

Carson City Historical Society

1207 North Carson Street, Carson City, NV

Mailing address: 112 North Curry, Carson City, NV 89703

May 2021



U.S. Arizona Memorial, Pearl Harbor

On May 31, 2021, Memorial Day we honor the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military

A Message from Sue Ballew, President

We have lots of new and exciting events coming up. The pandemic seems to be easing up and although our lectures are all on Zoom, I imagine in the near future, we will be able to meet in person.

Keeping that in mind we do have a couple in-person events coming up. We are planning a Picnic in the Park on Sunday, June 27, with a picnic in Roberts House Park and a Kim Harris portrayal of Laura Fair, who ran the Tahoe House in Virginia City. It will be held in the Carriage House. 25 person limit. Cost: TBA

In July we are having a Grand Re-opening and will have both the Carriage House and Foreman-Roberts House open. The exhibit “Notable Women of Eagle Valley” will continue to be open the first Saturday of each month from 1 to 3 p.m. We’ve had a quite a few people coming through to see the exhibit and even some relatives of the “Notable” women.

The Zoom lectures continue through July and then again in September through November. The schedule follows.

Future exhibits include 1864 Nevada Day Ball Gowns, Old Bottles from Adele’s, Music in Carson City in the late 1880s, and travel back in time.

We will have a computer on premises soon thanks to David Bugli and Travis Legatzke and are still running wifi. We’re zooming into 2021!

Kiyoshi Nishikawa and Andi Fant have set up a new online payment system through “Square” that will be up and running in the next few weeks.

Thank you to ALL of our Board members. You have all worked towards making the Carson City Historical Society a great place to be. So come join us. It’ll be fun.

2021 Officers:

Sue Ballew, President
Open, 1st Vice President
Travis Legatzke, 2nd Vice President
David Bugli, Secretary
Kiyoshi Nishikawa, Treasurer
Andi Fant, Membership
Kat Long, Exhibits
Donna McLaren, Facilities

PICNIC...PICNIC...PICNIC
Sunday, June 27, 2021, 1 to 4 p.m.
ROBERTS HOUSE PARK
CHAUTAUQUA BY KIM HARRIS,
CARRIAGE HOUSE
“Laura Fair of Tahoe House - Virginia City” (see page 4)

Sign-ups beginning June 1, only 25 places available, cost to be announced. This is a catered event.

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as your nonprofit, and you're all set! A percentage of your purchases automatically comes back to help fund CCHS. Every little bit helps. Because of the COVID pandemic we have not been able to do fundraisers and have not had income other than dues. I would like to thank our Treasurer Kiyoshi Nishikawa for setting up Amazon Smile for us.

UPCOMING ZOOM EVENTS



Bruce Roter

"The Museum of Political Corruption"

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The Carson City Historical Society presents its fifth free lecture of 2021. It's on "The Museum of Political Corruption" by Bruce Roter, Founder and Director of The Museum of Political Corruption in Albany, NY, on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. The lecture is free and open to the public. For information about attending, contact David Bugli at 775-883-4154 or send an email to Dcbugli@aol.com and he will provide you with a meeting link (or a meeting ID with passcode).

Upcoming zoom lectures:

6/17/21 – Robin Holabird, "The Silver State on the Silver Screen"

7/15/21 - Chris Bayer - "The Strychnine Banjo"

9/16/21 - Samantha Szesciorka - "Long Riding"

CARRIAGE HOUSE EVENTS

***Our exhibit, "Notable Women of Eagle Valley" is now open the first Saturday of each month from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Carriage House. Next date is Saturday, June 5, 2021.**

Our exhibits chairperson Kat Long and Andrea Hobbs have been working on this display for many months along with many local artists. Each month one of the women in the exhibit will be featured in the newsletter. This month it is Nellie Mighels Davis.

Notable Women of Eagle Valley—

Nellie Mighels Davis

By Sue Ballew

(from Nevada Women's History Project)



Nellie Verrill was born September 10, 1844, in Crestwood, Maine. She was sixteen when her parents died. Her father was a school teacher in his younger days and later conducted a general merchandise business. There were four brothers and two sisters. Her parents died within a few months of each other, leaving her to make a home and care for the younger brothers and sisters. She was prepared to enter Vassar at about the time of her mother's death and was unable to do so.

She met Henry Rust Mighels when she was sixteen and lived in Maine. He was born in Norway, Maine, and was twenty-nine when they met. He served in the Civil War and was wounded when his horse was shot out from under him.

He later moved to Carson City. Henry proposed to Nellie the year that they met. She accepted and the wedding took place four years later when Nellie was 20 years old. Nellie traveled to the Isthmus of Panama from New York, then went across the Isthmus on narrow gauge railroad and by steamer to San Francisco where she was met by her fiancée. They were married in San Francisco. A successful newspaperman by this time, he promised to hire her as associate editor of the *Carson City Morning Appeal* for which he was the owner and editor.

Following their marriage, the Mighels traveled to Sacramento by boat, then to Placerville and stage to Carson City via Kingsbury Grade and Genoa. For part of the trip Nellie rode up in front with the driver, Hank Monk, a daring and dangerous feat for a woman in those days. Arriving in Carson City, she noted the rusticity of the mining town; horses and cows roamed freely in the streets, and pigs were wallowing in the open irrigation ditches. In preparation for their arrival in Carson City, Henry had rented a cottage. They later had a house built. Five children were born to them; three boys and two girls.

Nellie was the first woman to cover the Legislature, reporting in 1877 and 1879. Henry had taught her how to report by taking her to church and having her write down the sermons. They were reported in the *Appeal*, much to the delight of churchgoers and ministers. “We couldn’t afford to pay a reporter \$25 a month, so I did it myself,” she recalled. “It wasn’t so hard – my husband had taught me to write down high spots of a speech. By the time the speaker had quit orating and had come to another high spot, I would be through writing the first high spot. By that method I managed to give an accurate account of the proceedings.”

When Henry became very ill in 1879, Nellie moved the typesetting to their home so she could work and take care of him. He died that spring. Nellie was thirty-five when she became a widow

and the proprietor of the Carson paper. She went on publishing and soon hired Samuel Post Davis as editor. They were married July 4, 1880. Sam and Nellie had two children, both girls. They bought a ranch and raised Holstein cattle. Sam ran the paper; Nellie ran the ranch.

In 1897 she was the first woman to report a prize fight when her husband was out of town and she took his place as reporter at the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight held in Carson City. She was paid \$50 for the story by a Chicago newspaper. “I was for Fitzsimmons and I had a bet on with Mr. Woodburn,” Nellie recounted. Nevada was the only state in the Union where prize fighting was legal. Not only was Nellie the only woman reporter there, she was one of only a few women – mostly prostitutes – in the entire audience. She used her maiden name on her fight story to avoid “disgracing” herself and her friends by her acknowledgment of being present at the fight.

In 1899, during the Spanish-American War, Nellie organized the Red Cross in Nevada and became the first State President. She was involved in the Leisure Hour Club of Carson City in the early 1900s; she became its President for the first time in 1906. Instrumental in the building of a club house for the Leisure Hour Club, she was affectionately called “The Mother of the Leisure Hour Club House.” The cornerstone was laid in 1913 after seven years of planning.

Nellie was President of the Leisure Hour Club again in 1909, followed by daughters, Lucy Crowell in 1925, and Ethel Waite in 1953, and her grand-daughter-in-law (H.R. Mighel’s wife Barbara) in 1927 and 1952. The family members attended and were supporters of the Club for over fifty years.

In 1908 the Twentieth Century Club issued a call for a convention of the state’s women’s clubs for the purpose of forming a State Federation. Nellie was elected President of the State Federation. It was instrumental in helping to pass a state legislative bill giving equal rights to mothers as well as fathers in the care and custody of a child, as well as another bill establishing a home for delinquent children at Elko. The Federation raised \$100 towards the General Fund Endowment and continued to raise approximately \$1,000 for a loan-fund to assist girls with education.

An interesting sidelight was the fight over whether the Leisure Hour Club would be allowed to join the State Federation; the Federation didn't allow clubs with male members and the Leisure Hour Club's membership included men. A compromise was struck; the Leisure Hour Club would be allowed to join but the men would have no vote in Federation activities.

Nellie was left a widow again in 1919 when Sam Davis passed away. She continued her interest in Carson City and the political welfare of the state. At the age of ninety she said, "...Why do I feel young at ninety? Goodness knows. Because I am interested in everything that's going on. I have no recipe for youth. I eat whatever I like and plenty of it. I have never used cosmetics. When I was a girl, we did not use rouge or lipstick. Nice girls didn't." Nellie Davis celebrated her 100th birthday before her death on June 24, 1945.

(Biographical sketch by Sally Wilkins from an unpublished report by Susan J. Ballew; corrections and additional information given by Sylvia Crowell Stoddard to Kay Sanders, Fall 1998.)



CCHS PICNIC & CHAUTAUQUA PERFORMANCE BY KIM HARRIS
Sunday, June 27, 1-4 p.m. on Laura Fair

Sign-ups starting June 1. Only 25 spaces available.

Performing as a Chautauquan for over

10 years via her business, "Western History ALIVE!" Kim Harris regularly portrays several local and national historic figures which include Pony Express rider Warren Upson, stagecoach driver Charley Parkhurst, Genoa and Nevada suffragist Lillian Virgin Finnegan, frontierswoman Calamity Jane, and acquitted axe murderess Lizzie Borden.

Unlike a character actor or actress simply reciting a script, Chautauquans are essentially historians who research their chosen character's life, write a monologue to perform the character, endlessly rehearse their presentation and then present the character to a live audience. All the while they stay in character until the very end when questions can be answered by the historians themselves.