
ALPINE REVIEW

Arborglyphs of Alpine

By Asa Gilmore



Growing up in a small town gives one a different perspective on history. As I roamed the mountains and canyons of Alpine County in my teenage years, my view was relatively unhindered by modern developments and new buildings.

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The Alpine Review is published quarterly by the Historical Society of Alpine County

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Alpine County Museum

The Alpine County Museum is located in the heart of Markleeville, on top of the hill off of Montgomery Street, up the hill at the end of School House Road.

The museum features exhibits on Blacksmithing, the Old Webster School, Silver Mountain City, Jail, Basque Oven, early Alpine County's pioneer families, Native Washoe people, mining in the area, farming, and cattle ranching.

The museum is open Memorial Day weekend through October from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

Museum Curator

Jim Boyd

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Members,

Hope this finds everyone healthy, wealthy and wise and ready for a great year of new adventures. Over the last three months the museum has been a busy place, Jim Boyd, volunteers, and the Board have been working together on changes to the museum. The work will continue right on up to the museum opening in May.

Plan to visit the Museum complex during the summer, be sure to walk around the grounds and see the progress of work being done. We will be rearranging a couple of exhibits in preparation for a new exhibit.

The stamp mill will get some well-deserved maintenance which will improve the operation and hopefully make it easier to operate for demonstrations. If you have looked the stamp mill over in the past be sure to stop by and see if you can spot the changes. We will be announcing when the mill will be operating but don't wait for that to come by and see what else is new.

When the spring weather arrives we will be having a bread and cinnamon roll bake in the Basque oven. Anyone who would like to bring their homemade bread dough or cinnamon rolls baked by the oven crew is welcome to bring it.

Alpine County Historical Society and Douglas County Historical Society have agreed to honor each other's membership cards for free admission to events, lectures and museums.

Over the past years our dedicated volunteers have assisted the museum staff with a variety of projects. We want to thank them and want to invite anyone who would like to join them and volunteer whatever time they have. No experience necessary, there will be a volunteer get together and information day coming up. Anyone who is interested or just wants to know what is involved should come and get your questions answered. We will be sending out an invitation letter in a few weeks.

A gentle reminder, we are in the middle of our annual membership drive. If you haven't sent in your dues for 2019 please do. Are you missing your form and need another? Just send me an email and I will get one out to you.

Your Board of Directors, Curator, and hardworking volunteers all would like to have you visit your museum this season.

See you there!

Tom

Curator's Corner

Sometime in the first few months I was here, I came across the mission statement of the museum. It was in an evaluation of the museum, Conversation Assessment Program Survey of the Alpine County Museum May/June 2009. I was happy to find the Mission Statement and its goals in written form and it has become a working document for me, one which guides big and small decisions. It puts me in touch with a common culture.

It reads as follows:

The mission statement of the museum and the Historical Society of Alpine County is "to preserve forever the rich cultural heritage of Alpine County and the Surrounding Eastern Sierra Nevada Area." The stated goals towards achieving this mission are "Preserving the Past", "Interpreting the Past" and "Educating the Present to Preserve the Future".

The goal of "Interpreting the Past" is integral to museum work and in the museum world has a very specific code. In interpretation you start with what you consider the story, sort through the artifacts, photos, and materials available to convey that story, and then use the materials to present the story as best you can through labels, presentations, and conversations. You hope you get it right, but you won't always. This is the common basis of museums and the fabric which holds the profession together. In this process, you hope to provide a hook which will convey the story of our rich cultural history to the visitors of the museum.

However, it is the third goal which I find intriguing. I have never seen the third goal, "Educating the Present to Preserve the Future" anywhere in the literature, presented in just that way. As an idea, this one carries great weight as it turns the whole concept of Museums on its head. We are used to preserving the past as museum professionals. But "educating the present to preserve the future" takes the concept of a museum to a whole new level and gives a whole new perspective to the work we do both as a museum and as a historical society.

Much of the work of the museum, the historical society, and local authors such as Nancy Thornburg and Karen Dustman has been in the collection of oral histories. The museum has a great collection both in the museum archives and the gift shop. Generally, when a discussion of oral histories takes place, the emphasis is on preserving past. How different is it when we sift our perspective and think of our oral histories as "Educating the Present to Preserve the Future". In making this perspective change we sift the focus from us in the present to them in the future. We give to the future tools they can use in confronting the problems and conflicts they will surely face. Alpine County has a rich history and culture which can provide a firm foundation for the future, but only if we effectively use the materials available to tell our story of family, culture, and values.

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Arborglyphs of Alpine *continued from page 1*

The rust marks of wagon wheels on the rocks of Kirkwood, the occasional discovery of ancient grinding stones, and above all the buildings and relics at the Markleeville Museum shaped my perspective as a young man on those who had come before.



It was during this impressionable time that I began to work with Nancy Thornburg.* Decades later, though she is no longer with us, her influence still rings strong. I admired her dedication to community and history, her blunt demeanor, and the fact that no matter her accomplishments (which were many) she was always looking forward to her next project. Her work was never done and never would be. Such was her dedication to life.



I was about 14 when Nancy told me about the Basque tree carvings, as part of a museum project to document them. At the time I was only vaguely familiar with Basque culture, not yet being of an age to develop my now fully formed taste for the Picon Punch.

The tree carvings, or arborglyphs, were left behind by the Basque shepherders of the Comstock era...men who lived a solitary life in the hills with their charges, little to distract them save the occasional trip to a bustling metropolis such as Markleeville.

The arborglyphs are somewhat reminiscent of ancient cave paintings. Primitive perhaps, but with a charm, authenticity, and incredible historical relevance.



As an aspiring photographer and history geek, this project piqued my interest. My mother, ever supportive, drove me and my Pentax Spotmatic around Alpine County in search of these elusive landmarks.



I particularly remember walking through the aspen groves off Monitor Pass, and finding carvings showing me that I was walking in the footsteps of men who walked the same grove over a century before. It was a powerful moment, one of many I've been fortunate to experience where I've been able to feel the weight of history and how a single person can shape the future.



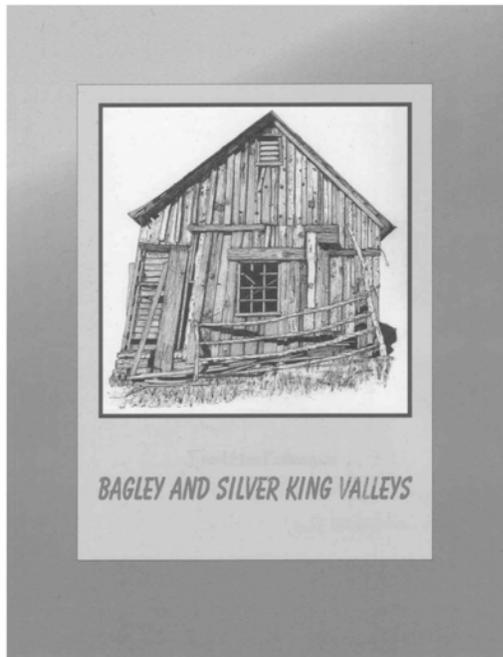
Through the travels and burdens of life, when I think back to that aspen grove, that carving has so much depth and impact. It speaks of simple times, of hard times, times of endurance and fortitude and loneliness and long winters and one man in a high Alpine meadow with his sheep. And over a hundred years later, here we are.



**Though readers of this publication likely know who Nancy Thornburg was, for the sake of posterity I will say that she was a historian, a leader, a rancher, a pillar of the community, and a good friend.*

Books available from our local authors

The two books pictured below are our most recent additions. We also have walking and driving tours in the area, oral histories, and much more. Copies are available at the Alpine County Museum.



Land use Patterns in Bagley and Silver King Valleys

By J.E. Warren-Wickwire
August 2017 printing

A reference book on the history of this area from 10,000 years ago to 1983.

A book in the stirring for many years during extensive research and vintage photo hunts. Including the history of the irrigation practices by Dangberg Land & Cattle and Heenan Lake. Color and black and white photos including Vaquero Cow Camp and the brick house.

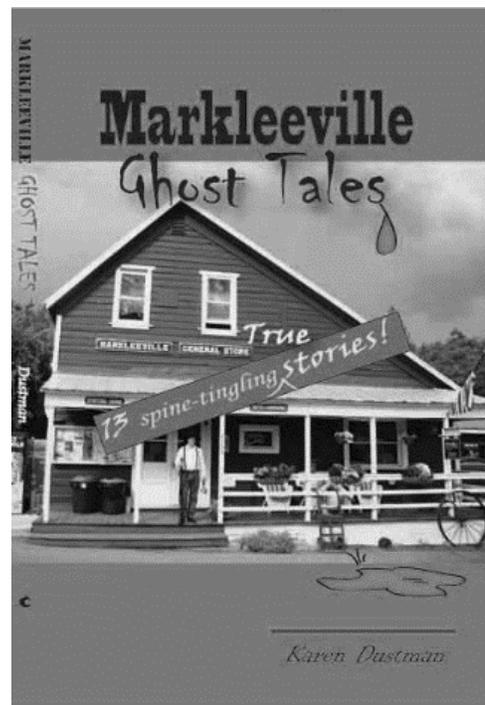
Cover Price \$29.95

Markleeville Ghost Tales

Karen Dustman

"With a pioneer history dating back to the early 1860s, it's no surprise that ghost tales abound here in tiny Markleeville! Locals have been telling and re-telling these ghost stories for years. But it took this book to gather them together for your enjoyment! From tantalizing tales of the unexplained to sinister, strange and spooky apparitions, here are more than a dozen hair-raising TRUE tales of the supernatural in and around Markleeville."

The cover price is \$14.95



Miscellaneous Musings

Are you a modern world Historical Society Member who would like to receive this **Newsletter by email**, rather than on paper? If so (or if you want both) just forward your name and email address to us at alpinemuseum@yahoo.com.

The museum is looking for Volunteers to help with exhibits, filing, and acting as docents for the coming year.

See the long list of things you could help with in the Curators Corner. If you have time, please contact the museum to help.

Check out our **Website** and be sure to add us to your favorites. Come visit us at www.alpinecountymuseum.org Announcements and additional information about our events will also be posted so be sure to bookmark us.



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The Historical Society of Alpine County



Sketch by Dede Lyon

Old WEBSTER SCHOOL

HISTORIC JAIL

BASQUE OVEN

MUSEUM BUILDING

The Historical Society of Alpine County invites you to become a part of our member family. Whether you are joining for the first time, or are renewing your membership: Please fill out this form and mail it today!

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Email: alpinemuseum@yahoo.com Website: alpinecountymuseum.org

Membership dues are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ALPINE COUNTY 2019 EVENT DATES

Quarterly Meetings 2019

February 19 Board of Director's Meeting – Museum
February 21 General Membership Meeting – Turtle Rock Park
May 14 Board of Director's Meeting – Museum
May 16 General Membership Meeting – Turtle Rock Park
August 13 Board of Director's Meeting – Museum
August 17 General Membership Meeting – Basque Oven Pizza Bake – Museum
November 19 Board of Director's Meeting – Museum
November 21 General Membership Meeting – Hung-a-lel-ti or Turtle Rock Park

Events

May 18 Weeding/Planting Day at Museum – weather permitting
May 23 Opening of Museum
May 25 Basque Oven Bread Bake – Museum 12:00 pm
October 5 Basque Oven Bread Bake – Museum
October 27 Closing of Museum

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