

Golden Nuggets

OCTOBER 2006

The Sacramento County Historical Society Presents
Clearing the Rubble
Links Between Archives and History
Tuesday, October 24, 7 PM at SAMCC

Dr. Barry Pateman, UC Berkeley, associate editor of the Emma Goldman Papers, Goldman biographer, and curator of the Kate Sharpley Library, poses the interesting question, "Who is more important in creating history - historians or archivists? Come weigh the evidence. Free!



Archives Month

By Dylan Macdonald

It's Archives Month across the country! Begun in 1988, the month celebrates the role that archives and archivists play in documenting and preserving our country's rich historical record. During October many of the more than 4,000 repositories throughout California will be sponsoring events that highlight the state's documentary heritage. Activities include public tours of archives, exhibits, and speakers. For a listing of events in California, visit www.ss.ca.gov/archives/archmonth2006.html.

In proclaiming October as Archives Month, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said, "As stewards of our cultural resources, California's archivists play a critical role in preserving our documentary heritage. I commend them for carefully collecting, caring for and supplying access to a wide array of items that have shaped our state. Because of their work, our past will be readily accessible for generations to come."

The Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center will be unveiling a new exhibit of recent acquisitions, *In Recent Memory*, as part of the celebration. The exhibit is available for viewing during normal business hours. Sacramento City and County Archives Month proclamations encouraging residents to "recognize the people and resources dedicated to our county's important and diverse history" will be displayed.

Past, Present, and Future Happenings

We should all offer a big "thank you" to our Old City Cemetery BBQ & Tour Committee for organizing a wonderful evening on September 26th. It was fun, as well as informative. The team included Dr. Bob LaPerrière, Becky Caruthers, Susan Ballew, Pat Turse, Alan O'Connor, Rick Bettis, Lisa Calloway-Wire, Janice Kelley, Mary Helmich, and Mory Holmes. We also very much appreciated the generous hospitality extended to us by the Old City Cemetery Committee. Thank you everyone!

It's Archives Month! For those of you who have done any primary research, you know how important archives and libraries can be. This month we pay tribute not only to archives, but also to the archivists who have saved and organized the evidence of history. A worthy profession, it gets little recognition for the important work that it does. I invite each of you to take advantage of the special activities that will be occurring throughout the month of October, which are focused at many of the region's outstanding archival institutions (see the Out & About page). Be sure to come to the Society's October meeting at the Sacramento Archives and Museum Collections Center, when our guest speaker will be Dr. Barry Pateman.

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And don't forget, November 17th will be our fourth annual "Taste of History," to be held this year at the Towe Auto Museum. We are planning to make the event even bigger and more special than ever with the involvement of many of the area's historical and cultural organizations. So mark your calendars and be sure to join us. I look forward to seeing you there.

- Mary A. Helmich, President

SCHS Expanding A Taste Of History

You have to admit the idea has appeal: a kind of progressive dinner party featuring stations with carefully selected, lovingly prepared traditional historical fare. As if that were not enough, this year's event is set in a museum of classic cars, with knowledgeable docents present. And you get to take home the recipes for your own soirées!

We've always had a good turnout for this four-year-old event, previously held in December. This year we want to include more historical organizations to launch a grand, new tradition-filled holiday season event. Tickets will be \$25 before the event, \$30 at the door, and will go on sale October 25. So hold Friday evening November 17th free, and stay tuned for more exciting details. Watch for event fliers in the mail. – Editor



From left: The SAMMC team, Dylan McDonald, Kristin Elder, Jim Henley, Becky Carruthers, Pat Johnson, Carson Hendricks, keepers of our heritage.

News from SAMCC

By Dylan Macdonald

With increases to its budget funded by both the City and County, the Sacramento Area Museum and Collection Center (SAMCC) recently hired new staff. The temporary archivist position, held by Carson Hendricks since June 2005, has been made

permanent. Carson, a graduate of the Public History program at CSUS, had spent much of his time working on the records SAMCC received when city offices moved back into the historic and new city halls last year. His knowledge of regional and architectural history makes him a welcome addition.

Filling a position long vacant due to funding cuts, Becky Carruthers began as Curator of History at SAMCC in July. Having previously worked at the Discovery Museum, the State Museum Resource Center, and the California State Railroad Museum, Becky brings a wealth of experience and skills to the artifacts housed at SAMCC. A graduate of the Public History program at CSUS, she will be working on developing exhibit space at various public institutions throughout Sacramento county.

Online searching of SAMCC's catalog, "PastPerfect," is now possible. Since May, online users have had access to the catalog's nearly 50,000 entries, including over 30,000 images. The project has been a great success, producing photo orders that more than pay for the investment. Two days after going online, staff received a phone call from a man who had been searching for years for a photograph of his parent's business in Old Sacramento before redevelopment. He finally found the elusive image after searching the SAMCC website. Try your own search at www.sacramentoarchives.org.

Beginning in November, SAMCC's public research hours will be expanded from 16 hours to 24 hours a week. Our reading room will now be open by appointment on Saturdays, from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. In order to help staff this expansion of hours, a part-time position will be filled by a graduate student via a paid internship. Our reading room has also been rearranged to allow more room for patrons.

And finally, Pat Johnson, Senior Archivist at SAMCC, is teaching the "Archives and Manuscript" course for CSUS graduate students this fall semester. The 15 students meet at SAMCC every Thursday night for lecture and discussion, as well as to work on the collections that they will be processing from the archives holdings. The students' work will allow us to open several collections previously unavailable to researchers.

Everyone Has a Story: Capturing Family Stories

by Janice Kelley



Where do I start?

I don't have any interesting stories to write about in my family.

There is so much to say, I don't have time to write it all down.

Capturing family stories is relatively simple and fun, especially when you engage family members in the process, and everyone remembers it differently. Then you laugh, cry or celebrate all over again. Capturing these stories is the glue that bonds family together. As the author of your story, you can decide what is fact and what is fiction and how much of both to include. Everyone has a story. And it's not necessary to be a hero, or famous or the life of the party to be worthy of words. Writing a story involves a few simple steps described below.

Step One: Identify the topic. Begin by identifying an event or challenge, person or setting. Writing about your first home and the traditions that began there, the birth of a child, or a day in the life of a challenging home improvement project are ideas to build on.

Step Two: Details. Ask yourself questions and gather your answers from personal interviews, memory, old letters or other research. What inspired you about Grandma Mary? What gifts did she give you? What did she cook? Describe what she wore. Did she have a favorite perfume? At this stage, you are thinking of words and phrases to trigger recall. You may write the full story if you feel the urge to write and words flow. If not, keep brainstorming until you have written down every idea related to your topic.

My grandmother made batch after batch of strudel and packed it in 5 lb coffee cans to give to neighbors, her mail carrier and every doctor she saw all year long. Every day she and my grandfather timed their trips to be home to watch their favorite television daytime serial.

Step Three: Format. Once you have ideas written, the next step is identifying how to format your story. How many words are enough or too much is the next question. Length is determined by the value that detail brings into the story to keep it interesting and tell the full tale. A poem or a letter is long enough if it captures the essence of a person. A chapter by chapter account may be your best format to look at milestones in a person's life or to describe their different roles in life: teacher, traveler, mother, wife, community leader, volunteer, and many more.

Stories do not always need a beginning, middle and an end. Poems, cards, letters, miniature books and journals, quick anecdotes, one photo or a series of photos combined with descriptive captions can work. Even carefully preserved mementos with narrative describing the meaning or the adventure behind the item are all excellent "containers" for stories.

Step Four: Write the story. Make the book. This is where you sit down with notes, photos, memorabilia, the dates, places and the smallest details to finish writing your story. Even short anecdotes or quotes tell the tale and spark cherished memories.

Every night after dinner, my grandpa washed the dishes. I always helped by drying the silverware. I dried the forks, the knives and the spoons with a clean dry towel. And every night I never did it just right, because when I opened the silverware drawer to put something away, my grandpa would turn to me with conviction and say, "Don't dry those over the drawer, you are going to get everything wet! Close the drawer first." I would close the drawer. The next time I opened it to put something away. He would say again, "Close the drawer, you are going to get everything wet."

Editor's note: Janice Kelley is a new Board Member. She leads workshops describing how to develop family and personal stories. For more information, see her web site, www.drivingwiththetopdown.biz.

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GOLDEN NUGGETS

Pat Turse, Editorial & Layout
newsletter@sachistoricalociety.org
Deadline: 20th of month

Out & About

Date	Time	Event	Place & Contact
October All Month & Beyond	Sat. 9 AM & other days & times	Cemetery Tours. Garden tours, birding tours, fall color tours, memorial tours, mostly free, mostly Saturday mornings. Try the spooky Lantern Tours, Oct. 27, 28, 29th at 6:30 & 8:00 PM, by reservation, \$15.	Old City Cemetery. Tours begin at 10th & Broadway entry gate. Questions or evening tour reservations, phone 916-448-0811. www.oldcitycemetery.com
Sat. 7	4 PM - 8 PM	Open House. Behind the scenes tours, new California missions exhibit, rarely seen documents on display, and more. Free!	California State Archives 1020 O St., Sacramento Information 916-653-7715
Wed. 11	10:00 AM to 7:00 PM	CSUS University Archives & Special Collections Open House. Student members of the Society of American Archivists will offer tours at 12, 2, 4 and 6:00 PM. Free.	University Library 2000 State University Drive, Rm. 1502 Sacramento 916-278-6144
Sat. 14	8:30 AM to 4:00 PM	Family History Day. Free information and assistance from archivists and genealogists to help you begin your journey into your family's past.	California State Archives, 1020 O St., Sacramento. Light rail stops opposite the archives. Some free parking in lot across the street. 916-653-7715
Tues. 24	7:00 PM	Clearing the Rubble: Links Between Archives and History, with the always engaging Dr. Barry Pateman of UC Berkeley. Free.	SAMCC, 551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd., Sacramento, off the Richards Blvd. exit of Interstate 5. 916-264-7072.