

COLFAX COBBLESTONES

COLFAX AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

USS Mercury

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Homer Eldridge's ship in WWI

CAHS

HERITAGE MUSEUM

99 Railroad Street, in the Depot

Open Daily: 10:00 to 3:00

CAHS members receive 10% discount in the Gift Shop.

VOLUNTEERS

WELCOME

Museum help is always welcome, encouraged, and really needed.

Contact Helen Wayland at 530-346-8599, or stop by the Museum.

PROGRAM IDEAS

Members we need your help! Do you have an idea for a program? A passion for history you would like to share? Would you like to put on a program? If so, please contact Walt or Bonnie Wilson at 530-878-6640, or email them at bonwally@hotmail.com



See us on the Web at www.ColfaxHistory.com

HOMER R. ELDRIDGE The Navy Years - WWI

Storekeeper 1st Class Homer Russell Eldridge

He was born in Lafayette, Indiana on January 28, 1895 and prior to America entering the First World War Eldridge enlisted into the United States Navy. Prior to enlistment Eldridge was a photographer in civilian life. He enlisted at Miles City, Montana and on May 19, 1917 he reported aboard the Receiving Ship at Puget Sound, Washington.

He served aboard the Puget Sound Receiving Ship until June 2, 1917 when he received his first assignment aboard a ship. On that date he was assigned to the battleship *USS Connecticut* then at Norfolk Navy Yard where he spent 18 days until he became ill and was transferred to the hospital ship, *USS Solace*, where he remained for 3 days when he was sent to the Na-

val Hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia. Once released from the hospital he returned to the *USS Connecticut* where he served until July 7, 1917.

After that he served on another battleship, the *USS Ohio*, which lasted until August 20 when he was sent to the Receiving Ship at the New York Navy Yard. There at the New York Navy Yard he waited until he was assigned to the *USS Mercury* on August 31, 1917. He would serve on the *Mercury* through the duration of the war. While the *Mercury* was being fitted out and readied for sea Eldridge was again in the hospital, this time at the New York Navy Yard, after his release he returned to the *Mercury*.

He spent his first 91 days in the navy at the rank of Fireman 3rd Class and then was advanced to Fireman 2nd Class still aboard the

Mercury. Sometime after that he was advanced to the rank of Storekeeper 1st Class. Once the *Mercury* was finished with her navy duties the US Navy crews were discharged and she was eventually scraped. Storekeeper 1st Class Homer R. Eldridge, Service Number 1403732, USN was Honorably Discharged from the Navy at Salt Lake City, Utah on September 26, 1919. He was awarded the WWI Victory Medal with a Transport Clasp.

Homer Russell Eldridge passed away on October 14, 1995 and is buried in section J in the Colfax Cemetery in Placer County, California.

The above article, and the photos of the *USS Mercury* on the cover and page 5 are from the Web book, "USS Mercury, WWI Troopship." The article, above, is from the only chapter in the book dedicated to an enlisted man below the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

Editor's Note: When we last left Homer's story he was operating a photographic studio in Mott, North Dakota.

Excerpts from Homer's WWI Navy Diary

On May 14th 1917 I left home and went to Miles City, Montana, where I enlisted in the Navy as a Fireman 3rd class. I was then sent to Salt Lake City where I was sworn in on the 18th of May, and at that place I saw a sailor for the first time.

I, with many other boys, was sent to Bremerton, Washington, for training, but it was very little we got, for on June 2nd there were about 300 of us sent to the east coast. I was to go on the *USS Connecticut*. I did not much care about

going for I knew I would be a long way from good old North Dakota.

But we had a fine trip across the US and I saw lots of beautiful sights, the people treating us fine all along. After a six day ride (during which they wouldn't even let us off the train, we stayed on that train, same seat, clear across the United States) we reached Newport News, Virginia. We were then taken by boat to the Navy Yard at Portsmouth where we spent one night, and the next day all of us were taken up to York River where the fleet was at that time. It was sure a wonderful sight for most of us who had never seen a battleship before and here there were at least

25 or more anchored out in the stream.

I was soon on my ship which seemed very interesting and new. I was only on the *Connecticut* about a week when I got sick and was sent to the hospital ship *Solace*, and from there to the Navy hospital at Portsmouth. After two weeks I was again O.K. and was sent back to the *Connecticut* where I spent another week and then I, with several other boys, was sent to the *USS Ohio* for training. I was on the *Ohio* about 6 weeks. During that time we were out at sea most of the time and it sure was hard work down in those old hot fire-rooms and then, to top it off with, twice a

(continued on page 4)

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Our summer heat is fast upon us. We are going to take another run at

designing and building a shelter over the bull and bear. This new design is to provide a simple cover over just the bull and the bear and we are hopeful we can do this for a reasonable cost. If you have any ideas for this please contact Helen or me.

Many of us are spending more time at the archives. Volunteers are continuing to catalog and organize the items in the archives as well as at the museum. We are getting used to our new software and have several issues to resolve but we are beginning to get records into the system. We are writing a procedure for handling this new system so it will be maintained and

backed up in an organized manner. Most of our activity on this takes place one morning each week so this is a slow process but we are making progress.

We continue to provide aid and advice to the traveling public and to visitors interested in our area. We recently hosted a Chamber of Commerce mixer in support of their monthly meet and greet for our local merchants.

Our membership drive is winding down but we have an additional mailing to go out for folks who have not renewed their membership over the past few years. As is mentioned in this newsletter we are not sending out thank you notices for new or renewed members in order to save money. If you want a membership card that can be provided at the museum.

Please check to see if you have responded to our request to renew your membership. Many of our active members have not sent in their dues for the coming year.

Thank you for your interest and participation in society projects and activities. If you have any ideas how we can be of service to the community and our local businesses, please let us know.

Contact Bonnie Wilson (530-878-6640, email:

bonwally@hotmail.com) with your ideas for program presentations.

All the best to you as we now deal with heat and the threat of fire this summer.

Swend L. Miller

President.

*Colfax Area Historical Society
(530-346-6960)*



*Thou wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not;
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
Shall be an endless theme of praise.
And love a simple duty.*

~ *To Frances S. Osgood
Edgar Allan Poe
1845*

RECIPE FROM THE PAST

Holiday Cake¹

(Long ago recipes were sometimes written as verses.)

To two pounds of flour, well sifted, unite
Of loaf-sugar, ounces sixteen;
Two pounds of fresh butter, with eighteen fine eggs,
And four pounds of currants washed and clean;
Eight ounces of almonds well blanched and cut small,
The same weight of citron sliced;
Of orange and lemon-peel candied one pound,
And a gill of pale brandy un-iced;
A large nutmeg grated, exact half an ounce
Of allspice, but only a quarter
Of mace, coriander, and ginger well ground,
Or pounded to dust in a mortar,
An important addition is cinnamon, which
Is better increased than diminished;
The fourth of an ounce is sufficient. Now this
May be baked for good hours till finished.

Makes about 24 lbs.

¹ Godey's Lady's Book, 1862

(continued from page 2)

day we had to fall in on the quarter deck and go through the Swedish drill exercises. But after that 6 weeks of hard work and training I could eat most anything, sleep anywhere and I was as strong as an ox.

Several of us left the ship at Fort Jefferson and went by rail to the New York Navy Yard and we were given shore leave that night and it was really the first I had. I had not received any pay until just before we left the Ohio but when I set foot in New York City for the first time I tried my best to see it all in one night, but soon found out that \$100 would not go very far and I was soon broke again.

We were not at the receiving ship over a day or so and on the 20th of August we were sent to the ship which I am still on, The Good Ship Mercury, although at that time the name had not been changed and it was still the Barbarossa.

I was there and got to watch them re-do the whole ship. They had us scrubbing decks every day, painting and doing different things. The crew didn't repair the engines or tear out the mahogany, which was all dumped out there in piles and just hauled to the dump, I guess. They took the staterooms all out and put bunks in them, about 3 bunks high on each side.

For a long time there was but a small crew and we had lots of work to do in getting the ship cleaned up and repaired and ready to carry troops. About the latter part of December she looked like a new ship instead of a wreck as she had a few months before. We made two trial trips, the last one a 48 hour run and then for the first and last time I was very sea sick.

The ship just went around in a big huge circle, several miles across. We were in sight of the Statue of Liberty all the time. But they made this circle and it was rough seas and the ship was not only going this way but it was going that way too and oooh, I got so seasick.

I was laying down in the middle of the deck in the officer's mess room. The guys came along and said, "Hey Eldridge, don't you know this is Captain's inspection today? You'd better get up and get into uniform." "Oh", I said, "I Just don't care". "Boy, you are going to get put in the brig". I didn't care.

The Captain came up where I was and put his toe under my side and kind of moved it. "Sailor", he said, "stand up at attention, don't you know it's Captain's inspection?" I said, "I don't care what you do, I wish you'd throw me overboard." I remember yet, I could hear him laughing and he said, "That boy is really sick", and he went on.

On the 4th of January 1918, we were loaded down with cargo and troops and started on her first trip under the U. S. Flag. The weather was very bad and the sea very rough. Our first port in France was St. Nazaire and we left January 28th on our return. trip. We had such awful storms that we stopped for two days at St. Michaels Island in the Azores. There It was nice and warm and everything green. We had plenty of oranges, pineapples and all kinds of fruit just out of the fields. After a six weeks trip we were again in New York.

On our second trip we went to Bordeaux, on our third trip to Brest, our fourth to Bordeaux and our fifth to Brest again. Of course we did not go to New York every trip and then, too, we had many excitements and fights with the

subs and saw many wonderful sights, all of which are too numerous to mention.

Was in Richmond, Virginia the day the truce was signed. They sure had some time there. Everybody was so happy that they were almost crazy. The streets were so crowded with parades and people that one could not get anywhere.

The first thing we knew they started a parade. A flatbed truck came up there and they were gathering up all the servicemen so we got to ride in the parade on this flatbed truck.

I made fourteen round trips, twenty-eight times across, all on the U.S.S. Mercury. It took us about 11 to 14 days to get across. We made the trip once in 9 days during the war when a German submarine followed us back to New York. The Captain was scared to death that the sub was going to sink us but we were going back empty. It didn't want our empty ship. The sub sat out of the New York harbor and waited for loaded troop ships. At first subs were bad near France and England where the troops were unloaded, then they started going to New York Harbor and a few ships sunk almost before they had gotten out of sight of land.

(to be continued)

This article, like the previous article and those to follow in future issues, consists of excerpts, some abridged, from the book, "The Life and Times of H. R. Eldridge", as told to Myrtle Richards, Tom Eldridge and Carolee Eldredge." The article, and much of the book, are in the first-person as it is based on a number of interviews the authors had with their father/father-in-law, Homer Eldridge. Myrtle (Eldridge) Richards (Tom's sister) typed (on a typewriter), composed and published the book. Thanks to CAHS member Tom, and to his wife, Carolee, for photos and notes concerning Homer's life, and to Mickey Fletcher for lending me her copy of the book.

NEW MEMBERS***Welcome!!!*****BOARD MEETINGS**

- October 11, 2014

All Board Meetings are on Thursdays at 10 am in the Depot.

GENERAL MEETINGS

(To be announced)

USS BARBAROSSA / USS MERCURY (ID # 3012) 1917 - 1919

USS Mercury, originally the German Passenger Liner Barbarossa, was briefly USS Barbarossa in 1917. The ship, a 10,984 gross ton troop transport, was built at Hamburg, Germany, in 1896 as the passenger liner Barbarossa. For nearly two decades she served in commercial trade under the flag of the North German Lloyd firm. The Barbarossa was laid up at Hoboken, New Jersey in August 1914, after the outbreak of World War I. She was seized there when the United States entered the conflict in April 1917. The German crew had blasted the engine cylinders so that

they couldn't be used. It was a wonderful passenger ship with beautiful mahogany staterooms. This was the ship on which Kaiser Wilhelm made his trip around the world.

The ship was turned over to the Navy for repair and conversion and commissioned as USS Barbarossa in early August 1917. Soon renamed Mercury, and later assigned the registry ID # 3012, she began carrying military personnel to France a few days after the beginning of 1918. The ship made seven trips to France,

with over 18,000 passengers, until the 11 November 1918 Armistice halted the fighting. Mercury then began the process of bringing American troops home. She made seven more trips for this purpose, carrying over 20,000 men.

In September 1919, after her final trip, USS Mercury was decommissioned and transferred to the War Department for use as an Army transport. The Army turned her over to the U.S. Shipping Board in August 1920. Though subsequently sold to a private shipping firm, her new owners defaulted and the ship came back to the Shipping Board in January 1921. She was sold for scrap in February 1924.



The above article is from the Department of the Navy – Naval History and Heritage Command.

THE COBBLESTONES IS LATE!!!

Dear Readers,

As I am sure you realize you are receiving this issue of the Cobblestones over a month late. The reason for this is that I had a catastrophic failure of my main computer.

If anyone is interested, the fan in the power supply in my computer was slowly failing and I didn't realize it. Over a month ago the fan stopped and, before I knew it and could turn off the computer, the

power supply failed and, in so doing, it "fried" the mother board, which means the computer was useless.

Usually, when I get a new computer I buy a product such as LapLink, which consists of some software and a special cable that runs from the old computer to the new one. This provides for the programs and data on the old computer to be rapidly moved to, and correctly installed on, the new

computer.

Since my old computer was dead I couldn't do that and had to come up with a way to get everything off my old disk drives onto the new computer. I have finally accomplished this and installed all necessary software on the new computer. So, I am finally back in business.

Thank you for your patience.

The Editor

See us on the Web at www.ColfaxHistory.org

MEMORIAL GIVING TO CAHS

Colfax Area Historical Society
welcomes gifts and memorials
in honor or in memory of
loved ones and friends. To
make a gift please include
your check with the form on
the right and mail to:

Colfax Area Historical Society

Attention:

Memorials Secretary

P O Box 185

Colfax, CA 95713-0185

Gift in Honor or in Memory

Of: _____

By: _____

Address: _____

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Amount: _____



MYRTLE FINDLAY'S 95th

Join us to **celebrate**

95 years of life

for

Myrtle Findley

during an easy, breezy

OPEN HOUSE

**Saturday, September 13,
2014**

11:00-2:00 p.m. drop by for **ice
cream**/snacks

5:30 p.m. sit around 'n chat
BBQ

(your presence is your present!)

33 Sunset Court

Colfax, CA

(requested dinner rsvp by 9/9/14
to

707-496-2154 or

jb.brayfindley@charter.net)

All are invited!

GIFTS

In Honor/ Memory Of

Richard Wixon

Undedicated

“

“

“

“

Donors

**Ken & Mickey Fletcher &
Mavis Wright**

Jay MacIntyre

Beth Murphy

Roger Staab

Helen and Dick Wayland

Gold Country Lionesses



ANOTHER LOSS FOR THIS FAMILY



Richard Phillip Wixon passed away on Thursday, July 17, 2014. He had just returned from his morning walk. He was 76.

Richard was born March 1, 1938 in Somerville, MA. On July 6, 1959, Richard married Carlotta Paul in Los Gatos. Richard joined the Coast Guard after high school and worked for the Campbell Fire and Police Departments. He earned a BA degree in Police Science.

He enjoyed logging competitions, motorcycles, fishing and, most of all,

his family.

Richard is survived by his wife, Carlotta; son, Donald Wixon; grandsons, S/Sergeant Patrick (Celeste) Wixon and Cody Sagan; granddaughter, Sarah Thompson; mother-in-law, Gertude Paul; and four great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Suzanne Sagan, his grandson, Heath Sagan, and parents, Arthur and Mary Wixon.

A Service of Thanksgiving was held at Peace Lutheran Church on Friday, July 25.

Our hearts go out to Carlotta, Donald, Gertrude, and the rest of the family.

See us on the Web at www.ColfaxHistory.org

CAHS MEMBERSHIP – JOIN US

Objectives:

To support and promote educational and research activities and interest in the history of the Colfax area; to promote and establish a local museum; to work with other Historical Societies and local groups; to discover, collect and make accessible to the public historical facts and objects; to mark places and buildings of historical interest in the Colfax area and catalog such markers in an orderly manner; to register historical landmarks and buildings; to accept gifts and donations from the public and other organizations; and to raise

funds to accomplish all the above.



Meetings:

General Meetings: 4/ year
Locations will be announced.

Board of Directors: 4/year
Located in the Depot at
99 Railroad Avenue, Colfax

Membership and Annual Dues:

Regular (single) Member :	\$20.00
Family (including children):	\$25.00
Junior (not included in Family):	\$ 5.00
Business (includes ad)	\$35.00
Non-profit Organizations	\$35.00

Additional contributions are always welcome.

Dues apply to the fiscal year, July 1 to June 30, and are tax-deductible. Members receive quarterly issues of the Colfax Cobbles, and a 10% discount at the Gift Shop in the Museum. If desired, an annual membership card may be obtained at the Museum.

Make checks payable to: Colfax Area Historical Society. Please send check with your name, address, phone, email address, membership class, and amount enclosed to: CAHS, P.O. Box 185, Colfax, CA 95713, or go to the Museum to sign up.

SPRING & SUMMER MEETINGS

The Summer Meeting and Ice Cream Social was held on Saturday, July 26, at 7:00 pm at the Depot. Our guest speaker was deputy sheriff, Sgt. Ty Conners, Commander of the Sheriff's Office Colfax Substation. He answered a lot of questions from the attendees. We had an excellent turnout, either because of Sgt. Conners being our guest speaker or because it was our annual Ice

Cream Social. I believe the turnout had a lot more to do with our excellent guest speaker.



Sgt. Ty Conners and his mother, Sue

At our Spring Meeting, on May 17, Chris Bierwagen spoke, and showed old slides, about the history of pear orchards in Chicago Park.



FUN LINKS & INFORMATION

Donner Pass Historical Rendezvous:
www.DonnerSummitHistoricalSociety.org

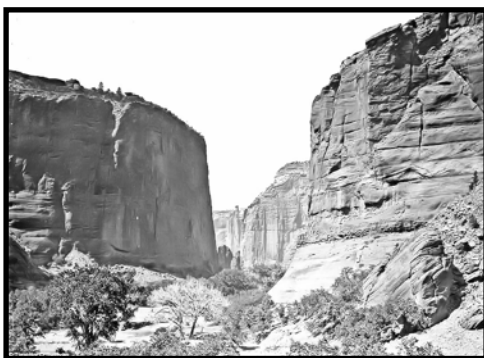
Placer Sierra Railroad Heritage Society: www.psrhs.org

Leave a Legacy: www.snla.org

Sierra Nevada Virtual Museum: www.sierranavadavirtualmuseum.com

Historic Hwy 49 Photos: www.HistoricHwy49.com

Gold Rush Stories:
http://nevada-outback-gems.com/gold_rush_tales/california_gold_rush1.htm



Do you have any stories or photos you would like to share?

Please email them to the editor at:
melcouch57@gmail.com

Subject line: Cobbles

See us on the Web at www.ColfaxHistory.org



COLFAX AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 185
Colfax, CA 95713

Visit Our Museum
Located in the Depot
99 Railroad Street
530-346-8599
10am – 3pm Daily



SUPPORT OUR LOCAL BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

American Legion Colfax Post 192 P.O. Box 311 Colfax, CA 95713	Teri Andrews-Murch Realtor w/Lyon Real Estate 1900 Grass Valley Hwy Suite 100, Auburn Direct: 530-798-0215 tandrewsmurch@golyon.com www.FoothillsHotProperties.com	Colfax Dental Center 120 Whitcomb Avenue P.O. Box 1080 Colfax, CA 95713 346-6244	Colfax Elementary School District P.O. Box 1080 Colfax, CA 95713 530-346-6244
Colfax Garden Club P.O. Box 1801 Colfax, CA 95713 346-8561 forgivenami@cablewave.com	Kurtis H. Fox, M.D., Inc. P.O. Box 1199 Colfax, CA 95713 346-2281	Grace Hubley Foundation 24820 Ben Taylor Road Colfax, CA 95713 530-863-3698 info@gracehubleyfoundation.org	Pick-A-Flick Video P.O. Box 29 (6 N. Main Street) Colfax, Ca 95713 530-346-8808
Placer County Historical Society P.O. Box 5643 Auburn, CA 95604	Sierra Business Service James and Barbara Kelly 520-D So. Auburn Street Colfax, CA 95713 346-2455 barbkelly@foothill.net	Sierra Vista Community Center P.O. Box 88 (55 School Street) Colfax 530-346-8726	VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post 2003 P.O. Box 1213 Colfax, CA 95713 (Pres.) 636-4242