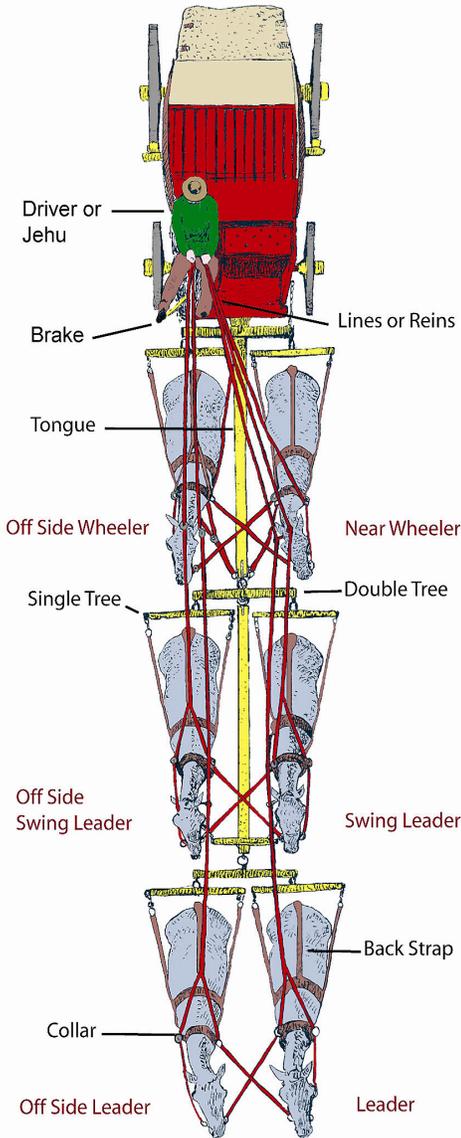


Golden Nuggets

October 2008

SCHS Presents
Gary Kurutz: Knights of the Lash
Tuesday, October 28, 7:00 PM

Wells Fargo Center, 400 Capitol Mall, Sacramento



A six-horse hitch driven by a Jehu.
 Courtesy California State Parks

SCHS is pleased to present a lecture by California State Library Director of Special Collections, Gary Kurutz, highlighting the fascinating characters who served as California stagecoach drivers. An accomplished writer and editor as well as a gracious raconteur, Kurutz edited and introduced **Knights of the Lash, Stagecoach Stories of Benjamin C. Truman** (San Francisco Book Club, limited edition) in 2005. His talk, appropriately offered at the Wells Fargo Center, will be the grand finale of California State Parks' 3-month-long statewide celebration of Stagecoach Days. Come early for the best seats. For details on other events scheduled this month see the link in the box below.

California's Daring Stage Drivers

By Kathi Bristow

Jehu, a title often bestowed upon stagecoach drivers, came from a Biblical quote in the Old Testament, Kings 9:20, "...and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously."

Stage drivers, also called "whips," were revered. They were the road warriors of their day. The Reverend Henry W. Bellows, president of the United States Sanitary Commission, declared on a trip to California in 1864, "I think I should be compelled to nominate the stage-drivers, as being on the whole the most lofty, arrogant, reserved and superior class of being on the coast—that class that has inspired me with the most terror and reverence."

Many dressed in the classic drivers' "uniform": a long linen duster—a light overcoat to help fend off dust, rain and wind; long gauntlet gloves; a wide-brimmed, low-crowned felt "wide-awake" hat; and tall leather boots. Each also carried a long whip.

The Butterfield Overland Mail Company, founded in 1858, and other stage lines connected distant towns in California and linked the West Coast with the Mississippi River in the East. The bravado and personalities of the drivers embellished the pages of the newspapers and later the history books of the Old West. Among

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the bevy of whips employed by the stage companies were some who would become legendary during their lifetime and beyond—Henry James “Hank” Monk, George Monroe, Clark “Old Chieftain” or “Old Foss” Foss, Charley Parkhurst (who later proved to be a woman), Charley Webster, and Gen. Phineas Banning.

Hank Monk became famous for the ride he gave Horace Greeley, a journalist for the *New York Daily Tribune*, over the Sierra Nevada range, from Virginia City to Placerville. Greeley had complained to his driver that the trip was going too slowly and he needed to reach Placerville, where he had to give a lecture. It seems the constant grumblings from Greeley caused Monk to speed up and drive his team furiously. Hank yelled to Greeley, “Keep your seat, Horace; I’ll get you there on time!” Stories about that trip were retold in many California mining towns. Even Mark Twain and Artemus West used them to embellish their own lectures.

Some passengers reflected upon the discomfort they endured in their journals, but most wrote about the thrill of their adventures travelling at breakneck speeds while on board a stage in the hands of a daredevil driver.

Kathi Bristow is an intern in the Interpretation and Education Section of California State Parks. She has worked extensively on Stagecoach Days.



Daredevil stage driver drawn by J. Ross Brown for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February 1862

The Thrill of the Ride: On Board a California Stage

An 1898 account by Helen Wilmans
Describing rides of the 1860s or 1870s
Contributed by Pat Turse

I have tried every species of locomotion from a bicycle to an elephant, and there is nothing equal to a stage ride. It was in the mountain regions of California where I wrung from this experience the bewilderingly exalted emotions that add depth and breadth to the ordinary scope of life. Oh! the dauntless joy of the thing; the grip-on-fate feeling; the fearlessness...

How many times I have taken the stage at Lower Lake, near where I was living, to Calistoga, some thirty miles away. The soft, magnetic air of that peculiar climate transfused my whole being; the beautiful horses were themselves an inspiration. Trotting or walking, every movement seemed to be gauged by the finest steel springs, as we travelled along toward the base of Mt. Saint Helena. Here we crossed a stream that often was only a thread of silver, and again a raging torrent; then the laborious crawl up the mountain side until we reached the toll house on top. The scenes that spread out before us changed constantly as we ascended.

At the toll house fresh horses would be waiting for us, one man to a horse. The driver got down from his perch and examined the wagon; examined the harness on the four fresh horses. One could not help observing the fine sense of mastery expressed in his face. No man ever wore that look but there was a reason for it.

"Turn 'er loose, boys. Now then!" And the horses were in the air that very instant on a mad run, and never would they break step until we reached the plain some miles below. Sometimes the coach was on three wheels as we zigzagged round one of the sudden bends; sometimes it was on two wheels; now and then it was on one wheel, and once in a long time there were no wheels touching ground as it scooted around a turn above some fearful incline. There were broken bones and a few deaths on that road, but not many; and when accidents happened, the driver was strange to the business, and wore no such face as the one I have described.

Editors note: Helen Wilmans was an early pioneer in the New Thought movement, which emphasized the power of mind over body. Original research on her brought me to California. Materials for her life story currently reside in my file cabinets and in my head. -PT



Photo: Dick Schmidt, Sacramento Bee (SAMCC)

“The Final Odyssey of Robert F. Kennedy” To Open at SAMCC

By Dylan McDonald

On Friday, October 17th, the Sacramento Archives & Museum Collection Center will unveil a new photographic exhibit of Robert F. Kennedy’s 1968 California campaign stops during his run for the White House. The exhibit is largely based on two collections recently donated to SAMCC by photographers Richard Gilmore of the *Sacramento Bee* and Dennis Warren of United Press International. The evening will also feature an address by Dr. Joseph Palermo of California State University, Sacramento, on the 40th anniversary of the presidential campaign of RFK. The event is free and open to the public. It begins at 7:00 p.m. in SAMCC’s new, expanded reading room at 551 Sequoia Pacific Boulevard, Sacramento.

Senator Kennedy made three visits to Sacramento before the California Democratic presidential primary on June 4th. The candidate made appearances at Florin Mall, UC Davis, and at his campaign headquarters in downtown Sacramento. During his last visit—on May 30th—he spoke from a “whistle stop” at the Southern Pacific Depot on I Street. It was during these visits that Gilmore and Warren took the photos at the core of this exhibit.

Dr. Palermo is an authority on the 1960s. He has written two books on Robert Kennedy, **In His Own Right: The Political Odyssey of Senator Robert F. Kennedy**, and **Robert F. Kennedy and the Death of American Idealism**. A regular contributor to the Huffington Post political web blog, Palermo is an expert in presidential politics and civil rights.

The event is part of Archives Month, a nationwide celebration to highlight the importance and value of historic records and archival materials. It will be the formal opening of the SAMCC reading room, which now includes the space formerly occupied by the Viewpoint Gallery. The reading room is the designated area where patrons view the historic collections during their research appointments at SAMCC. A secured room, it includes computer terminals; microfilm readers; finding aids, guides, catalogs, and indices to the collections; and space for up to ten researchers.

Another exhibit dealing with 1968 will also be opening soon in the Sacramento History Museum (formerly the Discovery Museum) in Old Sacramento. Entitled “1968: It Happened Here,” is a look at the turbulent events of that year, and at how Sacramentans responded to them. The two exhibits appear to be fine companions that will be of great interest to Baby Boomers, among many others.

For additional information on these exhibits, call SAMCC at 916-264-7072 or the History Museum at 916-264-7059.

CSUS Renaissance Society To Hear Ray Oliver

SCHS board member Ray Oliver will be speaking about the history of McClellan Air Force Base to the Renaissance Society at 10am, Friday, October 24 in Room 1522, CSUS library, 6000 J St., Sacramento. The Renaissance Society is Sacramento State’s participatory center for learning in retirement. His talk will include a rarely seen 1986 video made for the base’s 50th anniversary. The event is free and open to everyone. For more information on this event, phone 916-278-7834.

Bell P-39 Assembly Line

To step up its delivery of Speedy Bell P-39 “Airacobra” fighter airplanes to American pilots in the South Pacific, the Army Air Forces Air Service Command put American production line methods to work at McClellan Field.

<http://en.Wikipedia.org>



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Out & About

Date	Time	Event	Place & Contact
OCTOBER At your convenience	You pick it	SAMCC Users SHORT Online Survey Ten brief multiple choice questions will help SAMCC better serve us now and in the future.	http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WkN9jFYDA8KGkAeteb6OJA_3d_3d
10-12 Fri-Sun	10 AM to 4 PM	Coloma Gold Rush Live Enjoy living history, demonstrations, and gold panning. Take a carriage ride, watch miners at work and see an original Concord stage coach on exhibit.	Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park Rte 49, about 7 miles north of Placerville 530-295-2173 mmich@parks.ca.gov
18 Sat Thru 4 Jan	11 AM to 4 PM Tues-Sat	From Garden to Jar Joint exhibit with UC Cooperative Extension on how food goes from farm to table. Features historical exhibits and information on current practices. A harvest season event.	Folsom History Museum 823 Sutter Street, Folsom 916-985-2707 www.folsomhistorymuseum.org
25 thru 4 Jan	10 AM to 8 PM Tues-Thurs; weekend hours vary; closed Monday	Freedom Sisters Traveling interactive exhibit celebrating the lives of 20 African American women whose varied roles fighting for freedom helped shape our country and its collective conscience.	Sacramento Central Library 828 I Street, Sacramento 916-264-2920 www.saclibrary.org
NOVEMBER 18 Tues (3rd Tues-day)	7:00 PM	Kennedy Gold Mine Bill Braun, of Jackson's Kennedy Mine Association, will speak on what was once one of the deepest (5912 feet) gold mines in the world.	Details To Be Announced www.sachistoricalociety.org