ECHOES FROM THE PAST

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Here it is Springtime again! I am very pleased to thank Village Nursery through our membership for their gracious donation of well over 85 plants and flowers to the Old Jail Museum Garden. All the plants have been planted and it seems most, if not all, are thriving. (see p. 2)

Within a few seasons we will have a flowering barrier from the street above us and our erosion problem has been eradicated by that planting and the creation of terraced levels to the west of the ‘Apple Tree.’ (see photo)

We were also given two beautiful birdhouses created by Greg Zirbel. (see p. 2)

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So to all, have a great spring/summer season and tell your friends to stop by the Old Jail Museum and see our new exhibit on Hobart Mills and the finding of the Time Capsule - or stop by on Thursdays at the Research Cabin.

Respectfully, Chaun Mortier, President

http://www.truckeehistory.org/tdhs-calendar-of-events.html

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ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PARISH
TRUCKEE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Part 1 of 2: A Church on the Move
Katie Holley

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The first mass was offered in the new church on August 15, on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Assumption Church, as it was colloquially called, served the Catholic populations of the Italians, Portuguese, and Irish who settled here. It is estimated that almost 10,000 Irish Catholics were employed by the Central Pacific Railroad in construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, but not all of them were in Truckee!

1883. Not so long after the opening of the Assumption Church, the building began to feel too small. The church doors now faced north and roughly parallels Donner Pass Road at the east end of downtown. The church doors now faced southeast.

Just a Little More to the North. In 1949, the State of California wanted to route Highway 267 through Truckee, and required that the Assumption Church building be moved again. The church and rectory were moved to the portion of E Street that curves north and roughly parallels Donner Pass Road at the east end of downtown. The church doors now faced southeast.

A Little Mountain Church. The Assumption Church building was a simple rectangle, with an entry vestibule just large enough for 2-3 people to stand and stamp the snow off their boots. The building lacked a sacristy for vestments, sacred vessels, and other supplies; it did have a choir loft, and a belfry for the original bell from 1883. As Truckee continued to grow in population, the tiny church grew in 1954 with a single-wing addition extending south from the sanctuary. At an unknown date a small sacristy was added to the back of the church.

In the next issue of ECHOES you will read about the stained glass windows of Assumption Parish and the final destination of the Church on the Move.

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ELLEN HOME.

One of the oldest mill men in the state of California was Elie Ellen, the owner of Trout Creek lumber mill and the Vine that connected his mill with downtown Truckee.

A bit of Ellen’s life history is in order. Ellen was born in 1825 in Hanover, Germany, and eventually landed in New Orleans in May 1845, where he resumed his cabinet-making work. In April of 1850, Ellen joined the ‘tide of emigration’ to California and wound up in El Dorado County for a time where he started a sawmill, but later established himself in Truckee in 1868. He built the third lumber mill that operated on the Truckee River. Ellen held a large contract with the Central Pacific Railroad for moving railroad ties and shed timber. He has been referred to as Truckee’s “King of Lumber.” Ellen suffered several destructive fires at his mills, and sadly, was not insured. Nonetheless, references to Ellen’s determination reveal a man of “indefatigable perseverance that has insured. Nonetheless, references to Ellen’s determination reveal a man of “indefatigable perseverance that has insured.”

By Dennis Beegly

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The cabinet is an extremely valuable historic treasure for TDHS as we have no other representative item from the Ellen home.
JOHN LAURENCE CORBETT'S PHOTO COLLECTION
By Heidi Sproat

Over the past few years, several of our intrepid volunteer researchers, notably Ron Rettig and President Chaun Mortier, have been in the painstaking process of scanning and digitizing upwards of 7,000 images which were donated to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society (TDHS) when photographer John L. Corbett passed away in 1995. There are well over 10,000 images which were donated, so we are more than half-way through this monumental undertaking.

John L. Corbett was a local photographer here in Truckee in the 1960s - 1990s. While many of Corbett's photos in his Sierra Sun column "John Corbett's Historical Photo Album" were from other photographers from long ago, we stumbled on a few that are representative of life in Truckee in times gone by. If anyone out there can put a date on any of these images, we welcome your input.

Corbett was born in 1918 in Moscow, Idaho, and attended the University of California at Berkeley for a time - just long enough to learn what he needed to know for photography - and then dropped out. He was first introduced to photography when, at the age of 12, Kodak ran a promotional campaign and gave every 12 year old child a camera and a roll of film - for free. Among many part-time employment jobs using his photographic skills, he made: training films for the Army during World War II; color prints for Standard Oil's national fuel advertisements in the late 1940s; ran an 8 mm movie camera for Truckee High School's football team to analyze plays; and photographed food labels for national manufacturers cans. He also supervised the photo department of the U.S. Ordnance Department, wrote standard practice manuals, and helped develop a process to X-Ray shells and bombs. Corbett travelled California extensively making post cards and photographs for various ski areas and eventually became the photographer for Squaw Valley activities.

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While we do not have Corbett’s photos available for public viewing online - yet - they are available at the Joseph Research Cabin to view. Here are several representative samples of his work - all taken of various Truckee places and events. There are more of Corbett’s images uploaded to our website under Supplemental Content for this issue of ECHOES.

In future ECHOES, we hope to showcase other image collections from various donors.

View of Donner Lake and Rainbow Bridge from high atop Donner Summit
(Below) Snow sculpture

1968 Re-Dedication of the Donner Memorial at Donner Memorial State Park - 50 years
License Plate garage, Karl Kuttel, at the foot of Hilltop, just below Cottonwood, on Brockway Road

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ELLE ELLEN’S CABINET REFINISHED
By Dennis Beeghly
One of the oldest mill men in the state of California was Elle Ellen, the owner of Trout Creek lumber mill, and the Virginia that connected his mill with downtown Truckee.

A bit of Ellen’s life history is in order. Ellen was born in 1823 in Hanover, Germany, and eventually landed in New Orleans in May 1845, where he resided his cabinet-making work. In April of 1850, Ellen joined the ‘tide of emigration’ to California and wound up in El Dorado County for a time where he started a sawmill, but later established himself in Truckee in 1868. He built the third lumber mill that operated on the Truckee River. Ellen held a large contract with the Central Pacific Railroad for moving railroad ties and shed timber. He has been referred to as Truckee’s “King of Lumber.” Ellen suffered several destructive fires at his mills, and sadly, was not insured. Nonetheless, references to Ellen’s determination reveal a man of “indestructible perseverance that has carried him through business vicissitudes” and he lived a comfortable life in his later years.

While we do not know exactly where this cabinet was built, we are certain it belonged to Elle Ellen as his unique signature - Elle Ellen Truckee - appears underneath the marble top. Streamline Painting & Finishes of Reno, Nevada, painstakingly restored the mahogany cabinet over a period of 10 months. The cabinet was built with square nails. In 2012, the Mccall family of Sparks, Nevada, donated the cabinet to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society when they discovered the signature. The McCalls were related to the family who owned the Ellen house before a fire destroyed the home. Later, the McCalls contacted us at the TDHS.

The cabinet is an extremely valuable historic treasure for TDHS as we have no other representative item from the Ellen home.

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THE MEANING BEHIND THE NAME ESSEX
Beginning in the earliest days of Truckee, the term Essex has been used many time for businesses. Even our neighbors to the east used the term for a town. Essex in Washoe County no longer exists and from information located1, it was in the Northwest area of Mount Rose. This was the home of the Essex Ice Company2 and the Mutual Ice Company3. The town was located in the Verdi Area4.

In Truckee, the use of the term was originally for the Essex Saloon5. After the fire of July 26, 1868, Brazil Bicknell, brother of E.J., built the Essex Saloon. It was located next to Buckhalter’s Store on Front Street. As was the standard for the day, businesses or residences were on the second floor. An advertisement in the Truckee Tribune for September 1868, shows that Melvin W. Wilson, Dentist/Surgeon had an office in the Bicknell House above the Essex Saloon. By October, 1868 it had changed hands and the proprietors were now “Stephens & Page.”6 By December of 1868, a restaurant had been added to the rear of the saloon. Also in December it was reported that 52 of 72 buildings in Truckee were selling liquor.

By June of 1869 there were reports that the Essex Barber Shop had enlarged with the addition of the Essex Bathing House and the Essex Lodging house. It is unknown if these shops were all in the same area.

In January 1878, the saloon again changed hands and was now owned by Johnnie H. Richardson7. In the Month of June 1878, Ed Baldwin opened a fruit market in front of the saloon8.

Moving on to 1882, the Saloon again changed hands to a Charles Williamson who then added a stage and concert hall9. In November, the Truckee Republican reported Mr. Williamson had “gone below to procure women to entertain in Essex Hall.”10 By December of that same year, Mr. Williamson had disbanded his troupe and the Saloon belonged to Ed Hussey and George Williard. This partnership did not last long and in October of 1883 only Mr. Willard was running the new, New Essex Saloon. The saloon closed in January of 1884 with all fixtures and stock sold at Auction.11

Our tale of the Essex finds its way into 1887 when John Nagle reopened the Saloon. This all goes to show a good name doesn’t stay down for long. Oh, was does Essex mean? It is the name of County in England immediately north-east of London. The root is in the Old English Eastsea or East Saxons and has been around since AD 527. A good name with a long history. [See our website to see a 1966 California State Automobile Association map showing ESSEX].

By Chaun Mortier | References:
2. Daily Nevada State Journal, May 29, 1883
3. Reno Evening Gazette, April 9, 1879
4. Nevada Historical Society
6. Truckee Tribune, October 3, 1864
7. Truckee Republican, January 12 1878
8. Truckee Republican, June 26, 1878
9. Truckee Republican, April 26, 1862
10. Truckee Republican, November 15 1882
11. Truckee Republican, January 9, 1886

1867 TELEGRAPH INSULATORS
Somewhere our research volunteers never quite know what they’ll find. We discovered this image tucked away in an envelope from a “J.F.” – postmarked September 1966, of a telegraph insulator with this note written on the back: “Brook’s Pat. 1867 Telegraph insulators. Parallelled the C.P.R.R. when it was built from 1863 to May 10, 1869. The word ‘DOME’ was tapped on the telegraph at Promontory, Utah. See Photo of Meeting of the Railroads of the C.P.R.R. and the Union Pacific. This post and cross arm was a rare find. Found between Prosser Creek and Bocar a rocky area among the rocks on the north side of the railroad. You [TDHS] have one of the insulators in the museum [Cabinet].” JF. For more information, please see the link below.

http://cpr.org/Museum/Ephemera/Brooks_insulator.html
**ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PARISH**

**TRUCKEE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**Part 1 of 2: A Church on the Move**

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In 1883, the parishioners put in a tower with a bell to call the Irish and English speaking homes to mass; by 1890, the church was named “St. Mary’s Church.” Fr. R. McFadden, who was not so named because of the houses of worship thereon.)

In the next issue of ECHOES you will read about the stained glass windows of Assumption Parish and the final destination of the Church on the Move.

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Summer is here and starting Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, Truckee’s Old Jail Museum will be open on the weekends, holidays and Truckee Thursdays - docent staff permitting. We are still looking for docents to give visitors jail tours, some of the history of the jail and museum and Truckee in general. You don’t have to be an expert in the history. The Historical Society trains and mentors docents. If you are interested please call 530-582-0895 and tell us how to contact you or e-mail the “docent master,” Karl Pape at kdpape@me.com.

Please get involved with your Truckee Donner Historical Society (TDHS). The only way we can offer programs and events is if YOU, as a volunteer, step up and get involved. TDHS is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) organization so any and all donations are gratefully appreciated and tax deductible.

Our mailing address is Truckee Donner Historical Society, P.O. Box 893, Truckee, CA 96160.

Truckee-Donner Historical Society collection; 1907 Catholic Church

The Church Moves to Church Street. In 1907, the entire church building was relocated to Church Street, just east of the rocks that lie east of the Methodist Church. Sanborn maps from 1907 confirm this location. The orientation of the Catholic church was now facing northwest, and a brick rectory was constructed nearby. (Incidentally, Church Street was named in the 1800s after a highly skilled local freight wagon driver named Eli Church; it was not so named because of the houses of worship thereon.)
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JUNE 2016 ISSUE 2

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The Money Market account which continues to grow. Barring any unforeseen expenses, we are within budget. We have all of you to THANK. We have also greeted over 5,600 visitors to the Old Jail Museum.

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CALENDAR

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