

# Carson City Historical Society

1207 North Carson Street, Carson City, NV

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

**January 2022**

---

A Message from  
Sue Ballew, President:

Below are the Carson City Historical Society Officers for the 2022 who were installed at the Christmas Party meeting. Our newest member, Chris Pattison, is with the Sutro Tunnel Restoration Project. Included in this issue is a March 2001 story printed in the newsletter for the Nevada Landmarks Society (now CCHS). I was President in 2001 also.

Of special note we wish a Happy Belated Birthday—to a very special lady, Thelma Roberts (Ron Roberts' Mother), who had her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday in November 13, 2021.

### 2022 Officers:

Sue Ballew, President  
Liz Cain, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Travis Legatzke, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
David Bugli, Secretary  
Kiyoshi Nishikawa, Treasurer  
Chris Pattison, Membership  
Kat Long, Exhibits  
Donna McLaren, Facilities

-----  

### Events:

January 10, BOARD MEETING, 3:45 p.m., Carriage House.

January 20, ZOOM LECTURE, 7:30 p.m. Chris Pattison, Sutro Tunnel. This is a free event.

January 23, BABY SHOWER, 1 to 3 p.m. Carriage House. Celebrating our youngest members.

TBA--"IF THESE GOWNS COULD TALK" -- "Or find out why women dropped their corsets and more..." to be presented at the Foreman-Roberts House and Carriage House.

### We Need Your Help:

DUES are due for 2022. The application is included as an attachment to this newsletter.

MANNIQUINS, CORSETS, BUSTLES needed to borrow for "If These Gowns Could Talk" Exhibit. Email Sue at [carsoncityhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:carsoncityhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

VOLUNTEERS/DOCENTS needed for upcoming exhibits. Please e-mail me at [carsoncityhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:carsoncityhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) if you are interested.

---

### Donate Through AmazonSmile

Help fund the Carson City Historical Society through your purchases on Amazon.com. Simply type in the name:

[smile.amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile)

in the browser bar when you make an Amazon purchase, then search and/or select Carson City Historical Society 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 AmazonSmile for us.

---

### Inside this issue:

- Photos from the Christmas Party
- Information on the Zoom Lecture, Baby Shower and Fashion Show
- "Stories Told to Jerry Purdy by Thurman Roberts"

Carson City Historical Society, December 5, 2021, Christmas Party



The Bliss Mansion was beautifully decorated for the Holidays by Steve and Cyndy Brenneman. (top left). Pictured left to right Kiyoshi and Bonnie Nishikawa, Ron Roberts and Lisa Jayne. (Top right) "If These Gowns Could Talk," a preview of our upcoming exhibit. The lady is wearing a gown borrowed from Andi Fant. The officer is wearing a military outfit borrowed from Gary Cain. (bottom left) David Bugli and his jazz band were fantastic.

### Sutro Tunnel



Chris Pattison, Project Manager Sutro Tunnel, will present a ZOOM Lecture on the "Sutro Tunnel Restoration Project" January 20 at 7:30 p.m. (E-mail [dcbugli@aol.com](mailto:dcbugli@aol.com) if you want a link to the lecture.)

Chris Pattison writes: Adolph Sutro came to Virginia City in the Utah Territory when he was 30 in the hopes of finding success. When he left 20 years later, he had completed the tunnel that he had set out to build. He fought the big banks and won, he became the hero of working miners, built a town, brought attention from the entire world that benefited Nevada, and was a contributor to Nevada becoming a state. He was then, and is still, known as the king of the Comstock. His story is that of the Jewish experience in Nevada. One that teaches

everyone that you can be a success even without a college education. That through hard work you can become anything that you want, like Sutro's motto *Labor Omnia Vincit*; Labor conquers all.

I am the project manager of Friends of Sutro Tunnel, an organization that is working on restoring the Sutro Tunnel Site and the Sutro Tunnel itself for the benefit of all people. Once completed this location will bring revenue to the area as a focus for tourism and be an educational experience for students and adults.



## Stories Told to Jerry Purdy by Thurman Roberts in the 1960's...

*Excerpts from Jerry Purdy's talk at Landmarks Meeting March 12, 2001 (This copy has been transcribed from a tape recording for those who were unable to hear the lecture that evening)*

Nevada Landmarks Society is now the Carson City Historical Society

---

Thurman was a tremendous storyteller and what follows are some stories that he told to me. There are also some pictures of Thurman Roberts.

Jerry described Thurman as a tormented fellow who did not really fit in the present and couldn't go back into the past... he was just sort of out there. Here he is walking toward his Model A into the past.



Thurman walking to his Model A in 1965.  
(Courtesy of Jerry Purdy)

His wife's mother's place is from the Hales. She had a Commission that George Washington signed for the Continental Army. The Commission hung in the Roberts Home until Thurman Roberts' death.

The Roberts family had a tremendous impact on Nevada. The Roberts House was originally in Washoe City, and they moved the house on the railroad from Washoe City. There was an earthquake fault at the location in Carson and water was present. The Roberts family had visitors, such as Hank Monk on his stage ride [who], would visit with the family. The Indians would stay alongside the house and Mrs. Roberts would bake for them. One visitor was Dat-So-La-Lee, who gave some of her baskets to the Roberts. Thurman would say he knew they were Dat-So-La-Lee's baskets because of the 32 stitches to the inch. When you held them up to the light, you would not see through them.

Thurman's father was involved with

Major Ormsby. Thurman told a lot of stories, touched on history and gave it a glow. His Dad found Ormsby and his sergeant before they died. He said the Indians danced around the bodies. The Roberts family was also involved with Major Ormsby when he went up to fight the Indians. The Indians chased the horses away and the soldiers didn't have any way to get back. The Indians hid in the bushes.

His father knew the Governor, and he helped Thurman's dad get a job at the prison. At that time they were expanding it. There was sandstone and Thurman's dad found footprints in the sandstone. He told him not to destroy the footprints, that he would call someone from the governor's office. It turned out one of the finest specimens in the country.

Thurman's mother was friends with Sandy Bowers. Eilley and Sandy Bowers couldn't make it because they couldn't do placer mining -- gray clay keeping clogging it up. The gray clay was silver. Eilley Orum and Sandy did open pit mining and became incredibly rich. They went overseas to buy all sorts of things and started their mansion. When they got back, the mine hadn't been managed properly [and it] started going downhill. Sandy tried to work it out and got pneumonia and died. This whole thing collapsed.

She [Eilley] was a seeress, a fortuneteller. Eilley talked to Thurman's mother and said the brother [Richard] was going to see both worlds because he had a mask over his face, a membrane. He did have incredible skills. He would take a chalkboard and put chalk in between and run his hand over and write things.

He could move pool balls. Thurman said it wasn't a gift, it was a curse; his brother was cursed. He had magnetism in his body and could freeze up locks and even crackle mirror backing. He could move pool balls around the table and make things go. He could remember things. He could count how many steps there were going upstairs and remember number detail. He [Richard] was a very happy guy.

Thurman liked to go Duck hunting at Washoe Valley with a big 10-gauge shotgun. He and his brother would go out and shoot a wagonload of ducks and then wonder why there weren't any left.

He had two younger sisters who were invited to big events at Bliss Mansion and went on the Glenbrook steamer. He was a good dancer, and invited to prominent functions. One of the sisters married a man who worked on the Carson and Colorado Railroad, and another was involved in the Savage Mine in Virginia City. The Savage mine was 3000 miles [feet?] down. They used flat laid cable because of the weight.



Thurman once asked us to watch a Nevada Day parade in 1962 and he brought out a piece of ore. It came out of his mine up there. Thurman had a mine with rich ore - the vein kept getting wider and going down about 100 feet. Jerry used to go change the light. We would stop by a minute, and Thurman would tell a story at his home.

Here was a guy living in the back of the house with a pot-bellied stove. We used to ask why he didn't sell the place and get a condo, but Thurman wanted to keep it for the children of Nevada, a public place. He

lived in uncomfortable bad conditions. How many of us would live that uncomfortably with that goal in mind?

He would tell us about all these things about baskets by Dat-So-La-Lee, pictures, spears, and bow and arrows from the Pyramid Wars. We would say Thurman you don't even have a living room, and he said, "Come in and I'll show you," and there they were, all the baskets and everything.

If it weren't for Pat Moran and others the House probably wouldn't have been saved.

There were efforts at that time to furnish homes for the wealthy, and Thurman was just a workingman. The Shewans helped make things go. We were able to get convicts from the Prison to help with floor and foundation. Wil Wieprecht also came forward and carried the work through. The place [Roberts House] is a positive effort of lot of people.

Thurman needed a job from time to time, and the Governor helped him. In 1907 he told a lot of stories about Goldfield, big prize fights and Wyatt Earp was there, and Thurman had a job on the Carson and Colorado and would ride to Bishop. There was a brakeman. One day this man let the train get out of control, and they were going to fire him. Thurman stepped in and asked them to give the man a second chance. He never did make out well as a brakeman but that same man later became Governor.

Thurman's sisters used to go to Italian parties at the Park on their way down from Virginia City on the train. They would have bands and parties. These were great social events.

Thurman was a surveyor for the state, and they didn't have money to pay him, so [they] gave him some land on South Shore at Tahoe with lots of timber. There was no road to get to it, so he let it go for taxes. There was beautiful surveying equipment in Thurman's home.

He was devoted to his wife. Thurman was a widower for many years. His wife was killed in 1963 in the cross walk on main street.

[His] was a cosmopolitan way of eating.

He would lift up the plate put the napkin under the corner. He would go to the Nugget for free Thanksgiving dinner. He's got the silverware set and lifts up his napkin, and he would put his napkin under the plate.

He had a friend by the name of Ferris who had a ranch by Cradlebaugh. Ferris was a tinkerer and invented the Ferris wheel. It was water powered for a while.

Thurman's sister was a recorder at the Savage Mine, and he showed us a book from there. It was a great big ledger, there were names of people who had stock in Savage Mine, written in beautiful script. The people in it were prominent like who - judges, etc. - who had stock in mine.

His dad was a young man when he came west in the wagon train with [the] Gold Rush at 14 and 16 and got to Fort Bridger and got very sick with dysentery and got too sick to go on. He dropped out and stayed by himself. When he got better, he got a horse and hooked up with people, went on through to the gold fields, and got to Nevada City, Grass Valley and ran into Lilly Langtry, and she invested in the Thurman's mines.

Before Eilley Orrum died, she was about to lose Bowers Mansion because of no income. Thurman's Dad went down and talked to some prominent people in the legislature and governor's office to see if the state would buy the mansion for a park. Thurman's Dad talked to the right people.

The Roberts family did a lot for Nevada. Thurman's dad came over when Comstock

starting booming and settled in Washoe City and had a house built and his children were born. Then Washoe City folded up. They sawed the house in half and took it through the tunnel at Lakeview Hill. Then screwed it all together down here.\*

The mine is still there, but when Thurman passed away somebody went up and nailed the door shut. His mine went in a couple hundred feet in and then straight down 100 feet. A friend and I went down to see if anything was down there. We took [a] ladder down, and there was a rabbit and old mining gear. It looked like the whole thing was going to close in. In the back you could see that vein of silver, and it was getting bigger. He found that from float, the little rocks that you find outside the mine. Thurman was complaining to us that he couldn't find miners for \$5 a day to help him.

Thurman Roberts died in 1968. His wife preceded him in 1963.



Hattie (left) and Thurman Roberts (middle).  
Eldena Galgiana (right).

*\*Although Thurman Roberts tells the story of the Roberts House being sawed in half, being moved to Carson City on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad and being screwed back together there, bills of lading from 1874 V & T do not show any house being moved, nor would it have fit through the tunnel at the top of Lakeview Hill.*

This is the end of Jerry Purdy's story about Thurman that was printed in the 2001 March newsletter. Dad, Bill Dolan, always added some facts or stories from the Past so I've included the poem below:

*Past Pages BY BILL DOLAN*  
**120 YEARS AGO — MARCH 20, 1881**  
**THE SONG OF THE CAMP**

"Give us a song!" the soldiers  
cried,  
The outer trenches guarding,  
When the heated guns of the  
camps allied,  
Grew weary of bombarding.

The dark Redan in silent scoff  
Lay, grim and threatening,  
under;  
And the tawny mount of the  
Malakoff  
No longer belched its thunder.

There was a pause. The  
guardsman said—  
"We storm the forts to-morrow;  
Sing, while we may, another day  
Will bring enough of sorrow."

They laid along tire battery's  
side,  
Below the smoking cannon—  
Brave hearts from Severn and  
from Clyde,  
And from the banks of Shannon.

They sang of love and not of  
fame;  
Forgot was Britain's story,  
Each heart recalled a different  
name,  
But all sang "Annie Laurie."

Voice after voice caught up the  
song  
Until its tender passion  
Rose like an anthem, rich and  
strong—

Their battle-eve confession.

Dear girl, her name he dared not  
speak,  
Yet, as the song grew louder,  
Something upon the soldier's  
cheek  
Washed off the stains of  
powder.

Beyond the darkening ocean  
burned  
The bloody sunset's embers;

While the Crimean valleys  
learned  
How English love remembers.

And once again a fire of hell  
Rained on the Russian quarters;  
With scream of shot and burse  
of shell,  
And bellowing of the mortars.

And Irish Nora's eyes are dim  
For a singer, dumb and gory,  
And English Mary mourns for  
him  
Who sung of "Annie Laurie."

Oh soldiers! To your honored  
rest,  
Your truth and valor bearing;  
The bravest are the tender est—  
The loving are the daring.