

THE AMADORIAN

A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

"Preserving the past and present for tomorrow"

Summer 2020 – Vol. 13, No. 3

President's Corner

Dear Fellow ACHS Members:

I'm at a loss for words this issue. On a good note, we now have everything in place for the opening of the museum when we finally get the go ahead from Governor Newsom. I have followed all the directives from the county health department. We have contact guidelines in place for both the museum and visitors, sanitization, and all the signs up that they are requiring.

We actually did have it open for about two days before we were shut down again. We had a sign on the door to call for those who would like to tour the museum by appointment only. We actually had a call from a lovely couple and being that Judy and I both live only two minutes away, we were able to be at the museum to greet them before they even got there from Main Street. For an abundance of caution and safety for ourselves and visitors, we will continue to do it this way for a while when we can reopen. I will be sending e-mails to all members with information about the reopening when it happens.

We are working on a combined history day with other historical sites in the county, hopefully next year. I'm sure everyone feels the same way as I do, but I can't wait to actually plan some functions and be out and about doing something that I feel is important to our community. Being that there is really nothing more to report at this time, I'll close now with a wish that everyone is staying healthy and safe.

Hope you enjoy your latest issue of *The Amadorian*!!

Best Regards,

Cathy McGowen, President



Amador County Museum, 225 Church Street, Jackson, CA

Donors Are Making the New Livery Building Project Possible. Thank You!

Listed are donors of \$500 or more:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Amador Community Foundation | Richard and Pat Jones |
| Joe and Iris Aparicio | JoAnn Levy |
| Paul and Claudine Burnett | Stan Lukowicz |
| Marshall Cova | Kim and Cathy McGowen |
| Jean Louise Dahl | Jeffrey and Hazel Powell |
| Barry and Sue Duncan | Beverly Smallfield |
| Wayne Garibaldi | Charles Spinetta |
| Phillip and Jenny Giurlani | Russell Van Voorhis |
| Larry and Jeana Hultquist | Violich Farms |



Your generous donation will help build the New Livery Building which will replicate the California-style of rural agricultural buildings. Learn more at www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

A Blast from the Past Lone High School – Gone but not Forgotten

By Peggy Piccardo

Being that school will be starting soon, in what way or form is anyone’s guess, I thought it would be interesting to take a look at the first high school in Amador County. Lone High School was the first one in the county. When it was erected, it was not a public school but a private school operating under the name Lone Academy and charging \$5 a month tuition.

In February 1903, the corporation purchased for just \$10 gold coin, from the Lone Coal and Iron Company, owners of the Arroyo Seco grant, the property for the academy, west and north of the Catholic church and cemetery. The Lone Union High School District was formed in 1906 and began operating the



Academy as a public school. In 1909 The lone school district purchased the academy schoolhouse from the corporation for \$3,700.

Students came from all over the county to attend school there. Many boarded during the week in lone, and others took the train from Martell to lone to attend. *(cont’d on page 3)*

Lone Union High School, circa 1907

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

On November 26, 1972, a fire destroyed the school. In 1973 the taxpayers approved a half million-dollar bond issue, and the school was rebuilt by January 1975. In 1987 the county combined Lone High School with Jackson High School on the Jackson campus and renamed the school Argonaut High School.

This is the brief history of the school. Following is a narrative of her days at Lone High written by Peggy Piccardo, an lone native and member of the Amador County Historical Society.

Looking Back - Lone High School - A School That Promoted Success!

How would you like to be a citizen of a town named 'Bed Bug,' 'Freeze Out,' and then 'lone'? And, of course, the high school was called Lone High School! My parents (Bob and Margaret), my sister (Linda) and I, (Peggy Ann), had the wonderful opportunity to attend Lone High School! Most of the staff at Lone High School were locals who shared the positive, local charm of lone. My sister graduated in 1960, and I graduated in 1968. (And yes, our parents graduated from Lone High in 1940.) My sister and I both left lone after high school graduation to attend college. We were able to feel confident about our future because of the well-prepared education we received at Lone High School! For example, Mr. Wood taught English, and he also served as Lone High's counselor. If he saw an opportunity for you, he would provide the guidance you needed to achieve your educational dreams. In his senior English class, we studied many plays. He even arranged the opportunity to witness 'theater in the round' at U.C. Davis. Many of us had never been to live theater, or to U.C. Davis!! But going the extra step for all students was demonstrated daily by the Lone High Staff!

Most of the high school classes were small, and, of course, the teachers knew our parents! Why? They 'talked' at lone's post office! For example, if you needed to visit the principal or stand outside of the classroom door, your parents knew about it before you got home! And yes, I did visit the principal's office because my yellow 1947 Willy's jeep, "Daisy," somehow found herself in the center of the football field. (???)

The Lone High Teaching Staff was small in numbers, but HUGE in concern for their students' welfare regarding learning goals and post-secondary opportunities. For example, staff members would assist us with college applications: i.e. Sacramento State, U.C. Davis, U.C. Berkeley, Delta College and U.O.P.

Attending Lone High School was a special opportunity that positively shaped many students' lives. And speaking personally, I also chose a career in education that provided me thirty-five years of dear memories. And, yes, I did share stories about my Lone High School dear experiences with my students.

Peggy Piccardo, a proud Lone High School 1968 graduate

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

Tragedy Springs

The following is the first of several installments to be published in *The Amadorian* from the article *“Tragedy Spring and the Opening of the Gold Rush Trail”* by Frank Tortorich.

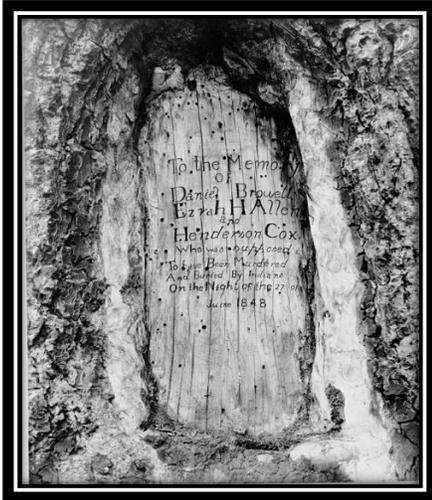


Photo by Frank Tortorich

This stump and its carving are presently housed in the Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park Museum in Coloma, California



Photo by Frank Tortorich, September 2019

This plaque was attached onto a granite rock at the base of the trail to the grave on Tragedy Spring Road on September 2, 1967, by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers

INTRODUCTION

When I was very young my parents often took me into the Sierra Nevada for a day of fishing, picnicking, or camping at Silver Lake. It was on these trips that I first became aware of Tragedy Spring just off California State Route 88. We often stopped to drink from the spring and walk up to view the grave. In the 1960s a rock wall was built at the edge of the highway with a drinking fountain and the Daughters of Utah Pioneers bronze marker attached to the wall.

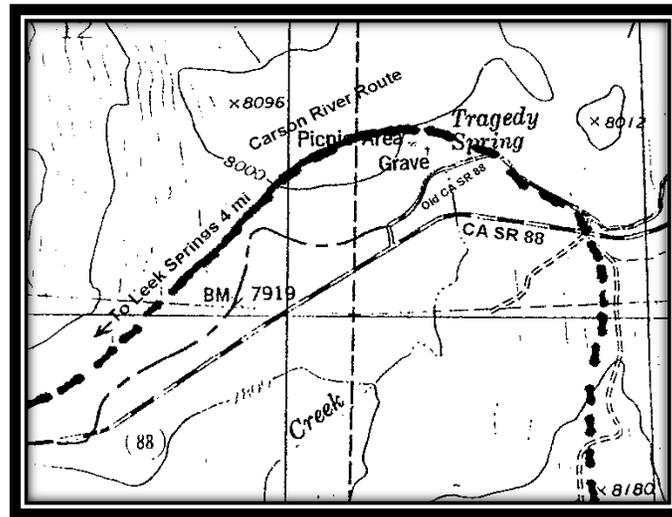
In 1978, my wife Mary Ann and I were recruited as US Forest Service volunteers to research the Carson River Route of the California Emigrant Trail for the Amador Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest. Tragedy Spring is one of the most historic locations along the Carson River Route.¹ It seemed a good place to begin our research as we knew very little about emigrant trail history. (cont'd on page 5)

¹ There is only one spring at Tragedy Spring, though many mistakenly refer to it as Tragedy Springs.. The location is near California State Route 88, about two miles west of Silver Lake. The Oregon-California Trail runs from Missouri to Pocatello, Idaho. At that point the trail splits, with the California Trail headed southwest into the Humboldt River basin of present-day Nevada.

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

Our research naturally led us to the emigrant trail journals, of which there are many. We found that published versions of the same journal often differed from one another because of editing and transcription. These different versions made for interesting reading. Editors and transcribers often sought to correct spelling, punctuation, or attempted to make the text easier to understand in today's vernacular. The changes sometimes showed the bias of the editor. In this article we have footnoted each quote to let the reader know which version of the journal is being used.²

In this paper we explore the interesting details that explain why this site became famous. We offer opinions about the events that took place at Tragedy Spring to augment the primary source documentation surrounding those events that sometimes fail to answer remaining questions. These opinions are based on forty-plus years of studying the research findings of the Carson River Route and Tragedy Spring stories.



Grave and SR 88 and Carson River Route

Graphics added by Frank Tortorich

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The story of Tragedy Spring is the account of 45 men, and one woman, seeking to rejoin their community of faith in the Salt Lake Valley. The inception of their odyssey can be traced to a vigilante murder just a few miles east of the Mississippi River in Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844. The nearby city of Nauvoo was the most recent home to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS, Saints, or Mormons). The Mormons were led by their founder and beloved president

² "Extracts from the Journal of Henry W. Bigler," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, "Bigler," October 1932, Vol 5, no 4, 148, states of the transcription "... It is a true copy of the original journal." However, page 155, offers the following correction obviously added to the original journal: "...camped on the Carson River though at that time we had no name for it only the one we gave it that was 'Pilot River.'"

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

Joseph Smith. Smith and his brother Hyrum were, on June 27, in jail in Carthage, having been charged with closing down an opposition newspaper in Nauvoo. A mob gathered nearby, attacked the jail, and killed Joseph and Hyrum.³ These murders were a continuation of the persistent persecutions of the Mormon people by non-Mormon Americans. After this event, the violence against the Mormons escalated. Families were accosted, barns, and homes burned down.⁴

The killing of Joseph Smith fragmented the church. Debates erupted over who should lead it. Brigham Young was at that time the President of the Quorum of Twelve, or second in command after Joseph Smith, and so assumed the interim leadership role.⁵ Eventually Young was chosen to become President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

By the end of September of 1845 it was clear to the leaders of the church that the Saints would have to sell or abandon their farms and homes in Nauvoo, for their own safety, and leave for a new home somewhere beyond the Rocky Mountains.⁶ Rumors of various destinations spread. Eventually the Salt Lake Valley in Mexican territory became their destination.

On February 4, 1846, the first group of Saints crossed the frozen Mississippi River into Iowa, a difficult winter trek.

In June the Mormons, after an exhausting winter, halted their migration for a few weeks at a site they named Mount Pisgah in Iowa. During this early migration, Brigham Young sent his nephew, Elder Jessie Little, to Washington to seek financial assistance from the federal government to aid their exodus from the United States.⁷ At Mount Pisgah, on June 26, 1846, US Army Captain James Allen brought an answer to Young's request for help. The answer came in the form of a letter from President James K. Polk, who requested 500 men from the migrating Mormons to enlist into the US Army,⁸ under the command of US Army General Stephen Watts Kearny.⁹ They were to aid the nation in its war with Mexico, declared just a few weeks earlier. Needing the money to support the migration, Mormon leader Brigham Young encouraged this one-year enlistment.

This request from President Polk did not sit well with the Mormon community. The United States was considered by many Mormons to be their enemy. Joining the US Army and leaving their families to migrate without them was repugnant.¹⁰ (cont'd on page 7)

³ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 546-50.

⁴ J. Leonard Arrington and Davis Britton, *The Mormon Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 94.

⁵ J. Leonard Arrington, *Brigham Young American Moses* (Urbana Chicago: University Illinois Press, 1986), 114.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷ Arrington, 128.

⁸ Norma Baldwin Ricketts, *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West 1846-1848* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), 11.

⁹ Pronounced KAR ney in Nebraska and KER ney in California. Family uses KAR ney.

¹⁰ Sgt. Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of The Mormon Battalion in The Mexican War: 1846-1847* (Chicago, Illinois: The Rio Grande Press Inc., 1881, reprint 1964), 116.

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

*... President Young encouraged the men by assuring them that their families should be cared for, that they should fare as well as his did, and that he would see that they were helped along. He also predicted that not one of these who might enlist would fall by the hands of the nation's foe, that their only fighting would be with wild beast.*¹¹

By the end of July, Captain Allen, promoted to Colonel Allen, had collected a list of Mormon volunteers that would take on the identity of the Mormon Battalion. The US Army allowed the battalion to select their own officers and form their own companies.¹² The count was thus: 22 officers and 474 enlisted, for a total of 496 men. Four other men would join up in route, bringing the total to 500.¹³ The battalion organized themselves into five companies of 100. Each company was allowed four laundresses for a total of twenty laundresses.¹⁴

The Mormon Battalion was dispatched to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and inducted into the US Army of the West under the command of General Kearny.

Kearny was ordered to lead the Army of the West to California by way of the Santa Fe Trail. He was charged to occupy Santa Fe in Mexican territory, and then proceed on to Mexican California to take command of it for the United States.

On August 13, 1846, the US Army of the West, including the Mormon Battalion, began their march to California.

After six difficult months of travel, three groups separated from the main Mormon Battalion because of illness and fatigue, and the numbers fell to 335 and five women.¹⁵ Those groups were sent to Fort Pueblo (Colorado) for the winter and would be known as the sick detachments.¹⁶

The Battalion, under the direct command of Philip St. George Cooke, pioneered a new road across the Southwest, arriving in southern California on January 29, 1847. They found the war in California over. Brigham Young's bold prophecy that no man would die in battle was fulfilled.

The Mormon Battalion members were discharged from the US Army in July of 1847 and left to their own resources to somehow reunite with their families and other members of their faith who had accompanied the westward Mormon migration. At that time, they did not know that the Saints' final destination was the Great Salt Lake Valley.¹⁷ (cont'd on page 8)

¹¹ Tyler, 118.

¹² Ricketts, *Mormon Battalion*, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30. The five women were: Melissa Coray, laundress; Susan Davis, laundress; Lydia Hunter, laundress; Phebe Brown, laundress. Nancy Brown Davis' name does not show on the rosters as a laundress but does appear in her family journal. Ricketts only lists 16 laundresses by name, so Nancy may have been one of the names not recorded.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

Upon discharge, the members broke into several groups. Seventy-nine men reenlisted in the army for another six months. Several men returned by the way they came to join their families still in Iowa or Winter Quarters in Nebraska. Some chose to follow the Old Spanish Trail out of southern California, hoping to find the migrating Saints. Fifty-one members traveled up the coast to Yerba Buena (today's San Francisco). However, the bulk of the discharged Mormons traveled north over Tejon Pass and through central California to Sutter's Fort to get supplies. They were planning to head east over the Sierra Nevada by way of the four-year-old Truckee River Route,¹⁸ later to be known as the Donner Trail, to join their families and church.

En route, however, they encountered a messenger from President Brigham Young near what is now the town of Truckee, California. A letter dictated by Young communicated that the Salt Lake Valley was to be the destination and future home of the Saints. However, since the pioneers in the valley were in destitute circumstances, Young recommended that only those men with ample funds and adequate provisions should proceed east to join them. The others were asked to remain in California and labor until spring, then bring along their earnings and provisions.¹⁹

Many of the discharged Mormons that stayed found work in northern California with Captain John Sutter at his fort, located in present-day Sacramento. Sutter sent six Mormon men to work for James Marshall in building a sawmill in the Coloma Valley along the south fork of the American River. These men were: Henry Bigler, Azariah Smith, Alexander Stephens, James S. Brown, William Johnston, and William Berger.²⁰ They were the first to witness Marshall's discovery of gold in the tail race of the mill on January 24, 1848, and to correctly document the date of the discovery.²¹

Two of these men, Henry William Bigler²² and Azariah Smith,²³ journaled a near daily account of their experiences, from their first day of their enlistment in the battalion, after their discharge, until their arrival in Salt Lake Valley. It is these two first-hand, eye-witness accounts that will be used as the primary sources for the events at Tragedy Spring.

There are several other journals that describe the events; however, most do not add significant details to the story. There is always an exception: Addison Pratt's²⁴ journal does add some detail not found elsewhere, and it will be cited.

In the next issue of *The Amadorian* - The Mormons in California start the journey to the Salt Lake Valley.

¹⁸ Emigrant trails usually followed rivers; eight trails were so named, i.e. Truckee River Route.

¹⁹ Ricketts, *Mormon Battalion*. 176.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

²¹ James Marshall claimed the date of gold discovery was January 19, but the two Mormon journalists disagreed.

²² Erwin G. Gudde, *Bigler's Chronicle of The West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962).

²³ David L. Bigler, *The Gold Discovery Journal: Of Azariah Smith* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1990).

²⁴ Addison Pratt's Journal is in the History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

*Amador County Historical Society**Board of Directors**Society Officers*

Cathy McGowen, President
 Jeannette Garbarini-Walters, Vice President
 Judy Jebian, Secretary
 Wayne Garibaldi, Treasurer

Board Members

Thornton Consolo
 Georgia Fox
 Phillip Giurlani
 Teresa Guidi
 Jeana Hultquist
 Alicia Miller
 Gary Reinoehl
 Coni Saracino
 Danna Saunders
 Keith Sweet
 Grant Vogel
 Russ van Voorhis
 Leonard Williams

Newsletter

Cathy McGowen, Hazel and Jeffrey Powell

*Board Meetings are held on the 3rd
 Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m.
 225 Church St., Jackson (Amador County
 Museum)*

Members and friends are invited to attend.

ACHS Life Members

Eugene & Christina Ammann ~ Kathy Allen &
 Frank Axe ~ Richard & July Allen ~ Joseph and Iris
 Aparicio ~ Ed & Mary Lee Arata ~ Caryl Arnese ~
 Michael Bell ~ Heidi Boitano ~ Mark, Lorie &
 Matthew Bowlby ~ Ray & Barb Brusatori ~ William
 Burger ~ Paul & Claudine Burnett ~ Jerry Cassesi ~
 Robert J. & Susan L. Chandler ~ D.E. Collins ~
 Thornton & Paula Jo Consolo ~ Robert M. &
 Lorraine M. Cooper ~ Mary Cowan ~ Jeannine &
 Patrick Crew* ~ Jean Louise Dahl ~ Robert Davis ~
 Kathleen Du Bois ~ John Ellyson, MD ~ Carol
 Emerson ~ Katherine Evatt & Pete Bell ~ Robin
 Field & Carol Mischer ~ Wayne Garibaldi ~ Phillip
 & Jenny Giurlani ~ Jim & Teresa Guidi ~ Ray &
 Cheryl Herndon & Bobby Keeling ~ Curtis &
 Denise Hollis ~ Patricia Huberty ~ Jeana (Cova)
 Hultquist & Marshall Cova ~ Ida Ruth Johnson ~
 Marilyn Jones ~ Richard & Pat Jones ~ Gretchen
 Kingsbury ~ George & Joan La Ponsie ~ JoAnn
 Levy ~ Gary & Jaimie Little ~ Stan Lukowicz ~
 Doug & Susan McElwee ~ Allen & Karen Martin ~
 Jeremy & Shirley McCarty ~ Doug & Susan
 McElwee ~ Frances Melusky ~ Marshal Merriam ~
 Joe & Alicia Miller (Giurlani) ~ Jean Mueller ~ Ron
 Oliverro ~ Katherine & William Orescan ~ Alan &
 Peggy Piccardo ~ Hazel, Jeffrey & Amy Powell ~
 Marian & Leonard Randolph ~ Jeanne C. Russ ~
 Martin Ryan ~ John H. & Patricia Scott ~ Norm Seid
 ~ Beverly Smallfield ~ George P. Smith ~ Rose
 Marie Smith ~ John Solaja* ~ Marie-Louise Solaja ~
 Audrey Souza ~ Charles J. Spinetta ~ Ray Stacey* ~
 Steve & Linda Stocking ~ Suzanne Erickson Stroy ~
 Keith & Gail Sweet ~ Ed & Margaret Swift ~
 Russell & Mary Beth VanVoorhis ~ Violich Farms ~
 Grant Vogel & Pam Sharp ~ Fraser & Teddy West ~
 Sutter Creek Promotions Committee ~ Volcano
 Community Services District *Benefactor

About the Amador County Historical Society

The Amador County Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the research and preservation of Amador County heritage and history.

The organization brings together people from diverse backgrounds to work towards these goals. We invite all interested persons to attend our monthly meetings and encourage your suggestions and active participation in Society events and endeavors.

We also welcome guest articles for our newsletter. Unfortunately, due to limited space we can accept only those pertaining to local history. If you have any questions regarding ACHS please contact the office at (209) 257-1485.

If you would like to become a member of the Society, please fill in the membership form below and mail along with the appropriate dues to the Amador County Historical Society, P.O. Box 761, Jackson, Calif.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please check one of the following Memberships:

ANNUAL **Individual \$25.00** **Family (2 or more) \$40.00** **Students \$15.00**

LIFETIME **Family (2 or more) \$400.00** **SPONSOR** **Benefactor (\$1,000 up)**

Patron (\$500 to \$999)

Associate (\$250 to \$499)

Other _____

The Amadorian
A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society
P.O. Box 761
Jackson, CA 95642

In This Issue:

- *President's Corner*
- *Livery Building Donors*
- *A Look Back – Ione High School*
- *“Tragedy Spring and the Opening of the Gold Rush Trail” – First installment from an account by Frank Tortorich*

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org