelson School in Murphys in October 1977.

Courtesy of the Historical Society.

Message from the President...

It is with considerable pride that we can look back at the success of our splendid organization as we celebrate our Golden Anniversary. Fifty years of longevity certainly qualifies as a milestone worthy of reflection. To quote the words of Coke Wood, the first editor of what was then known as the Historical Bulletin, from Volume 1, Number 1, "it seems necessary to trace the brief history of the organization and state some of the hopes for the future."

It was a noble adventure that our founding members embarked upon when they established the Calaveras County Historical Society and began publication of the bulletin in October 1952. The names of many of those members are well known among the annals of Calaveras County history: Judge James Smith, Coke Wood, Sadie Hunt, Ella Thompson, George Poore, Amon Tanner, Frances Lombardi, John Squellati and the many others that you have long read about in *Las Calaveras*. Judge Smith opines in the inaugural issue that the "prime purpose of the... Society is to collect and preserve for posterity the early history of Calaveras County." That Statement of Purpose remains the cornerstone of our mission today.

One wonders if our founders those 50 summers' past would have envisioned what the work of the Society has become. We operate a wonderful museum, graced by artifacts donated by many of you, and visited annually by almost 2000 people. Our office collects, catalogues and preserves photographs, newspapers and other memorabilia about our heritage. We operate the Altaville

Schoolhouse. And, with the participation of the County, we are now in the process of developing the Red Barn as a museum to display equipment from our mining, logging and agricultural past.

We currently have more than 600 members. The CCHS has one full-time employee and two part-time employees. We continue to benefit from the generosity of so many of you who volunteer your time to work at the bookstore and to perform the many tasks that make our organization successful. The Board of Directors meets monthly to address the business and administrative issues faced by the CCHS. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the devotion and expertise that my colleagues on the Board bring to their jobs. Like so many of you who have ably served the needs of the CCHS as past officers and directors, our current Board works hard to continue the traditions that all of you have built.

Let us consider what the future holds for us, although I'm not particularly good at predicting the future. Perhaps in another 50 years we will have our current office computers displayed beside the six-shooter used by Sheriff Zwinge to corral felons, and our visitors will marvel at how people ever did any work with such antiquated equipment. But wherever our future takes us, I do know one thing: the journey will be successful because of the enthusiasm and devotion that all of you have brought to the Calaveras County Historical Society. Happy Anniversary to us all.

—*David Studley*, President

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENTS

1952 - 1964	Judge J. A. Smith
1964 - 1965	Paul Lewis
1965 - 1967	George B. Poore, Jr.
1967 - 1968	John P. Lemue
1968 - 1969	Otta Leonard
1969 - 1971	Albert E. Gross
1971 - 1972	Robert Heighway
1972 - 1973	George B. Poore, Jr.
1973 - 1975	Fred Cuneo
1975 - 1976	Bessie McGinnis
1976 - 1978	Tad Folendorf
1978 - 1980	Carmenne Poore
1980 - 1981	Robert B. Finnegan
1981 - 1983	Betty Snyder
1983 - 1985	Jack Kennedy
1985 - 1987	Lorrayne Kennedy
1987 - 1989	Gloyd A. "Bud" Ponte
1989 - 1991	Don Cuneo
1991 - 1992	John Gomes
1992 - 1994	Charlie Stone
1994 - 1996	Cheri Folendorf
1996 - 1997	Barbara Beaman
1997 - 1999	Donna Schantz
1999 - 2001	Rosemary Faulkner
2001 - present	David Studley



Newly elected officers to carry us in to the next fifty years, installed for the year 2002.
From left, Don Cuneo, Lynn Miller, John James, Rosemary Faulkner, David Studley, Beverly Burton, Joan Donleavy, Bob Woods, and Duane Wight (front).
Photo by Bonnie Miller, July 25, 2002.

attend the meetings and add their comments or to write them down for the bulletin. He worked closely with Coke to bring this information together, resulting in the popular historical bulletin, *Las Calaveras*. Much of the Judge's material from his weekly newspaper column was embodied by Editor Wood in *Las Calaveras*, while the Judge continued writing new articles and revising his earlier articles for the bulletin. He constantly urged members to save old photographs and today the Society has one of the finest photograph collections of any of the local historical societies in California. Many of the traditions of the Society evolved during the Judge's regime, with, we are sure, his full approval. After a prestigious career and the first ten years as the president of the Historical Society, the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors voted him as "Mr. Calaveras County" in 1962. A bronze plaque honoring his contribution to the Society and to the county as a whole adorns the wall in the foyer of the old courthouse and museum complex. The Judge served unchallenged as the society's first president until his passing twelve years later (see *Las Calaveras*, April 1964). It took a change in the Society's by-laws to fill the vacancy in the position of president.

Coke Wood said of his good friend and associate Judge Smith:

"Few men have left a greater imprint upon their home community and few historians have done so much to preserve and popularize the history of their native county. His influence will continue on down through the years in his writing. We will miss him very much but we are happy that we had the opportunity to walk with him for a little ways."

Sadie Hunt

We must recognize the role another of our founders played in the early years of the CCHS. No officer, no matter how capable as the Judge and Coke were, could be successful if it were not for hard workers behind the scenes. Few fledgling organizations could have had a more dedicated and hardworking secretary than Sadie Hunt. Mrs. Hunt, like the Judge, was a native of Calaveras. Her great-grandfather, Alexander Wheat, was a 49er, who came to the "Iowa Log Cabin" just below San Andreas. A few years later, in 1856, he purchased the historic Double Springs Ranch, which is still owned by his descendants. The beautiful two and a half story stone house built in 1860 is the home where Sadie and Percy Hunt lived from 1932 on. Sadie was secretary for the Society's first fifteen

years, and she maintained the Society's unofficial office in her home. The work of both Coke and the Judge was greatly facilitated by Sadie's hard work in keeping up on all of the paper work, handling most of the Society's correspondence, and maintaining the files as well as storing the artifacts and other possessions of the Society. Sadie did this work from her home until the Society was able to set up an office in the old IOOF in San Andreas. In the fifteen years that she served as the Society's secretary, she missed only two meetings (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1990). Sadie's thorough record keeping and strong custodianship of the Society's early records provided the foundation upon which the Society has grown.

George B. Poore, Jr.

Every organization needs some one who is concerned with those matters which are often referred to as "bricks and mortar" and "nuts and bolts." Co-founder George Poore was one of those people. George's constant presence in the Society's activities kept things running smoothly. When problems arose, George soon had them under control. He served on endless committees, and took his turn in each of the officers' positions.

George was actually born in South Africa where his father had been manager of a large gold mine. He grew up and was educated in the Bay Area and was a veteran of World War One (he misled the army about his age). He first worked as a construction engineer for the Northern Pacific Railroad, and then on the Bay Bridge before coming up to Calaveras. He came to Calaveras County in the mid-1930's with his appointment as resident manager of the Calaveras Cement Company's Kentucky House plant, a company co-founded by his father in the 1920's. George married Carmenne Cilenti in 1940.

After George retired from the cement company he was engaged in various engineering jobs for the county and district projects. He successfully guided the "new" county hospital that was completed in 1941 (see *Las Calaveras*, April 2001), the San Andreas Sanitary District system, the new government center, the grange hall construction, the re-roofing of the lodge building, and of special interest to the Historical Society, the restoration of the Old Courthouse, and the old Hall of Records. With Carmenne as his companion and aid, he led the effort to reestablish the county museum from the Zwinge/Fricot building to the Hall of Records. Subsequently he spearheaded the movement to restore the old IOOF and the Hall of Records. George then voluntarily ran the museum

for a number of years, a post that allowed the public to enjoy his vast knowledge of local history, mining, Native Americans, and other subjects.

George was one of the most important members of the Society, as well as to the several other organizations to which he belonged. He brought enthusiasm to whatever task was at hand. His death in December 1983 was at the end of 31 years of dedicated service to the Society.

Financial Background

For the first two decades the Historical Society had been forging along on the enthusiasm of the founders and members, plus the minimal income from the \$4 a year membership. In 1964 the Society incorporated itself as a Non-Profit Organization.

In 1970-1971 the Society participated in a campaign to save the Agostini Building in San Andreas (the building where the Black Bart Inn is located today). Unfortunately this effort failed but there was a positive side to the venture. The financial pledges to the campaign were not collected; however most of the donors who had already paid refused refunds, and the funds were turned over to the CCHS. This small fund became a financial nest egg for the Society.

A few years later Mrs. Eunice (Beal) Van Winkle, one of the charter members of the Society and a native of Calaveras County, decided to leave some of her wealth to the Society. Upon her passing in 1978 her will was contested by the CCHS and her other heirs. The Society was eventually awarded \$50,000 in a settlement. This sum received from Eunice Van Winkle, plus the funds from the failed Agostini project, became the basis for the future endowment of the Society. The Board of Directors appointed Dick Barger, Bill Fuller, and Unilda Treat to form a committee to evaluate and oversee the investment of this capital for the overall good of the Society. This original committee of three with the wise insight to preserve the capital became the investment committee who eventually saw the Society through many years of careful financial planning to its strong status today.

In 1981 another longtime member, Kathleen Mitchell, bequeathed the residue of her estate to the CCHS as well. When these new funds were added to the Society's capital it created a permanent endowment. Strong rules were established strictly limiting withdrawal of the capital and requires the Society to operate on the endowment's income only. The CCHS has remained financially strong due to the careful investment strategy under the continued careful guidance of Dick Barger, Bill Fuller, and Oz Kenyon. In

1999, after careful consideration, the investment committee felt the time had come to "retire" from active financial management, and recommended to the Society that the endowment's management be managed by a professional financial advisor. By a vote of the general membership, financial management has been turned over to Wulff- Hansen Capital, where it is hoped that the capital may continue to grow and provide an income.

Accomplishments and Contributions

Just to name a few...

In 1956 the society sponsored the first ***School Essay Contest***, which has been held almost continuously since. School children from around the county are invited to submit essays on historical subjects of their choosing. Participation varies from year to year but has included students from as young as kindergarten through high school age as well as home-schooled or independent students. Cash prizes are awarded to the winners, and sometimes the essays are printed in *Las Calaveras*. The young researchers have explored a variety of fascinating topics such as their own family history to the story behind the civil war cannon in the cemetery. The most popular subject remains unquestionably our famous bandit, Black Bart.

To perpetuate an interest in history among our youth, in the early 1990's ***Academic Scholarships*** were introduced. Annually students may apply for cash scholarships to assist with their advanced education costs. Graduating high school seniors with a particular interest in history are encouraged to apply for the scholarships.

In addition to the historic monuments, one will find a brass plaque sponsored by the society commemorating a building in almost every small community in the county. In recognition of the historic value of these buildings, an annual ***Architectural Award*** was developed in 1970. The awards have been given to building owners who have worked to restore, preserve, or even re-create an historic building of note. The annual Architectural Awards flourished from between 1970 to 1994 under the direction of Lorraine Kennedy until it became evident that most every noteworthy building had been found and honored. It is hoped that the Society may revive the award again in the future.

Building Restoration Projects

The Historical Society has participated on numerous occasions in the preservation of historic



The Altaville Schoolhouse.
Photo by Bonnie Miller, September 2002.

buildings. The Society often contributes to a preservation effort through various means such as volunteer labor or a cash donation for professional restoration.

The Society worked, under the guidance of George Poore, with the County of Calaveras in the restoration of the **Old Courthouse** in 1976 and **Hall of Records** in 1978 when these buildings were vacated by the county in favor of the new Government Center.

In 1981 the Society began a project to restore the beautiful but neglected **Altaville Schoolhouse**. With the impetus of a grant of \$22,500 from the Burlington Northern Foundation the Society was able to move the fully intact brick building to its present location and restored it to its original state right down to the furnishings. This mighty restoration project, championed by Bessie McGinnis and carried out under the direction of George Poore and Eldred Lane took several years from 1981 to 1989 to complete. Today the building stands fully restored alongside Highway 49 in Altaville open for the public to view. This one project is considered the "gem" of restorations in which the Society has participated. For more information on this project, see *Las Calaveras*, April and July 1989.

Over the years the Society has eyed other potential buildings for restoration and has seriously researched other endeavors, but none have proven as fruitful as those mentioned above. Today the Society is once again working with the County of Calaveras to preserve yet another old county building, the **Red Barn** in San Andreas. This was the old milk barn that served the County Hospital when it occupied the site where the Government Center operates today. To date the Society

has already done much restorative work to the exterior of the building making it a beautiful landmark beside Mountain Ranch Road. The long term goal is to construct improvements to the interior and convert the building to a self-guided farm implement museum. Under the dedicated direction of Rosemary Faulkner and Bob Woods, we hope to see this latest dream become a reality in 2003.

Books, Photographs and Library

The CCHS maintains its office in the old Hall of Records in San Andreas which is the home to a plethora of historical material on Calaveras County that rivals that of the official County Archives. And it is widely believed that Calaveras County has the most thorough and professional historical archives in the state of California. In the Society's office is a photograph file with photos dating back to the beginning of photographed history in this county. Most every community, gold mine, and pioneer family is represented in these photograph files. People are still encouraged to offer family photographs and memorabilia to these archives.

Since its inception the Society has accumulated many books, pamphlets, manuscripts and other written material specific to the history of Calaveras County. The society's office now maintains a modest library which has expanded to include California History and detailed references on mining and geology. This resource library is considered one of the finest collections of early Calaveras and gold mining history available locally today, due to the dedicated diligence of Bill Fuller's custodianship. The CCHS continues to obtain and add new material to its collections. School essay writers, young historians, professional historians, or the just plain curious have consulted these references for years. Members of the public may view these resources during the Society's regular business hours.

In addition to maintaining its library of references and files, the CCHS has further encouraged others to contribute to preserving the written word. In accordance with a publication policy, the Society has sponsored various books to assist authors in their endeavors. The Society does not necessarily profit from these arrangements, but merely assists in the initial publication so that the budding authors may get their works launched. The earliest publication that the society sponsored was called *The Diary of Thomas Matteson*. Ironically this book was later withdrawn upon the request of the family. Perhaps the most popular publication which was both created and

sponsored by the society is *An Album of the Pioneer Schoolhouses of Calaveras County* edited by Bessie McGinnis and Willard P. Fuller, Jr. This book can be found in every Calaveras County school library today, as well as the private libraries of most school teachers. The next book sponsored by the society was a reprint of an 1885 promotional publication that extolled the virtues of the county. The book entitled *Calaveras County, Illustrated and Described* was created by the noted lithographer and publisher, W. W. Elliott & Co. An original copy of this publication was provided by Kathleen Mitchell who was kind enough to allow the Society to disassemble her private copy for reproduction. This publication was also very successful, and has been since reprinted and remains popular today. The most recent joint venture in publishing was to sponsor the book *Madam Felix's Gold*, a history of the Felix Gold Mining District written by Willard P. Fuller, Jr., Judith Marvin, and Julia Costello. The latter three books are available for purchase from the Society.

Looking Forward...

The Historical Society has grown from a small group of enthusiastic volunteers to operating a fully staffed office open five days a week. In all the CCHS now employs four full or part time positions who report to the elected Board of Directors in accordance with the Society's By-Laws. The office staff assists the public in requests for research which are growing steadily. The Society continues to assist the county in all aspects of the daily operation of the County Museum (for which they are continually seeking volunteers!). The Society operates a book store and gift shop which is open seven days a week with the Museum. The Society still has stimulating and informative monthly meetings which continue to be well attended. Academic scholarships continue to be awarded annually, and periodically school essay contests are still sponsored. In efforts to modernize the numerous records and access to the material, the Society has joined the computer age and developed numerous indexes of their collections. The Society is looking forward to the restoration of the Red Barn, and welcomes other historic preservation challenges which may be waiting on the horizon. None of this success story would have been possible were it not for the generous benefac-



The Red Barn, adjacent to the Calaveras County Government Center on Mountain Ranch Road.

Photo by Bonnie Miller, September 2002.

tors who endowed the Society with the financial nest egg upon which the society has grown and flourished. The Calaveras County Historical Society is to be heartily congratulated for fifty years of accomplishments, and given best wishes for their continued efforts on in to the next fifty years and beyond.

Las Calaveras appreciates the assistance of Bill Fuller in the preparation of this issue.

IN MEMORIAM

The Calaveras County Historical Society is sad to inform the membership of the passing of Lorraine Kennedy. Lorraine was a dedicated member of the Historical Society for many years and often spoke at our meetings on a variety of subjects. She served as the President of the Society from 1983 until 1985.

Lorraine is best known for having been the Archivist for Calaveras County for twenty- two years. She saw many moves and changes in the archives and always handled each transition with the utmost care for the documents and artifacts. She saw the archives grow from a small office extension of the county courts to a large repository of extensive archival materials. Anyone who has ever done research in the County Archives appreciated the thorough knowledge that she had of the numerous materials as well as her genuine enthusiasm for her work. Her dedication to the archives was so strong that she actually donated one day of her personal time each week to work in the archives for which she was not paid.

We will miss you, Lorraine.

Calaveras County Historical Society

30 No. Main Street P.O. Box 721 San Andreas, CA 95249

Officers and Directors

President	David Studley, Mountain Ranch
Vice President	Joan Donleavy, Valley Springs
Treasurer	Don Cuneo, San Andreas
Secretary	Rosemary Faulkner, Jackson
Directors	John James, San Andreas
	Bob Woods, Mountain Ranch
	Lynn Miller, San Andreas
	Beverly Burton, San Andreas
Honorary Director	Willard P. Fuller, Jr., San Andreas
Bookkeeper	Shirley Huberty, San Andreas
Las Calaveras	Bonnie Miller
Office Manager	Elizabeth Braydis
Resource Coordinator	Cate Culver

Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. A subscription to *Las Calaveras* comes with membership in the Calaveras County Historical Society for \$16.00 per year. Non-members may obtain copies from the Historical Society office. The original historical material presented in *Las Calaveras* is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source would be appreciated. Contributions of articles about Calaveras County is appreciated and may be submitted to the Historical Society for consideration.

The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museum while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com.

New Members

December 2001 — Bob Pence, Sutter Creek, CA;
Barbara Comfort, Murphys, CA; Patricia Nash,
Santa Clara, CA

January 2002 — Robert Wehe, Arnold, CA;
Rurik & Marjorie Kallis, San Andreas, CA

February 2002 — Jim & Deanna Wagner,
Douglas Flat, CA

March 2002 — Robert Leer, San Andreas, CA

June 2002 — Juanita Newell, Mokelumne Hill, CA;
Hans & Karen Zumbach, Angels Camp, CA

August 2002 — Laurie Welsh, Sacramento, CA;
Ted & Lucille Fenner, Mokelumne Hill, CA

September 2002 — Donald & Pam Overacker,
Mountain Ranch, CA

Museum Donations

The Calaveras County Historical Society wishes to thank the following persons who recently made donations to the Calaveras County Museum:

June 2002

Cash Donations From:

Luellen Del Papa, Mountain Ranch, CA
Jim & Joanne Thompson, Redwood City, CA
Frank A Genochio, Santa Clara, CA
Sandra Peterson, Murphys, CA
Doug Brown, Avery, CA
Jeanne Gibbens, San Andreas, CA

July 2002

Cash Donations From:

Leora A. Tower, Farmington, CA
Glen Nevens, Farmington, CA
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Mewhinney, San Andreas, CA
Jordan & Mary Tatter, Watervliet, MI
Maria Kent Romaggi, British Columbia, Canada
Robert & Clelia Petithomme, Fresno, CA
Barbara J. Comfort, Murphys, CA
Jerry & Kathy Biedinger, Altaville, CA
Kay F. Hubbard, Coronado, CA
Virginia & Walter Vater, Valley Springs, CA
John & Sara Young, Bakersfield, CA
Franklin T. Laskin, Arnold, CA
Geri De Moss, San Andreas, CA
Roy & Janet Clifton, Sunnyvale, CA

David A. Hendsch, Oakland, CA
Photograph of Hendsch brothers

Jeanie L. Kancianich, San Andreas, CA
Various newspapers

John M. Crespi, Manhattan, KS
Cash donation in memory of Elizabeth S. "Bess"
Darby Anderson

Lauren & Kathleen Crespi, Murphys, CA
Cash donation in memory of Elizabeth S. "Bess"
Darby Anderson

Robert Fischer, Eugene, OR
A 14-page written history "Memoirs of a Sierra
Sawmill" by Robert J. Fischer

Kris Byers, San Andreas, CA
Math book from 1905 San Andreas school

August 2002

Cash Donations From:

Harry Lewis, Santa Rosa, CA
Kenneth & Carin Cuslidge, Stockton, CA
Duane & Barbara Verhalen, San Andreas, CA
Claribel Shideler, Lafayette, CA

Baby booties, socks, hat and handkerchief. 10-inch
white porcelain bowl and "Reliable" egg scales