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Alta Dutch Flat Gold Run
COMMUNITY

Volume 37 – No. 3 PUBLISHED BY THE DUTCH FLAT COMMUNITY CENTER WITH MEMBER SUPPORT **Fall 2026**

Oktoberfest 2026

A fundraiser for the Dutch Flat Community Center

**Saturday
October 3
12-4 pm
In the Garden
at the Dutch
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DFCC Board Member Karen Charles, with Mike Bell looking on, at the 2025 Oktoberfest



Kim Glassco welcomes revelers to Oktoberfest

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Bob Ewing enjoying the festivities

Photos by Sarah Fugate

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White Elephant Sale a HUGE Success

By Shelley Willsmore



Photos by Laura Glassco

WES Volunteers Nancy Morgan, Cindy McDonald and Amber Smith

This year’s White Elephant Sale is in the books and it is very safe to say, it was the most successful four days ever!

There are SO many big heart-filled thanks. To the community members for donating all the wonderful items, THANK YOU To the volunteers who worked so hard to display and sell those donations, THANK YOU! To all the shoppers who parted with those dollars that really added up, THANK YOU! To all those who donated salads and baked goods, THANK YOU! THANK YOU to Channel 10 and Channel 13 news for television coverage that spread the word. And THANK YOU Cal Fire for the muscle that helped move boxes up and down the stairs for us. Everyone involved contributed to the record breaking success of this year’s White Elephant Sale. This really is a very special community.

Both weekends the temperatures were pleasant, the energy was high, and the shoppers were happy. The WES Cafe served up a salad luncheon, drinks, baked goods and street tacos to keep the volunteers and shoppers fueled up. For those of us who gave many hours to the cause, it was very encouraging to know that all the hard work paid off, although right now we are looking forward to more restful days and weeks ahead now that it is over. Hopefully, these wonderful volunteers will be energized and looking forward to doing it again next summer.

I encourage you to get involved by volunteering next year. Our main objective is to pay for the building insurance, but it is also FUN. Get to know your neighbors, work together for a worthy cause and be an integral part of what makes this community so special. Please call the Center, check the Post Offices for meeting notices, come to the potlucks or get me your contact information and we will find a place for you to put your creativity to work. Everyone has a gift and being here to support your Center is a gift to our community.



Amanda Palmquist and Shelley Willsmore at the White Elephant Sale

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Views expressed in letters, guest opinion pieces and other contributions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the Dutch Flat Community Center, or its Board.

This newspaper is published quarterly and distributed to Dutch Flat Community Center members and to residents of the Center’s service area from Gold Run to Emigrant Gap in Placer County, California.

We welcome contributions from readers. Submission deadline for the next issue: **December 10, 2026.**



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Attic: Thursdays, 10 am - 1 pm.

Dutch Flat Community Center Board of Directors Meeting: 2nd Mondays, 6:00 pm. Location varies. Contact Laura Glassco, 916-778-8308.

Dutch Flat Community Center Potluck: 3rd Thursdays. 6:00 pm. Bring a place setting, your own drink, and a dish to share.

Golden Drift Historical Society Board Meeting: 1st Monday of February, April, June, August, October and December, 7 pm. Golden Drift Museum, Main Street. Contact Sarah Fugate, 530-210-5085.

Golden Drift Museum: Open through September. Regular hours: Friday through Sunday, noon until 4 pm, and holidays.

Odd Fellows Pancake Breakfasts: Sundays, April 5, May 24, July 5, and September 6.

Pioneer Union Church, Gold Run: Worship Service, Sundays, 10 am.

Sierra First Baptist Church, Alta: Sunday School, 9 am. Worship Service, Sundays, 10:30 am. 33990 Alta Bonny Nook Rd., Alta. Contact 530-389-2168.

Sierra First Baptist Church Bible Study: Mondays, 8:30 am.

Sierra First Baptist Church Community Lunch: Mondays, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm. Free.

Sierra First Baptist Church Food Pantry: Thursdays, 10 am - 12 pm.

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A Message from the DFCC President

By Doug Hughs

As summer winds down and fall begins, I have to say it was a very successful season for the Dutch Flat Community Center. Our 4th of July parade was a huge success as always with near perfect weather to accommodate the morning’s 5k race. Congratulations to Roxane Bertell for winning the ever-coveted Mayor’s race! We had a huge turnout of votes this year so thank you everyone who took



Mayor Roxane Bertell and Kenny Weatherwax

part in this. The water balloon festivities were not too out of control, it must be said that the kids, and probably some parents, did a yeoman’s job of cleanup of balloon material off the streets almost immediately after the parade ended. Thank you, kids and parents, great job!!

Thank you, Roxane and Kenny, for hosting our summer potlucks at the pool in July and August. Always makes for a wonderful setting!

As I write this, we are in between weekends of our largest fundraiser of the year, the White Elephant Sale. Our goal was to surpass last year’s record sales of \$20,000, and after our first weekend of sales we did that!! And we still have another weekend of sales to go! I want to give a huge thank

you to all those you donated items as well as those who came for their annual purchase of items. We expect a large increase in our fire insurance this coming year so we need every dollar we can get. We had a record number of donations as well this year so thank you all. And of course, a very special thank you to Shelley Willsmore, who once again stepped up to lead the event. And without our amazing volunteers that took part in the many hours this could not happen, thank you volunteers! It takes a lot of hard work to put on this event, and they all did this brilliantly and even had some fun in the process.

Our 4th Annual Oktoberfest will be held once again in the beautiful Dutch Flat Hotel gardens on Saturday, October 3rd from noon to 4pm. Thank you, Leif and Wendy Lowery, for accommodating us. Anderson Valley Brewing Company will be providing the beer once again. Lunch will be the traditional bratwurst sausage with music provided by the Brandon Dannels Band. Buy your ticket at the door. Flyers for the event have been posted around town and online.

Other events coming up are: The Annual DFCC Halloween party on October 31st for kids of all ages as well as the 3rd Annual Christmas Light Parade. Date of that will be coming out soon. We will also be having a spaghetti fundraiser dinner at the center on November 6th, so mark your calendar for that.

Here’s to a wonderful autumn season and may everyone stay healthy and happy! Hope to see you all around town.



WES Volunteers: Laura Glassco, Jeanne McSorley, Nancy Bullard and Marybeth Blackinton

It is All in the Name (not!)

By Mia Monroe

Incense cedar is a common, statuesque tree in Dutch Flat. But it is NOT a cedar (none in the New World*) but it’s botanical name does acknowledge the similarity, *Calocedrus decurrens*. Get close to the wood or shake hands with foliage and you’ll be transported back to the pencil box of grade school! The name says it: AROMATIC like incense!

A large tree, it is often mistaken for a redwood (or sequoia or juniper) due to the fissured fibrous and reddish bark. But look at the ironed-flat needles, the duck-bill small cones to distinguish it from the look-alikes. Like them, the bark does provide pest protection but you do NOT want to plant near a structure as it is flammable, can smolder (read Gary Snyder’s *Burned Out* for an eloquent long-view). Fortunately, it is a great wood for fence posts, kindling (surprise!) and of course pencils!

Common in the mid-range of 1000’ to

7500’ elevation western slope forest belt and often found companionably with ponderosa pine and white fir but moves in when fires are suppressed.

Other examples of the yin yang qualities of the tree include the abundance of pollen in January which starts the allergy season early for many. Yet it is highly desirable for smudge sticks for its grounding, woodsy aromatic qualities many find to be a blessing.

And the mostly disease resistant quality has a beneficial side when a unique rot gets in: the lumber, then called pecky cedar wood, results from a dry rot entering old fire scars to result in decorative paneling.

Here I am pecking this article to you on my laptop yet yearning for the quieter time of picking up a pencil, sharpening it, taking in the fragrance and setting words to paper. My current favorite pencil company is General Pencils with over a century of connection to our California incense cedars. www.generalpencil.com/monarchbutterfly/



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Welcome Home - Danger Close

By Bill Gallaher

Recon Team Wyoming MACV-SOG Southwestern Laos, September 1969, 0500 hrs.

We were one klick inside Laos when the jungle began speaking Vietnamese. We could see nothing. Darkness in the jungle is “not being able to see your hand in front of your face”, darkness.

We heard a cough, low Vietnamese voices through the trees—men talking quietly because they did not know an American LRRP, or Long Range Recon Patrol, was lying twenty meters above them.

We had been inserted the previous evening from Dak To, in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. There were 4 of us: three Americans and a Montagnard, Y Bham, our point man. He had been raised in and understood the jungle better than any American I ever knew.

Our mission was familiar: Find the target. Count men and ammo and supplies. Report what we saw. Do not make contact. Most important, do not get captured.

We were not supposed to be in Laos, as it was officially neutral. But intelligence (much of which came from USAF EC-47s), reported a possible build up along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

As the darkness faded, we were looking at an enemy staging area beneath triple-canopy jungle. The main trail had been widened to allow soldiers, men and women, to push bicycles loaded with ammunition and supplies. We even saw several crew-served weapons.

As we backed off the ridge, our team leader whispered a radio message to Covey 25. the Forward Air Control (FAC) on patrol.

“Covey 25, this is Viper One-Zero. I have heavy enemy build up. Personnel, weapons and supplies. No trucks. Ready to transmit coordinates. Over”

“Viper One-Zero, Covey Two-Five. Roger that. Go.”

Viper one-Zero passed the intel using the codes from the mission sheet. Nothing went over the radio that did not have to.

“Roger that,” Covey answered. “I copy. Advise when you are clear.”

At a hand signal from Viper, we backed silently down the ridge on our stomachs. We reached level ground and slowly moved out. Y Bham was walking point when he suddenly froze. His closed fist went up. The column stopped. He pointed at the mud. A sandal print lay on top of one of our boot tracks. The enemy, known to wear sandals, had crossed our trail after we passed.

Y Bham touched two fingers to his eyes, then pointed downhill. At a nod from Viper we changed direction and began moving slowly and quietly downhill, away from the observation point and the planned extraction route.

20 minutes and 50 meters later, an AK-47 burst snapped over our heads. Then the whole ridge line opened up.

“Move!” Viper shouted.

We ran bent-over no longer trying to be quiet. NVA communicated through the thick jungle with whistles and shouts and occasional bugle calls. Enemy soldiers, who knew the terrain better than we did, moved along both flanks trying to get downhill and seal the escape route. They were not just chasing us. They were herding us.

Viper keyed the radio while moving.

“Covey, Viper One-Zero. Prairie Fire. Prairie Fire. We are compromised and taking fire. Request immediate extraction.”

(Prairie Fire was an emergency radio code meaning the team was in imminent danger of being overrun)

“Viper, Covey. Roger Prairie Fire. What is your status?”

“Covey, 4 personnel. Team intact. Enemy company-size or larger. They are maneuvering on both flanks.”

“Viper, Can you reach your primary extraction point?”

“Negative Covey. Primary is burned. Repeat, primary is burned.”

Under fire, we reached a shallow bowl surrounded by thick bamboo. It was poor ground but the enemy had nearly overtaken us. We formed a tight perimeter, each of us covering a sector.

The enemy came first from above. NVA soldiers would appear and then disappear as quickly. Each time closer.

“Covey, Viper. They’re closing. I need air immediately.”

“Viper, I have Sandy flight inbound to you. Two A-1s. Call signs Sandy Three-One and Three-Two. They are on this frequency. I need a positive mark on your position.”.

“Covey, we are under heavy canopy. I will pop purple smoke”

Viper pulled the pin from a smoke grenade and threw it into a narrow opening below us. The grenade began pouring purple smoke through the leaves.

“Covey, purple smoke is 15 meters downhill from friendlies”

“Viper, I have purple smoke drifting west. Confirm friendlies immediately uphill from the smoke.”

“Affirmative. We are fifteen meters uphill. Enemy is uphill another 25 meters and on both flanks. Danger Close!” Viper transmitted.

“Viper, understand 25 meters. At that distance Sandy can only use rockets and twenty-millimeter. Ground commander must accept responsibility for Danger Close.”

Viper looked around the perimeter. Our men were bloodied. Enemy voices were close. Nobody objected.

“Covey 25,Viper One-Zero. I accept responsibility. Danger Close authorized.”

“Viper One-Zero, Covey 25, Copy Danger Close authorized.”

Covey 25 fired a white-phosphorus marking rocket. White smoke struck just above the enemy’s nearest position.

“Viper 25, This is Sandy Three-One. Understand Danger Close. Over”

“Sandy Three-one, this is Viper. Glad to have you join the fun. Affirmative to Danger Close. Hit the smoke, Friendlies are 50 meters directly downhill from rockets. Over”

“Viper, Sandy. You’re buying beer tonight. I will make a dry pass from northeast to southwest. No ordnance. Tell me if you are clear of this line. Over”

The A-1 came beneath the cloud layer.

“Sandy, Viper. Line is good. Keep everything just downhill of marking rocket.”

“Viper, Copy aircraft inbound northeast to southwest. Rocket pass. Heads down.”

We pressed into the mud.

The Skyraider roared over us, two rockets slammed into the slope. Explosions...tree limbs... dirt.. falling on us. The enemy firing stopped...For five seconds.

An NVA soldier burst through the bamboo ten meters away. As I fired at the first one, two more

figures appeared behind him.

“Sandy They are inside twenty five meters. Bring the guns close!”

“Viper, understand twenty five meters.”

“Affirmative!”

The second A-1 with it’s four 20 mm cannon, was already turning in.

“Viper, Sandy Three-Two is in from east to west. Guns only. His fire will remain 50 meters north of your smoke.”

“Cleared hot!”

The A-1 came in low. Its engine built from a growl to a roar, and then the beautiful sound of four 20 MM cannons tearing up the area. Trees burst apart. Bamboo exploded into spears. The ground jumped beneath my chest as each line of cannon fire walked toward us. The cannon stopped. The Skyraider passed overhead so low that the prop wash shook water from the canopy.

For several seconds, I heard nothing but my ears ringing. Then came moans from uphill. No AKs. No whistles. No damn bugles. No shouted orders. One lonely machine gun still firing

Viper raised his head.

“Sandy, Viper. Good hits, Very good hits.”

“Viper one-zero, This is Covey 25, can you move?”

“Covey, we have enemy automatic weapon west of our position. Range forty meters.”

“Viper, Mark direction.”

“Covey, From violet smoke, nine o’clock. Same elevation.”

Covey talked Sandy Three-One onto the gun position. The A-1 fired a short cannon burst, so close that chunks of wood and red earth flew across the perimeter. The enemy machine gun stopped in the middle of a burst.

“Viper, move now,” Covey ordered. “Sandy flight will cover.”

Still under sporadic fire, we moved another two hundred meters before finding an old bomb crater, the only opening in the canopy

“Covey 25, Viper has an emergency LZ 200 yards downhill from last position. Enemy following from north.”

“Viper, Sandy will slow them down. Extraction flight is inbound. Mark when you hear the helicopters.”

A few long minutes later we heard the Hueys. Viper threw green smoke into the crater

“Green smoke is friendly,” he transmitted.

The helicopter let down through the canopy and flared over the crater. The pilot held a hover with the skids several feet above the uneven ground. Enemy rounds struck the helicopter as the crew chief was pulling the third man aboard. The door gunner began firing into the northern tree line. A round punched through the cabin wall. Another struck a rotor blade with a sharp metallic crack. Through all that, the pilot didn’t lift off until all of us were aboard. (Helicopter pilots don’t get the credit they deserve for saving lives.)

The Huey rose almost vertically. AK rounds struck the belly. The door gunners fired until we were above the canopy. The A-1s protected us from below as the helicopter accelerated toward the border.

At the post mission briefing, we were asked “How close?”

How close? Was the enemy? I heard an enemy fart! How close? Was the friendly fire? Dirt from the impact of 20 MM cannon fire landed on my back.

How Close?

Danger Close.

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My First Tattoo

By Diane Star

Ten years ago I had two tattooed dots put on my skin for radiation treatment. They act as permanent “GPS markers” to ensure the radiation beam targets the exact same location during every therapy session. They guide therapists in using lasers to align your body on the treatment table. The permanency ensures that the markers cannot be washed off or fade over time. Ever since then, I had thought that I’d have one of the dots become part of a tattoo of my choice.

On February 21 of this year, I attended a fundraiser for the Alta-Dutch Flat School at the Dutch Flat Community Center. My husband, Robin, purchased a few tickets for me to use to try to win all sorts of swell gifts. As I was walking along the tables checking out all the things that had been donated by generous people and businesses, dropping tickets in bags here and there, I came upon a jar that offered three people a \$100 discount on a tattoo. I stopped and wondered if this was going to facilitate something that had been on my mind for ten years.

Being a reader of the Bible, I know that tattoos were forbidden in the Jewish Old Testament. I know there is no mention of it in the New Testament, but I wanted to make sure that God was okay with me getting a tattoo so I held my ticket up in the air and



Diane Star and Iryna Panamarova

said, “Lord, if You’re good with me getting a tattoo, I’ll win.” A friend, Christy Frantz, was standing next to me and we tapped our tickets together in the air with big smiles on our faces and both dropped them into the jar. WE BOTH WON!!!

I met Iryna Panamarova that same evening. She had been upstairs in a corner face-painting children all evening. After the fundraiser dinner, I went up stairs and watch her skillfully painting, in great detail, on happy little faces all for free. Her art was absolutely stunning! This was the young woman that would make a permanent mark on my life.

I gave Iryna a call to discuss the subject of tattoos. I did enough research ahead of time to discover that the little dot on my sternum was one of the most painful places on the body for a tattoo. I was having serious doubts about the choice of having a tattoo. I'm old, my skin is thin and old, what about the pain? What if I'm allergic to the inks?.....My online research was taking me down a dark hole. Every time I spoke with her or texted her regarding my fears and concerns, she very patiently assured me that everything would be fine. Even though she is young, she is an experienced tattoo artist.

I visited Iryna in the shop where she worked, Utopia Tattoo, in Auburn. I brought her some of my ideas and photos. We discussed size, placement, color and all my fears. She was, again, very patient and reassuring. I wanted to know more about her personally. I was curious about her past because of her

strong accent and found out she came to the U.S. in 2020 from Slavic Eastern Europe. She is planning to get her U.S. citizenship within a year. I was so disappointed when she told me she is now working in Folsom at Shanghai Tattoo.

Iryna started art school when she was 11 years old in Belarus. At age 21 she started face-painting and doing henna tattoos which led into doing needle tattoos at age 25. She's been tattooing for 6 years. Her husband, David Woodall, is a union lineman and works for ProEnergy in Colfax. He brought Iryna to our community, and they have lived in Dutch Flat since July of 2025. She has three step-children, two of which go to the Alta-Dutch Flat School. Both Shana Brown, the principal, and Brianna Harback, president of the parent club, always have wonderful things to say about her. Iryna gets much pleasure working with children and is always willing to volunteer her time and energy supporting our local schools and different children's activities in our area. She really likes our small community and thinks everyone is nice and honestly kind. She doesn't fit the stereotype image I had of a tattoo artist. Because I have been so impressed and inspired by this young woman, I decided to write this article.

On March 17 she tattooed a robin in flight on my upper left arm. It wasn't painful, it didn't swell up or scab up. I followed Iryna's care instructions and all is well. I was so impressed with the quality of her work, I went back into her shop to interview her, and she said she wanted to do a little touch up. She always offers one free touch up with every tattoo she does. I constantly get compliments on it from my friends. I'm super happy with my very beautiful, red breasted robin and so is my husband. When Robin was diagnosed with heart failure, I knew I wanted a robin on my shoulder for the rest of my life.

Iryna Panamarova outside her Auburn studio



The logo features three stylized houses in shades of blue and green, arranged in a row. A large yellow sun is positioned behind the rightmost house. The text "PACIFIC REALTY" is written in a bold, serif font above the houses.

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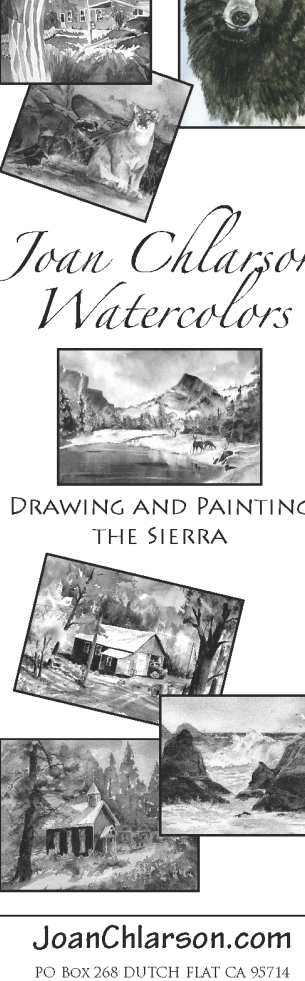
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Placer County History Award

By Anne Holmes



Dave Ferrier accepts the award given posthumously to his brother, Doug Ferrier. Anne Holmes and a member of the Committee are also pictured.

At the October 2025 Community Center Potluck, the Placer County History Award Committee presented the award for “The Service to History Register” to Debby McClatchy. Doug Ferrier was also honored posthumously. Dave Ferrier received the award for his older brother. This award is presented for “Significant, sustained, volunteer contribution to promoting history awareness, supporting local historical organizations or historic preservation of local history”. Their names are on a plaque at the Placer County Courthouse in Auburn.

Debby McClatchy, a professional musician created a Chautauqua-type performance as Lotta Crabtree, an American actress, entertainer, and comedian popular in the late 19th century. This very entertaining performance brings this historical figure to life.

With her most ambitious project, which took several of years to complete, Debby has identified all the grave sites in the Public Cemetery, plotted them on a map, and catalogued them. She also noted the wording and sentiments from the grave markers creating the most complete record of the cemetery to date. This map and index are an important resource we use to help visitors looking for their ancestors.

Through her extensive research of newspaper articles, the Coffin Diary, the hearse house logs, Douglas Ferrier’s files and informational binders, and archived family histories, Debby created a tour of the Dutch Flat Cemetery. She tells the stories of many of the prominent people and families of the area and brings the cemetery to life.

From all of her research Debby has written numerous articles for our local quarterly Community Newspaper. She has also written a summary that helps our docents with an introduction to the museum for our visitors.

Doug Ferrier loved history and volunteered at the Placer County Archives. For more than 20 years he spent one day a week at the archives researching our local history.

Doug was involved with the Golden Drift Historical Society for over 20 years and served as president for 15 years from 2000 -2015. Doug filled binders with all of the information you could want or need: photograph descriptions, mining, railroads, Towle Brothers Logging, building the Drum-Spaulding hydroelectric system, school records, cemetery records, fraternal organizations, oral and family histories and maps. His research and collection of reference material in our library have made the museum what it is today.

The Golden Drift Historical Society and Museum are honored to display the information from the many aspects of their research, and benefit from Debby’s and Doug’s passion for history.



Debby happily accepts her award

Updates from Alta-Dutch Flat School

By Shana Brown

While we may be surrounded by tall pines here at Alta-Dutch Flat School, the most beautiful tree on our campus is in the middle of our quad. We feel the passage of time, not just in the familiar routines inherent in the turning of the calendar and a return to school days, but as we watch this tree turn from green to red. This tree echoes what we also feel on campus as we watch our students grow and mature each year. A school is a unique environment, afforded the benefit of having a clear beginning and end, which is rarely afforded to other careers. Every year we welcome a new batch of kindergartners, ready to begin their school journey. We watch them learn their letters and their numbers, their colors and their shapes. We watch them learn to stand in line, raise their hand to be called on, and listen to stories. We watch them learn to share, to hold a pencil, and to take turns.

At a small kindergarten through eighth grade school like ours, we also celebrate another group of students as they begin their final year at Alta-Dutch Flat School and take the reins as the oldest kids on campus. At Alta, being an eighth grader means that they get to sit in folding chairs for all assemblies and do not have to sit on the cold, hard tile floor of our multipurpose room. It means that they choose the themes for the dances at our little school, which hosts about thirty students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Sometimes we refer to our dances as recess in the dark because it is a night out with the same group of friends you see all day, every day. But we decorate the gym, have some fun snacks, and definitely buy new clothes for these events. Sometimes we have video games to entice some of our reluctant party-goers to attend. As you may recall from your own junior high school dances, there isn’t always a lot of dancing that goes on and often the girls are on one side and the boys on another. However, eventually they realize that they do know each other pretty well and a good time is had by all.

The students returned for the first day of school on August 13. Yes, I know many older folks have memories of not returning to school until after Labor Day, but I believe we’ve been heading back in August for much longer than folks think. Every school has to convene for 180 days in an academic year, thus necessitating the August return. For our older students, though, we try to keep summer alive and walk to the pool on the two Fridays between school starting and Labor Day. This year they had three days! Although the walk sometimes brings some grumbling (it is all downhill!), it’s such fun to be out of class and hanging out with friends. Despite some, unseasonably cold temperatures our hearty mountain kiddos all jumped into the pool. I’m not saying they stayed in long, as a raucous game of Uno was soon playing on the pool deck, but a trip to the pool requires swimming, regardless of how cold.

Just as our beloved school tree begins to turn its leaves from green to red, so too we settle into our predictable routines that the school year brings. As much as it’s sad to see summer end, it’s exciting to start a new year with lots of possibilities. Here’s to a fantastic school year for all our Alta Bears!



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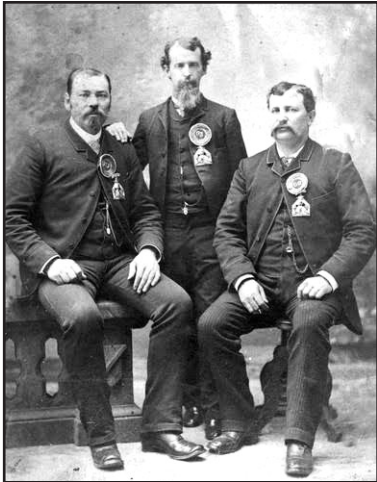
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E. Clampus Vitus - A Short History

By Debby McClatchy



During the nineteenth century Dutch Flat was home to eighteen different fraternal organizations. Most men and some women (when allowed) belonged to at least one. It was at meetings that social bonds and business contacts were made; and at events where fun and culture could balance the everyday exhaustion and stress of work. These organizations were strictly ruled and mainly true to the moral and religious norms of the day.

Except one--E. Clampus Vitus, originally founded in West Virginia by Squire Ephraim Bee, a blacksmith and tavern owner. Many other states, including Pennsylvania, Missouri, Vermont, and Alabama, claimed that honor, but, by the time the “Clampers” reached California, all precedent was shrouded in the fog of the past. The group proclaims that it began in 4005 BC, and that past members included George Washington, William the Conqueror, Nero, King Solomon, and Adam. A group of businessmen, interested in its revitalization, legally incorporated the “Clampers” in Marysville in 1915. It is still viable in 2026. Yearly conventions generally see 400-500 members in attendance.

Almost every gold rush town had its chapter. Most members worked hard at mining and other manual labors. After work, fueled by saloon liquor and needing an outlet for excess energy, many a gullible greenhorn was caught up in their burlesque of a fraternal order. Most joined. Officially their prospectus named them a service club and benevolent fraternity, formed for “the relief and protection of widows and orphans, but more particularly, the widows”. As, in the 1850s, widows and orphans were in short supply in the gold fields, the “Clampers” turned their energies elsewhere.

The “Clampers” vowed to do good deeds, but their main devotion was “spoofing, rambunctious horseplay, and straight-faced humbuggery”. Their practical jokes went so far that their creators often forgot their original purpose. So well executed were their hoaxes that often the public and the press were completely hoodwinked.

The “Clampers” were the unofficial law in the mining camps. They ran off grifters and imposters, sent corrupt politicians away on mules, and generally kept the peace. They took up collections for distressed families, organized parades on the Fourth of July, and sponsored events for the entertainment of the town. All proceeds went into their liquor fund. Eventually every male in town, not just laborers, but lawyers, innkeepers, doctors, merchants, etc., found it expedient to join. If they did not, they could find their businesses boycotted. When the Marquess of Queensberry, organizer of rules for the modern boxing ring, was billed for a lecture, he first spoke to an empty house. The next day he joined the “Clampers” and faced a standing room only crowd.

The calendar of the organization was based on phases of the moon. All meetings were held just before or after the full moon; other meetings were irregular. Members were summoned by “Hewgag”, an eight foot tin trumpet. All meetings were in saloons (as were early day gatherings of most fraternal organizations). Any new members were expected to cover the liquor bill for the evening.

New members were taken to a back room and introduced to the trappings of the order. These were a seven foot “Shining Sword of Justice Tempered with Mercy”, the “Blunderbasket”, a ten foot fowling gun, the “Hewgag”, demonstrated by “The Royal Grand Musician”, and a gilded billy goat. Their anthem, “We’ll take a drink with thee, dear brother” was sung as their flag, a hoop skirt, was raised.

As part of the initiation, a new member professed his religious beliefs, and was subjected to a number of humiliating tests, including sitting upon a wet sponge in a wheelbarrow, and being pushed around for hours. After passing through “The Cave of Silence” and enduring “The Obliterating of Obfuscation” and reciting the oaths of secrecy, the new member was welcomed

and received “The Staff of Relief”.

As well as social and business benefits, plus access to the liquor fund, new members were financially rewarded. There was compensation if one was hurt while drunk (but not when sober), and older members could receive eighty dollars a month after death, but only if they collected it in person. Everyone had a “passport” or ID card, carried on one’s person at all times, to prove they had joined.

“Clampers” were a democracy. Every member, except two, held equal rank. The only ones with status were the fore-mentioned “Royal Grand Musician” and “The Noble Grand Humbug”, who presided over meetings.

Everyone else had a title, including “Clamp Petrix”, “Clamp Matrix”, “Royal Patrix”, “High and Mighty Hagman”, “Grand Iscutis”, or “Great Mountageon”.

The biggest hoax perpetrated by the “Clampers” originated from their chapter in Sonora. The town had long been host to bull fights and bull and bear fights in a ring in the town center. Local citizens and clergy were aghast at the carnage and noise on Sundays and vowed to stop the proceedings. The “Clampers” pushed back and advertised not only a bull fight but one between a bear and a man. The opposition was united and large as church ministers led their flocks through the streets, singing hymns and planning to block the fighting. The humbuggery was that when they reached the bullring it was silent and empty; hoodwinked again.

I cannot find any evidence that Dutch Flat had a chapter. But, given their prevalence, it seems very possible. I leave you with their “Creed”:

As I pass through life may I always be humble

May I never take myself seriously
May I always appreciate a little of the ridiculous

May I always be a two-fisted Clamper
When the bottle passes my way and if I imbibe and can’t hold it like a man

Then may I always be able to pass it to the next brother

May I never forget the stout-hearted men who settled a great western wilderness and the heritage we love today

May I never fail to appreciate a bit of western lore
Anonymous

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How'd You Get Here? Jim and Nancy Geddes

By Shelley Willsmore

Although the Geddes' no longer live in the area, they were here for many years and theirs' is an interesting story. There is a Geddes plot in the Dutch Flat Cemetery so I think there are plans to move back permanently at some point.

Some of us are old enough to remember VHS cassettes and VCR players. Once upon a time, many years ago, Jim and Nancy ran Monte Vista Video in the stone house across from the Monte Vista Inn. It was a real hit back in the day since there was no internet streaming or satellite TV and regular reception up in these parts was sketchy at best. Many homes had antennas up in the trees and we had one in our attic. One of us would go up and move it around while someone below would yell, "there".

Jim and Nancy provided a service where you could run down to the corner, rent a movie for a few bucks and have some real entertainment right in your own home. It was a game changer. We rented Winnie the Pooh so many times I think she ended up giving it to us. A few years later they moved into "town", reopened The Scoop with a deli, ice cream AND videos. Those were the days.

Jim's memories go back long before that. When Jim was 7 years old his father, Jack, brought him up to the Bear River on a fishing trip. Jim fell in the river and got soaked. Jack took him to the Dutch Flat Store where Jess Fitch fired up the potbelly stove to warm him up. It is one of his earliest and fondest memories of Dutch Flat. Jim and Nancy had many adventures before they were able to find a way to fulfill a longing to move here.

While they lived in Dutch Flat, Jim did stonework, photographed and coached sports teams, and also coordinated a sports league for boys and girls. He started a business photographing the teams and individuals from different types of leagues, baseball, basketball and youth football. From this he began sketching the players from their photographs.

Nancy eventually got a position with Thousand Trails Snowflower which later took them to Whidbey Island where she managed a Premier Thousand Trails RV Park in Washington State.

Jim always had an artistic approach to



Jim Geddes with his art

his stonework and his photography, which he continued to pursue while living on the island—the photography, not so much the stonework, except on his own property.

In Washington he continued to photograph sports teams, sketching individual players, taking graduation portraits and then he began painting. He painted landscapes, still life, wildlife, and even portraits, things that he enjoyed looking at around the island setting, pressing in to perfect this craft that he began in his late 50's.

Another of Jim's passions is history. He would spend time with Janet Fonseca, (our school principle, and DFCC board member, Shana Brown's grandmother-in-law) hearing about her early memories of Dutch Flat. With the building of interstate 80 in 1956-64, much of the Placer County that Jim remembers has changed or no longer exists.

Jim began sketching scenes from the area as he remembered it. He got photographs from his parents' collection then started reaching out to old friends. Eventually, this turned into a project with a goal of 100 sketches, to be printed in a book. His sketches are from back in the day, then he and Nancy returned to the area to photograph the buildings and places, as they are presently. With much research and interviewing to make sure the content is accurate, he includes a wonderful narrative relating his memories, historic information and anecdotes to go with each sketch. The result is Every Sketch Tells a Story, by James Geddes, Visual Storyteller, and Nancy Geddes, Editor.

Ever curious, ever restless, not to mention,

creative, Jim found a project that he could pour his energy and talent into and only a few years later, Every Sketch Tells a Story Volume II was printed. Both volumes feature 220 pages with places and events in Placer County from Roseville, including Gold Run, Dutch Flat, Alta, Baxter, to Blue Canyon and beyond. I own both volumes and they are a treasure, seeing familiar places, along with an artful sketch and stories, factual, along with Jim's memories and recollections from his childhood.

Jim and Nancy come back to their roots occasionally and we try to connect. You can contact them at jgeddesart@gmail.com to view and purchase a book. There are prints available and Jim is also planning to sell many of the original sketches from both books so you can own an original by contacting him at the same address.

Nancy and I became fast friends over 40 years ago and many of us "old timers" remember them fondly. They now reside in Washington along the East Fork of the Lewis River where Jim has a complete studio. There, he continues to paint, sketch and create amazing images. Nancy spends her time growing flowers and vegetables and preserving the bounty. And when Jim gets restless, they pack up their motor home with their dogs Luey and Pinky, to find beautiful places to photograph and later put on canvas. It's a wonderful life!



Jim and Nancy Geddes



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