

SOCIETY NEWS

The Nevada Historical Society e-newsletter

Fall 2022

Vol. 1



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Catherine Magee

Please join me in welcoming Debra Brastoff as the Registrar/Collections Manager. The NHS team is slowly building back with amazing staff! We are still small and mighty with four staff and our new Admin. Assistant III will begin October 17, 2022. We are hoping the remaining two team members will be on board by early 2023.

Our docents have been tremendous in their support to keep the NHS open and running in so many ways. One of the behind-the-scenes projects is months of work to ensure our research, digitization, and cataloging computers meet the state's computer requirements. In case you were unaware — the state of Nevada doesn't pay for our non-staff computers, computer programs, and computer upgrades. This means all the computers you use in our Research Library and other computers used by our docents and volunteers are supported through your and our docents' generosity. THANK YOU ALL!!!

Speaking of docents, it's the 40th anniversary of the Docent Council this year! Celebrate a Year of Docents with the NHS at one of our docent-focused programs running from April 2022 to April 2023.

We remain the "little engine that could" — working hard to serve the public, meet your needs, and fulfill our mission to preserve, and promote our shared history. I am currently working on our strategic plan for 2023-2028. We've had insightful input from visitors, community partners, students, docents, and others. Input is essential to ensure we meet your needs, fulfill our mission, and remain central to education and cultural heritage preservation in Nevada.

The NHS is so proud to serve our state, our citizens, and the public; with your support we will continue to serve for another 118 years!

Cheers,

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Photo Above Left: Mr. Swalley and family eating watermelon, 1922. NHS Photo, Swalley Family Album, Swalley_Alb4_22.



Artist rendering, airplane Chester Ross Collection, MSNC 1113

While we have been closed, we have been going through some of our oversize maps and drawings. This airplane image was discovered amongst the rolled-up engineering drawings.



MEET OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBER

Debra Brastoff

Hello everyone, I am so happy to be working for the Nevada Historical Society. To many of you, my face is familiar; I've been a contractor working on the American Gaming Archive at the Nevada Historical Society for the last five years.

I have two wonderful sons and am proud to be a third generation Nevadan. In my earlier years, I had the pleasure of hiking the mountains and deserts of Northern Nevada. Some of my favorite things to do are fishing and sleeping under the stars and watching a Nevada sunrise.

I majored in Mathematics and often joked that I took anthropology to give my brain a break from math. But really it was a want to understand culture and the world beyond numbers.

As the NHS Registrar/Collections Manager, I combine data analysis and project management with a life-long love of learning. Every day presents a new opportunity to gain knowledge and share history with others.



L. H. Bell and A. C. Hofer and Bro. businesses, Carson City, 1889. MSNC727 Collection Photo.

THIS WAS NEVADA SERIES

Carson City's Big Quake of 1887

Phillip I. Earl

At 2:45 in the morning, June 3, 1887, a rolling, thundering earthquake spread across western Nevada. Although probably centered somewhere south of Carson City, it was felt in Genoa, Washoe Valley, Steamboat Springs, and on north, but it caused the most damage at the capital and stirred the most people from their beds. The community of Hawthorne alone escaped the tremor, sufficient reason, according to the residents, to move the county seat from Aurora to that place.

Within two minutes of the big shake, the streets of Carson City were filled with citizens in every stage of dress and undress, all bordering on hysteria and each with his or her own tale to tell. Most of the stories concerned cracked plaster, lamps shattered on floors, spilled pans of milk, and fallen pictures, and many merchants reported damage to fragile wares. Later estimates of total damage in the capital ranged from 1,000 to 5,000 dollars, but the scene of the moment was what Carsonites later remembered. Horses panicked, neighing, and screaming in terror and kicking their stalls, and the cows bellowed for half an hour afterwards. The chickens kept up an incessant squalling and the town's dogs bayed dismally.

To read the full article, [Carson City's Big Quake](#).



Before photo of the marriage certificates as they were received from the church.



After sorting into chronological order and re-housing into acid-free folders and an archival box.



Example of one of the marriage licenses. "Cruelty" is a common reason given for divorce.

REVEALING HIDDEN COLLECTIONS

by Sarah Patton, Archivist

The Dictionary of Archives Terminology defines a hidden collection as "an archival resource that is inaccessible and undiscoverable due to the unavailability or insufficiency of description." What this often means at this point in time is that information about the collection cannot be found online by researchers – if it's not online, it's like it doesn't exist.

The Nevada Historical Society already has basic descriptive information for most of its manuscript collections, but that currently lives in the PastPerfect database, only accessible to staff or to researchers on-site in the Research Library. One of my goals is to get those summary records uploaded to our online PastPerfect, so that they will be more discoverable. We want our researchers to know about all the amazing collection material we have!

In conjunction with ensuring that every numbered manuscript collection has an overview record online, I am also identifying collections that we can describe in more detail to increase their usability. One example of this is MSNC 1147, the Reno First United Methodist Church records. This collection consists of 18 boxes of marriage certificates from 1931 to 1955 and from 1970 to the 1980s. Two of our docents, Susan Moore-Fry and Linda Burke, are working to put the certificates in chronological order and rehousing them into acid-free folders and archival boxes. The next step, ideally, will be to create a spreadsheet listing of the certificates, with an end goal of being able to search by name, date, or certificate number. Ultimately, this will allow researchers to conduct their own searches and determine if we have what they are looking for.

The reason we collect and preserve material is so researchers can use and learn from it and increasing the discoverability of our collections is one way to help support that mission.

<https://nevadahistory.pastperfectonline.com/Archive>

We currently have records for 889 of our approximately 1200 numbered manuscript collections online.

Strategic Plan Survey

We want to thank everyone for filling out our survey! Ashley S., a local school teacher, was our **Door Prize winner!**

NHSQ NEWS UPDATE

by **Catherine Magee, Director**

I am excited to inform you about the upcoming changes we are making to the Nevada Historical Society Quarterly.

In 2023, we are changing the publication's name to the Nevada Historical Society Q (aka the "Q") and moving to an online publication with an end of year "best of" print publication mailed out in December.

We are extremely excited about partnering with Project MUSE to host the Nevada Historical Society Q where you will get online access with your paid subscription to the Q.

You will have immediate access to content uploaded as soon it is vetted and approved. Not only will you find expanded articles and color graphics—all the online content is compliant with US and international accessibility standards!

Our mission is our passion—to preserve, share, and protect Nevada's cultural heritage for the enrichment of all generations, and the Nevada Historical Society's publications are one way we ensure we fulfill our mission.

Don't forget that we are actively seeking new content. We invite and encourage papers related to all aspects of the history of Nevada, the Great Basin, and the West history, from prehistory to the present.

While our focus is original scholarly research, the *Quarterly* accepts shorter articles for the Notes and Documents section.

We look forward to serving you for another 118 years!

Year of the Docent - Fun Fact

"Late Summer Activities: During the Nevada State Fair (August 25-29) docents assisted at an exhibit on the Donner Party. They answered questions visitors had and made Nevada Historical Society pamphlets and flyers available. Over 2,000 people stopped by the exhibit to look at the pictures and/or listen to talks." D.C. Bee, Vol. 11, No. 2, October 4, 1999



Gabriel Foster, NHS Docent, processing a collection.

DOCENT SPOTLIGHT

by **Sarah Patton, Archivist**

Gabriel Foster is a recent graduate (2020) of the University of Nevada, Reno, where he studied psychology and minored in journalism, having transferred from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, in his hometown, to study at the Reynolds School of Journalism.

He has a lifelong fascination with history and has recently become interested in archaeology as well. He studies martial arts, paints miniatures, and has a small collection of masks. He next plans to earn an MLIS and continue to work with and preserve information.

Gabriel started volunteering in the manuscripts department in May and has been a tremendous help in the ensuing months. He has assisted with record clean-up in PastPerfect; organizing newspapers; and conducting an inventory and review of manuscript boxes on the shelves. Most recently, he did an initial review of a new, incoming collection, and he is now in the process of rehousing the material into acid-free folders and archival boxes; creating a final, folder-level inventory; and flagging material, based on discussed criteria, that we may wish to return to the donor.

I am so grateful for Gabriel's help and his willingness to be flexible and work on a variety of tasks, depending on that week's needs. He's a team player with a great attitude, and NHS is lucky to have him as a docent!

HISTORIC COLLECTIONS HIGHLIGHT

by Sheryl L. Hayes-Zorn, Curator of History

The Beer family

Joseph Law Beer immigrated to American in 1869 to work with his brother Thomas Beer. Joseph received his naturalized citizen document in 1874. He married Amelia Klays, an early Sacramento pioneer family in 1875. They had four children, three daughters and one son over a ten-year span.

The brothers operated grocery, general merchandise and fuel businesses in Empire and Virginia City and even had their own butcher house in 1866. T. Beer and Bro. sold liquor, wholesale cigars and imported high quality tea from England and New York.

In the fall of 1875, the Beer Bros. decided to enter the wholesale and retail liquor dealers. They announced their retirement from the grocery business at 102 South C Street. The advertisements for their new business, The Marble Hall, begin in late October, with an opening planned for the end of the year.

A detailed advertisement promoted they were friendly, expert barkeepers that had the finest quality of wines, liquors and cheapest cigars in stock to entertain their clientele. The saloon description has a men's club atmosphere from painted canvas draped on the walls, to depict marble, leather and wood furniture to chandelier lights. However, there only seems to be advertising until the end of March 1876 and no mention of the Marble Hall within the NHS Territorial Enterprise Index. What happened to their business?

Thomas Beer came to the United States in the early 1860s and moved to Nevada, a few years later. He was active businessman that dabbled in mining and politics and participated in community events and parades. Thomas and his wife Elizabeth had three children during their time in Nevada. Their oldest child, Birdie Josephine Beer was born in 1873 but only lived for 17 months. She is one of the Beer family members buried in the Empire cemetery.

By 1881, Thomas Beer was indebted to his creditors and began selling off his businesses, equipment and real estate. In the local happenings, Thomas sold his grocery business, Alta Market located at the Morton House block in Carson City to his younger brother Sam in 1883. There were a couple of ads in 1884 that Thomas was selling his real estate in Empire. He and his family move to California in the late 1890s. By the time Thomas dies in 1923, he was living with his daughter in Los Angeles.

While researching this family, a Mason Valley News article on the History of Camels in Nevada, mentioned the Beer Brothers used camels to haul freight between their businesses in the 1870s. How did the 1875 Nevada Legislature act that prohibited the use of camels on public highways impact their businesses? Did they release their camels into the desert? Further research is required.



After the Marble Hall saloon closed in 1876, Joseph was listed as a saloon keeper and living in the Smith House with his family. Joseph Beer's family home burned down in the great fire in Virginia City, October 1875. Joseph was active in his community and served on parade and dance committees. He was involved in politics and won the Republican seat as Storey County Assemblyman in November 1877. Joseph was a member of the fraternal order, IORM (Improved Order of Red Men), tribe #2 and even held office in the grand lodge in late 1880s. The revised order focused on temperance, patriotism and American History. Joseph died in Sacramento in 1922.

In one photo, Joseph and his oldest child, May can be seen standing in front of his *Grocery, Provisions, Liquors and Cigars* business located at 90 North C Street, Virginia City. May was born in 1877, married Gordon Palmer in 1899 but dies unexpectedly in 1902. Her parents raise their granddaughter, Ruth Elizabeth Palmer Burgess.

The youngest daughter Ada Frances Beer Borchers has several photos in this family collection. Ada was born December 30, 1886, in Virginia City, but the family moved to Sacramento in 1892. One beautiful 'informal' studio photo is dated August 16, 1899, with Ada and two other young girls are seated on a rug with a tent backdrop. What makes the photo special is their expressions, depicting them in their everyday garments, while the cute dark-haired girl seems to have had an 'accident' with her somewhat messy hair and a hole in her stocking. It is a very charming scene. Ada was in sixth grade at Capital Primary School.

In the 1903 Sacramento City Directory, Ada was working as a clerk. She would marry former major league pitcher and outfielder George Bernard 'Chief' Bouchers in 1918. They had four children during their marriage. George had played for old Sacramento Altas, Nashville Tigers, and other teams across the country between the years of 1888 to 1895. George operated a dairy in Sacramento until he passed away in 1938.

The MSNC899 Beer Family manuscript collection contains photographs, documents and Joseph Beer's business ledger from December 1889 to July 1890. This small collection was donated by a granddaughter of Ada's in 2005.



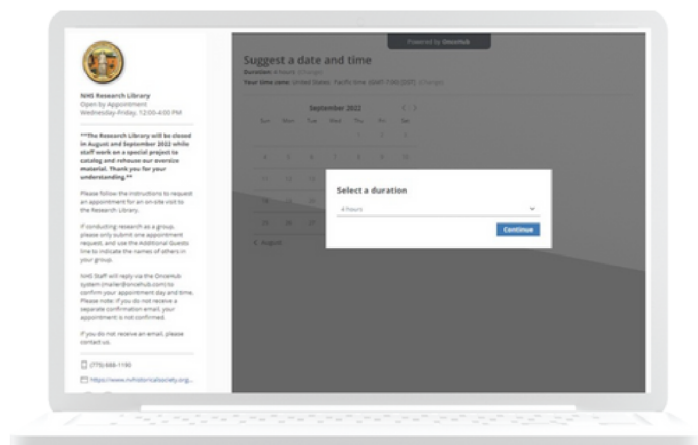
Left Photo Joseph and May Beer posing in front of store, 90 North C Street, Virginia City.

Above Photo Ada Beer (right) and two friends posing for a portrait.



Bicycling at the Lake Ranch, Washoe County, Nevada, May 19, 1894. NHS Photo, WA-00545.

RESEARCH LIBRARY APPOINTMENTS



The Research Library has reopened after its closure in August and September, and we are looking forward to welcoming researchers. Use our online system to request an appointment!

EXHIBITION NEWS CHANGING GALLERY



NHS Changing Hallway Gallery featuring the newest exhibit, *Geographical Divides: Finding Common Ground*.

Geographical Divides: Finding Common Ground examines Nevada's unique visual culture.

Nevada is a state labeled with cultural myths like "Area 51," "The Biggest Little City in the World," and "Sin City" and one that commands the imagination of Postmodernism, from the architecture of Las Vegas to the proliferation of the Burning Man Festival held once a year.

Nevada is comprised of two major metropolitan communities— in the north and south—divided by 300 miles of vast desert.

Visually exploring connections and disconnections between southern Nevada and northern Nevada's cultural attitudes, aesthetics, and geographical distinctions, these sixteen artists communicated and visually responded to each other's unique economic, environmental, political and social settings, further dissecting this notion of a splitting geography and/or communion of Nevada's polarities.

The exhibit will be on display from September 15, 2022 through February 11, 2023.

NHSQ HISTORIC ARTICLE

IDA MEACHAM STROBRIDGE

First Woman of Nevada Letters

Anthony Amaral

Literary interpretations of Nevada are as sparse as the land itself is abundant in sagebrush. By interpretations I mean a literature that conveys with deep feeling and perspective expression a sense of place, mood, and tempo of living.

Although definitions of regional literature abound, regional writing that lasts are characterized first by its feeling. The prose might read like poetry because of the writer's ability to translate an individual meaning to life and land and its history and legends.

The perspective is not muddled with prosaic descriptions or a silly emphasis of a pantheistic land of clear skies and eternal blossoms. Neither does forthright regional literature confuse a region's local significance for unique values. Without perspective the writer will have no difficulty outliving his own writing.

But the writer might be overlooked, as is Idah Meacham Strobridge, now dead over thirty years. Her three books, *In Miner's Mirage Land* (1904), *Loom of the Desert* (1907), and *Land of Purple Shadows* (1909), all privately printed in limited editions, do not merely contain stories and reminiscences told within a regional setting.

Idah Strobridge cast away flimsy observations and presented vivid and graphic impressions of the northern Nevada country.



Top Photo Idah Meacham Strobridge.

Middle Photo Idah Meacham Strobridge, image taken from her book insert. She is wearing an apron and holding a book hammer.

Bottom Photo Idah working in her book bindery business in Los Angeles.

NHSQ Fall 1967 issue, pages 5 - 12

<http://epubs.nsla.nv.gov/statepubs/epubs/210777-1967-3Fall.pdf>

Year of the Docent - Fun Fact

Centennial Happenings: Centennial Garden Party, with silent auction, "Another major moment in the afternoon will be the unveiling of the new outdoor sign donated by the Docent Council in honor of the Historical Society's centennial. We are all looking forward to seeing this long awaited and much appreciated gift." D.C. Bee Vol. 15, No. 7, March 1, 2004.



EDUCATIONAL DOCENTS NEEDED

Pam Walker, NHS Docent President

Hello all you wonderful Nevada Historical Society Docents. So many of you work so hard to provide service and support to NHS, and this has been especially difficult in the wake of shutdowns, staff cutbacks, COVID restrictions, and even rising gas prices.

Docents work on AGA, photos, and manuscripts. Some work in the library and on special projects; some process membership applications and renewals. Others work the front desk and the bookstore, and don't forget those that serve on the Docent Council Board or print the *Bee* every month. In fact, Docents contribute an average of over 400 hours a month to the Nevada Historical Society. What would they do without us?

As we go through this "Year of the Docent", our 40th anniversary, I have thought quite a bit about what it means to be an NHS Docent. I wonder if sometimes we get so wrapped up in doing all these behind-the-scenes and administrative type jobs that we forget that to the public, we are a museum.

People come into the Museum to see and learn about Nevada history. In Nevada, fourth grade is the year to study Nevada history, and we at the NHS are an important part of that learning. Every year hundreds of students come to the Museum looking to us to give them a feel of what it must have been like to live in the past. And it's not just students. Tourist's, locals, organizations, and family groups all come to the Museum to experience Nevada's history. Sometimes they just want to wander around on their own, sometimes they want a tour of the Museum. Either way, they almost always have questions and want to know more about what we have to show them. This is when the Education Docents go to work. Unfortunately, there are currently too few of us willing to go face to face with the public and share our knowledge of Nevada history with them.

So, here's my pitch. We are scheduling school tours and already have two planned for October 19th and 20th. I'm not asking you to lead a tour (not yet anyway!), but I am asking you to shadow a tour. Follow along as if you are a student or a tourist. See how easy it is to engage and excite the Fourth graders and how much fun it can be to learn something new.

I promise you, it doesn't hurt to lead a tour, and although I can't speak for any of the other Education docents, I can tell you that I learn something new every time I lead a tour.

I encourage you to join us; it'll be fun and help us spread the word! If you are not an NHS Docent but would love to learn more about our organization, please send an email to Catherine Magee, NHS Director, cmagee@nevadaculture.org



Above Photo NHS Nevada Gallery, Museum Day, 2018.

Below Photo NHS Education Docents, (L to R) Linda Burke, Ann Little, Barbara Weinberg and Lorraine Peterson at Reno Aces Day, May 2018.



NEW COMMUNICATION METHOD

by Sheryln Hayes-Zorn, Curator of History

Our E-blasts for upcoming programs and newsletters through Constant Contact were ending up in junk or spam email folders, so NHS has switched to a ListSrv for sending out our news and event reminders.

We hope you enjoy our new newsletter format as part of this campaign to provide more information about the happenings at NHS.

Our members and interested people will still have the option to subscribe and unsubscribe from the list. As always, NHS doesn't share our email lists.

DOCENT COUNCIL LECTURES

The NHS Docent Council has a great lecture series scheduled for this fall. Lectures occur on the first Thursday of the month at 10:30am; this is a great way to learn about the Docent Council organization.

10/6/2022 10:30am Meeting and Lecture

Speaker, Janet Phillips, *Tahoe Pyramid Trail: Following the Truckee River.*

11/3/2022 10:30am Meeting and Lecture

Speaker, Jeadene Solberg, Founder of Northern Nevada Ghost Hunters, *Ghost Hunting in Nevada.*

12/1/2022 10:30am Meeting and Lecture

Speaker, Myron Freedman, Administrator, DMH, *The Carson City State Museum and its ties to the NHS.*



Karen Burns with her *Hello Hollywood Hello* costumes.

Hours of Operation

Museum & Store: Wed. – Fri. 10–4pm

Research Library: Wed. – Fri. 12–4pm

Appointment Required

Nevada's Oldest Cultural Institution

Nevada Historical Society

1650 North Virginia Street Reno, NV 89503

775.688.1190 | nvhistoricalsociety.org

NHS is part of Dept. Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Div. Museums & History



View of Jarbidge, Nevada, 1917

UPCOMING EVENTS

We are scheduling several programs that didn't make it into this newsletter. Make sure to check our website and Facebook page for these and other upcoming events.

<https://www.nvhistoricalsociety.org/events/>

10/13/2022 12:00pm High Noon Lecture (Zoom)

Dana Toth, Exe. Director, Humboldt Museum

Promoting the Significance of North Central Nevada History Within a Museum and a Community

10/26/2022 5-6:30pm Geography Lecture (In-Person)

Catherine Magee, NHS Director

Reflections on Geographic Divides

5-5:30pm wine and cheese reception. Check out the NAC Geographic Divides exhibit before the lecture. **A Nevada Day program.**

11/17/2022 12:00pm High Noon lecture (Zoom)

Frank X. Mullen, Jr., Historian and Author

Vintage Fake News: Twain, DeQuille, Hoaxes and Tall Tales in Comstock Newspapers

12/1/2022 5:30-7:30pm History Lecture (In-Person)

Richard Dorman, Geologist and Local Historian

The Last Horse-drawn Mail Stage Robbery: A Forgotten Tale of Robbery and Murder in Jarbidge, Nevada, 1916.

Intermission with wine and cheese refreshments.

12/15/2022 12:00pm High Noon lecture (Zoom)

Karen Burns, K. B. Productions, Fabulous MGM Costumes

Backstage Pass: Behind the Scenes & Seams, When Hollywood Came to Reno!

1/20/2023 10:00- 12:00pm NHS Docent Orientation (In-Person)

Have you wanted to learn more about being a volunteer at NHS? Here's your chance to meet great people and help preserve and promote Nevada's History!