

Golden Nuggets

February 2009

North Sacramento's Liberty Iron Works: A Talk by Derrel Fleener
Tuesday, February 24, 7:00 PM
Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Building, 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento



Liberty Iron Works Buildings, ca.1917, McCurry Foto Co.

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Sacramento County Historical Society member Derrel Fleener, former director of the now closed Silver Wings Aviation Museum at Mather Air Base and former curator at McClellan Air Museum, will present a talk on the Liberty Iron Works at the SCHS member meeting this month. The program will be held at 7 PM on Tuesday, February 24, at the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society building, 5380 Elvas Avenue, Sacramento.

Liberty Iron Works, established in 1918 just after the US entered WWI, expanded the former Globe Iron Works site on Del Paso Boulevard. Globe, whose name can still be seen on the tower in the photo above, built railroad cars and locomotives around the turn of the century. Liberty Iron was founded in part to

attract an air base to Sacramento by manufacturing the government's Curtiss JN-4 planes—or Jennies—used to train pilots. The pitch worked. Sacramento got its Army Air Corps base— Mather Field—just as Liberty began its three-year, \$18 million government contract.

Newspaper ads soon began promoting development in North Sacramento, touting “big 50 ft. lots within a block of [the plant] for only \$500.” The ads went on, “You cannot fail to profit beyond your greatest expectations. The Liberty Iron Works is here to stay.” Sadly, it was not. Join us on Tuesday, February 24th, to hear the rest of this very interesting story. Guests are welcome! Ample free parking is available behind the building and on the street.

Key Points in the Black African American California Experience

By Clarence Caesar

1844

William Alexander Leidesdorff, an Afro-Caribbean businessman from Yerba Buena, is granted 35,000 acres along the south side of the American River in northeastern Sacramento County by Mexican Governor Micheltorena. Leidesdorff intends to operate a cattle-raising enterprise on the property but he dies in 1848 before his dream of cattle riches is realized.

1848

James Marshall discovers gold in Sutter's Mill in Coloma. Marshall and John Sutter agree to keep his find a secret, but six months later word gets out about the discovery and a rush for the gold fields in Coloma and other parts of the Mother Lode begins.

1849

California's Constitutional Convention in Monterey drafts and ratifies the future state's constitution. On the issue of slavery Article I, Section 18 of the newly drafted constitution states: "Neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this state."

A small group of African-American miners establish one of the earliest mining claims in Sacramento County at Negro Bar on the south bank of the American River near what is now Folsom, California. They mine the claim for nearly a year before moving on to nearby sites further north.

Newer claims at Negro Hill and Massachusetts Flat—more permanent in nature—represented some of the first successful mining ventures by African-Americans and other groups. Originally mined by Mormons from nearby Mormon Island, Negro Hill was reworked by an African-American miner named Kelsey from Massachusetts in the fall of 1849, giving the site its name. Mining activity at these sites continued through the late 1850s when the gold and the lure of mining began to diminish. African-Americans and other miners found their way to the growing cities and towns of Northern California.

1850

California becomes the nation's 31st state as a result of the Compromise of 1850, entering as a free state.

A small African-American congregation establishes the Colored African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Sacramento in a building on 7th street between G and H streets. Later renamed St. Andrews AME Church, this congregation is the first African-American church established on the Pacific Coast.

The first census of California counts 962 African-Americans in the state, with 240 African-Americans counted in Sacramento County.

1850-1854

The California Legislature passes a law banning African-American, Chinese, and Native American testimony in

cases involving Caucasian plaintiffs and defendants. Laws also prohibit African-Americans from voting or going to school with Caucasian children. The laws were eventually removed through the political efforts of African-American organizations such as the Franchise League and the Executive Committee.

1855

The first of three statewide Colored Conventions is held at St. Andrews AME Church in Sacramento. They focus on the political and economic well-being of California's African-American communities and plot strategies for the removal of unjust laws in the state. Two other conventions would be held later in Sacramento (1856) and San Francisco (1857). The state's first African-American newspaper, the *Mirror of the Times* (San Francisco) was established in 1856 as a result of the first convention.

1857

Archy Lee, a fugitive slave, is brought to trial in California's most celebrated fugitive slave case. California's courts later free Lee when it is shown that his master



illegally hired him out to others in California for over a year. State law prohibited extended stays in California by slaves and their masters. This case is similar in many respects to the Dred Scott case that was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in at the same time.

Lee later moves to British Columbia, where he resides for a number of years, but in time returns to Sacramento. The *Sacramento Daily Union* in November 1873

reported, "Archy Lee was found buried in the sand, with only his head exposed, in the marshlands of Sacramento. He was ill and claimed to have buried himself thus to keep warm. He was taken to the hospital where he died."

1858

Many African-Americans leave California for the gold fields along the Fraser River in British Columbia, Canada. The exodus is caused in part by the frustration of many African-American Californians trying to overturn unjust testimony and suffrage laws passed earlier by the California Legislature. New legislative proposals limiting African-American and Chinese immigration into the state also hasten the urge to move elsewhere.

An invitation from Provincial Governor James Douglas to African-American migrants to settle British Columbia provides added incentive to leave California. For many, the stay in British Columbia is short. Many of the same problems associated with racism and social inequality in California appear in British Columbia. Many African-American migrants eventually return to the United States after the end of the Civil War. Slightly expanded version online at the California Department of Education Instructional Materials web pages, History/Social Sciences. -Editor

**SAMCC Photo Collection Event
Launches Fairytale Town 50th Year**



Farmer Brown's Barn, August 30, 1959, Opening Day at Fairy Tale Town. SAMCC

By Annette Kassis

In 1955 members of the Sacramento Junior League began working with the City of Sacramento to plan and raise funds for a “children’s dream land” in William Land Park. The result, the 2.5 acre Fairytale Town, opened its Troll Bridge entrance on August 29, 1959. Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, Fairytale Town has partnered with the Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center (SAMCC) for a special *Faces & Places of Sacramento* photo collection event to kick-off the anniversary season on Saturday, March 7, from 10 AM to 3 PM. Admission to the park will be free for individuals bringing photos or memorabilia of family outings at the park to be copied on the spot.

Faces & Places of Sacramento is an ongoing SAMCC project documenting daily lives and historical, political, and cultural life of the Sacramento region. “This is the first event we’ve done for *Faces & Places* that is focused on Sacramentans’ experiences of a specific place,” said SAMCC manager Marcia Eymann.

“Fairytale Town is a physical representation of Sacramento’s Baby Boomers. Thanks in large part to the McClellan, Mather, and Army Signal Depot military installations, Sacramento experienced steady job and population growth during the Cold War era. The idea for Fairytale

Town was, in part, a response to our own Baby Boom.”

At the collection event, a professional photographer will record the snapshots. SAMCC will archive the copies and participants will keep their originals. Those who wish to participate are encouraged to call SAMCC at 916-264-7073 for a reservation time, but walk-ins are welcome. Fairytale Town is located at 3901 Land Park Drive in Sacramento.



Carolyn Hamm, Anita Jensen, and Richard Cameron, in costume, along the Crooked Mile. Aug. 23, 1959. SAMCC

Sacramento County History Day 2009

Individuals in History: Actions & Legacies

Saturday, March 7th

8 AM to 5 PM

American River College

Cafeteria/Davies Hall/Ranch House

& Gymnasium

Open to the public

Volunteers needed to judge and serve in many other capacities for this annual nationwide student history competition.

Phone for info: 916-868-1049

www.sachistoryday.org

Ballot Enclosed for SCHS Board Elections

Please Return by Monday, February 23

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Out & About

Date	Time	Event	Place & Contact
FEBRUARY 1 thru 13 Mar	10 AM to 6 PM enter by 5 PM	Pedals and Metal: the History of the Bicycle Exhibit coincides with the AMGEN Tour of California bicycle race, and illustrates the evolution of the bicycle with unique designs from the early 1900s to pre-war designs, to bicycles of today.	Towe Auto Museum 2200 Front Street Sacramento 916-442-6802 www.toweautomuseum.org
Opens 7 Sat Ongoing, 1st Sat of month	12-4, first Sat or by appt.	Elk Grove, the First 50 Years Various rotating exhibits featuring the people and organizations of Elk Grove from 1850 to 1900. Special medical history exhibit on loan from Sierra Sac Valley Medical Museum.	Elk Grove Hotel and Stage Stop Museum 9941 East Stockton Boulevard Elk Grove 916-685-8115
MARCH Ongoing now thru 8 Sun	Tues-Sun 11AM to 4 PM	Evolution of the Black Image Memorabilia depicting both positive and negative materials used in marketing. Special lecture & guided tour by Esther Roman, curator, on Feb. 21, 4PM. Call for reservations.	Folsom History Museum 823 Sutter St., Folsom 916-985-2702 www.folsomhistorymuseum.org
24 Tues	6:30 PM	Annual SCHS Awards of Excellence Witness awards for a variety of achievements in history education, preservation, and publications. Guaranteed to inspire! Reservation forms and details next month. Save the date!	Sierra Sac Valley Medical Society building 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento Message phone: 916-443-6265 www.sachistoricalociety.org