

Colfax Cobbles

The quarterly newsletter of the Colfax Area Historical Society

Colfax Area Heritage Museum



Rick Slama (right) and his wife, Cheryl, visited the Colfax Area Heritage Museum on January 31, 2016. Rick was the 100,000th visitor.

100,000th Visitor to the Colfax Area Heritage Museum

On his way to Reno, Rick Slama was the museum's milestone visitor

Rick Slama was the 100,000th visitor to the Colfax Area Heritage Museum.

Rick and his wife, Cheryl, visited the museum on Sunday, January 31, 2016, while they waited to catch the Amtrak train to Reno. They had driven from Rancho Cordova to catch the train in Colfax.

Arriving early, they walked around the Passenger Depot and train platform before going into

the museum. This was their first time taking the train from the Colfax station.

When they entered the museum, Rick and his wife were greeted by museum volunteers and Colfax Area Historical Society president, Swend Miller, who told Rick he was the 100,000th visitor to the museum.

Rick was presented with a gift bag that contained local history books, such as Pat Jones' *The*

Colfax Connection, t-shirts, caps, and a congratulatory letter from Colfax City Manager, Mark Miller.

After visiting with Swend Miller and CAHS members Claudia Petrie, Helen and Dick Wayland, Ken and Mickey Fletcher, and Tom Passanisi at the museum, the Slamas boarded the train to Reno and continued their trip.

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In a phone interview, Rick said that as a teenager, he had visited Colfax often in the 1970's, staying with a friend and his family. He has fun memories of camping in the Colfax area, going to Rollins Lake, and having a good time in Colfax on the Fourth of July.

The Colfax Area Heritage Museum is located in the Colfax Passenger Depot, a former Union Pacific passenger station, which was renovated as a museum and opened to the public in 2006. The museum began tracking the number of visitors at that time.



Cheryl Slama, Rick Slama, and Swend Miller.

Volunteers Needed at Colfax Museum and Chamber of Commerce

Volunteers at the Colfax Area Heritage Museum keep the doors open and the answers flowing. Our volunteers answer local history questions, make the museum available to the public seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and greet visitors and travelers from throughout the United States and abroad.

More volunteers are urgently needed, because there are not enough volunteers to continue keeping the museum open seven days a week.

All volunteers are trained to answer questions about local history, open and close the museum, and help visitors enjoy their visit to Colfax. If interested, you can also learn how to help do

research on local topics and questions.

If you would like to meet travelers from around the world, answer questions about local history, and help visitors enjoy the museum's exhibits, please call the museum at (530) 346-8599 and speak to any of the volunteers on duty. You can also drop in at the museum and talk to the volunteers on duty.

The Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce also has its office, displays, and local memorabilia in the Passenger Depot, in the room next to the Museum. The Museum and Chamber office are connected by open doors that allow visitors to visit both the Museum and the Chamber in the same visit.

Volunteers for the Chamber of Commerce answer questions about the Colfax Area and its businesses, provide information

about train and bus schedules, and help passengers enjoy their stop in Colfax. Like the museum, they are also seeking volunteers.

CAHS Officers

President: Swend Miller

Vice President: Bonnie Wilson

Treasurer: Barbara Kelly

Recording Secretary: Joanne Geist

Membership Chair: Florence "Chris" Miller

Corresponding Secretary: Lynda Couchman

Archive Director: Tom Passanisi

Museum Director: Florence "Chris" Miller

Cobblestones Editor: Dirk Gifford

Webmaster: Dirk Gifford

Member at Large: Walt Wilson

Member at Large: Jay Macintyre

Local Author Releases Book about Historic Iowa Hill Schools

A new book by historian Robin Yonash describes the rich history of the various schools on the Iowa Hill Divide in Placer County, California, from the Gold Rush to the present day.

The Iowa Hill Divide, Volume I: Schools of the Iowa Hill Divide By Robin Yonash

Written by a prior student of the one room school in Iowa Hill and based on extensive research, this book chronicles the former and current schools on the Iowa Hill Divide in Placer County, California. The Iowa Hill School District, the first in Placer County, was established in 1854 and was soon followed by several others in the area. The town of Iowa Hill itself has had five school buildings over the years.

The book includes detailed lists of students, teachers, and enrollment back to the Gold Rush era; biographies of selected students, teachers, and administrators; descriptions and maps of the various school districts on the Divide; a history of each of the five school buildings in the town of Iowa Hill; numerous photographs, some published for the first time, plus maps and other illustrations; and a chronology of the schools on the Divide. Robin's book has been cataloged by the Library of Congress.

How to Buy a Copy

Copies can be purchased at the Colfax Area Historical Society Museum in Colfax, California, or on Amazon.com. Proceeds from purchases at the museum benefit the Colfax Area Historical Society and Amazon orders support the Iowa Hill Community Club.



The third Iowa Hill Schoolhouse, built in 1922. Source: Placer County Museums.

Excerpt: "The Third Iowa Hill Schoolhouse, 1922-1947"

The third school, which opened in 1922, was across the road from where the previous building was located. It was constructed on property originally owned by Theodore L. and Anna Schwab, according to Deed #1471, recorded on Page 451 of Book 190 at the Placer County Clerk–Recorder's Office. The property description indicated that this was the former Methodist Church lot. For some reason, the sale to the Iowa Hill School District was signed on October 25, 1923, well after the new building was in operation, and wasn't recorded until May 2, 1927. Everett Macy was the Notary Public who witnessed the signing of the deed.

Given the sharp decline in population and the unlikelihood that it would ever increase significantly again, this new school was much smaller than the previous one—just one room approximately 12.5'x36', or 450 sq. ft., not counting the porch and shed, compared to the 2,450 sq. ft. of the previous building. In addition there were two outside privies. This was

the schoolhouse for the next 25 years.

About Robin Yonash

Robin Yonash moved to the Iowa Hill Divide in 1949 with her grandparents. She rode her horse, accompanied by her dog, to attend the Iowa Hill School for her elementary school education. Following a successful career in the computer field, she retired in 1998 and moved back to her beloved Sierra Nevada foothills—but not all the way to Iowa Hill. Having become addicted to electricity and telephones, she compromised on the Colfax area. However, she considers Iowa Hill to be her home town and is involved with the community there, serving on the Board of the Iowa Hill Community Cemetery and developing an updated transcription of the Cemetery in addition to writing this book and its upcoming companion volume, *The Iowa Hill Divide Volume II: Fire and Gold—a History of the Iowa Hill Divide*, coming in 2016. Robin is also the author of *History of the Weimar Joint Sanatorium and the Weimar Cemetery*.

Our City's Namesake: Schuyler Colfax (1823–1885)

Schuyler Colfax, the 18th Vice President of the United States, is Colfax's namesake. He was born in New York City in 1823, and his family moved to South Bend,

tion to the 32nd Congress, but was elected as a Republican to the 34th Congress and to the six succeeding Congresses during the next fourteen years (1855-1869). His tenure in the U.S. House of



This statue of Schuyler Colfax is located at the intersection of Grass Valley Street and Railroad Street, in Colfax. © 2003 BCC@aCPRR.org. Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum, <http://cpr.org>

Indiana, in 1836. There he served as deputy auditor of Joseph County in 1841, and became a legislative correspondent for the *Indiana State Journal*.

At 22, he purchased an interest in the *South Bend Free Press*, which became the *St. Joseph Valley Register*. He fulfilled his early ambitions for a public life, and for many years was a successful newspaper editor and politician.

As a member of the state constitutional convention in 1850, he helped produce the state constitution that is still in effect. He ran unsuccessfully as a Whig for elec-

Representatives included three terms as speaker, during which he presided over the difficult Reconstruction Plans after the Civil War, as well as over the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.

During his distinguished career in Congress he was well known as an impassioned lecturer and orator. His eloquence on many subjects was legendary.

Among his accomplishments was bringing the U.S. mail to every outpost and hamlet of the country, after many years of legislative struggle. He is also known as a

great proponent of the United States' expansion into the West.

As a long-time friend and political ally and supporter of President Lincoln, Colfax was able to lend Lincoln much needed support during the difficult years of the Civil War. He said good-bye to the Lincoln family just before the President and his party went to Ford's Theater on the evening of April 14, 1865. Colfax was leaving for California and could not attend the theater with them.

His visit to California was followed by speeches that helped convince legislators to link the country with the transcontinental railroad.

He was elected Vice President of the United States on the Republican ticket headed by General Ulysses Grant in 1868, was inaugurated in 1869, and served four years.

His chances for re-nomination as Vice President were destroyed by charges of involvement (with several other congressmen) in the Credit Mobilier scandal of Grant's first term. Although formal charges were not brought against him, his political career was damaged.

He retired without bitterness and resumed a career of travel and lectures. His most popular speeches described the American landscape and the life and character of Abraham Lincoln. While on a speaking tour in Minnesota, he died on January 13, 1885. He is buried in City Cemetery, South Bend, Indiana.

History of the Colfax Area Historical Society

A small group of people interested in local history decided, on July 22, 1985, to organize a historical society for the Colfax Area. Long-time Colfax resident Gertrude Paul, was the acting chairperson. She had previous experience with historical societies in the Bay Area. An election was held, under the guidance of Dave Tucker of the Placer County Museum, and Bob Townsend of the Chamber of Commerce.

CAHS will be 31 years old on July 22, 2016

Penny Owens, proprietor of Colfax Deli & Pick-A-Flick Video Store, became the founding president of the Colfax Area Historical Society, and Gertrude Paul was Vice President. Recording Secretary was Jean Paoli, Treasurer was Phyllis Geary, and Corresponding Secretary was Helen McNerney. The Board of Directors included Al Melenson, Jack Keyte, Dave Wilt, and Ed Fritz.

The society's purposes included preservation of local history by compiling stories about the people and their buildings, preserving and sharing life stories of the early residents, holding meetings featuring speakers on local history topics, and starting work on the establishment of a local history museum in Colfax.

A logo was designed, a constitution and by-laws were created, and the Society was incorporated. A newsletter was created and called *Colfax Cobbblestones*.

- Identifying old photographs, maps, etc., from many sources.
- Participating in numerous civic events in the City of Colfax.



The Colfax Passenger Depot, home of the Colfax Area Heritage Museum

As membership grew, a membership fee was requested to help fund the mailing of the newsletter and other expenses.

Meetings were held on a quarterly basis. Guest lecturers were approached to give presentations at these meetings. Some of the many accomplishments of the Colfax Area Historical Society are:

- Gathering a growing collection of archival artifacts.
- Collecting, writing, and preserving oral and written histories of local interest.

- Identifying historic buildings and placing commemorative plaques with recognition of the original owners.

- Researching the history of the Colfax Cemetery.

In 2001, the City of Colfax appointed a Depot Project Management Committee, with two CAHS members serving. Jim Wood was Chairman, and Myrtle Findley was vice chairman. In 2006, one room was completed enough for the Museum to move in under the direction of Helen Wayland.

Local Businesses and Organizations Support CAHS

The Colfax Area Historical Society (CAHS) and the Colfax Area Heritage Museum appreciate the support and services that local businesses provide.

CAHS works with the Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce to promote interest and support in the Colfax area. The Chamber of

Commerce has been serving Colfax, Dutch Flat, Alta, and Gold run since 1951.

The Colfax Area Heritage Museum and the Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce are both located in the Colfax Passenger Depot, located in former Colfax Amtrak passen-

ger depot at 99 Railroad St., Colfax, CA.

The following local businesses and organizations are members of the CAHS, and we appreciate their support. We invite you to support them and other local organizations and businesses.

American Legion Colfax Post 192 P.O. Box 311 Colfax, CA 95713	Colfax Dental Center 120 Whitcomb Avenue Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6244	Colfax Elementary School District 24825 Ben Taylor Road Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6244
Colfax Garden Club P.O. Box 1801 Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6215	Fair Oaks Historical Society PO Box 2044 Fair Oaks, CA 95828	Forest Hill Divide Historical Society PO Box 646 Forest Hill, CA 95631
Gold Country Lioness Club PO Box 1852 Colfax, CA 95713	Golden Drift Historical Society PO Box 253 Dutch Flat, CA 95714	Placer County Historical Society P.O. Box 5643 Auburn, CA 95604
Sierra Vista Community Center 55 School Street / P.O. Box 57 Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8726 svcc@colfaxnet.org	VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post 2003 P.O. Box 1213 Colfax, CA 95713 President: (530) 636-4242	<i>Please join the Colfax Area Historical Society We would love to put the name of your business here!</i>

CAHS Archives Are Open to the Public

You are welcome to visit and use the Archives of the Colfax Area Historical Society.

The Archives are open Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m., and by appointment.

To schedule an appointment, call the Colfax Area Heritage Museum, (530) 346-8599, and speak to the

volunteer there. Provide your name, phone number, and the date and time you wish to visit the Archives. A member of the Archives staff will call you back to confirm your request.

The archives include collections, period clothing, WWII memorabilia, books and other reference

materials, the Grace Hubley Jones Photographic Collection, maps, photos, and other historical materials.

The Archives are located in the Sierra Vista Community Center, 55 School Street, Colfax, CA.

Learn about Gold Country Medical History on March 19

The next general membership meeting will feature a presentation by Dr. Rod Moser, director of the Gold Country Medical History Museum in Auburn.

CAHS Quarterly Meeting Saturday, March 19, 2016, 7 p.m.

Colfax Passenger Depot
99 Railroad Street, Colfax

There is no charge. This meeting is open to all CAHS members and the public.

The Gold Country Medical History Museum is located in the first hospital that was built in Placer County, in 1855. The museum shows what medical activities

looked like in the 1800's and early 1900's. There are collections of medical equipment, furnishings, pharmaceuticals, and advertising, including settings that depict a doctor's office, pharmacy, and operating room. You can learn more about the Medical Museum on its web site:

www.goldcountrymedicalmuseum.com

CAHS holds quarterly meetings for CAHS members and the public, which include speakers and presentations about local history.

Your Articles and Photos

- Would you like to write an article about a local town or the

history of the railroad in the Colfax area?

- Do you have historical photos that you would like to share with the community?
- Do you have stories about the area's history of mining?
- Does your family have interesting stories about people in the area?

If you do, we invite you to contribute them to the *Colfax Cobbles* and the CAHS web site.

Contact Dirk Gifford at dirkgifford@gmail.com or at (925) 783-9664.

Join the Colfax Area Historical Society

We invite you to join the CAHS and support the work of the Society. Receive the *Colfax Cobbles* four times a year by mail, with articles, news, and photos about local history. Past membership meetings are reported on, and upcoming meetings are described. Memberships are for one year, July – June. Five kinds of membership are offered.

Historic Towns of the Colfax Area

Historian Robin Yonash has identified and organized dozens of online research resources that apply to Placer County in general, with a primary focus on the towns in the Colfax area.

These web sites cover the existing towns of Alta, Applegate, Colfax, Dutch Flat, Gold Run, Iowa Hill (AKA Iowa City until 1901), and Weimar. They also have information about the local historic towns of Bird's Flat, Damascus, Elizabethtown, Humbug Canyon, Illinoistown, Monona Flat, New England Mills, Red Point, Succor/Sucker Flat, Towle, and Wisconsin Hill.

These resources are listed on the CAHS web site, at http://www.colfaxhistory.org/research_resources.htm

To join, fill out this form and mail it with a check to: CAHS, PO Box 185, Colfax, CA 95713.

Your subscription will begin with the next quarterly issue.

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

☐ **\$20 Regular** (individual) membership

☐ **\$25 Family** (including children) membership

☐ **\$5 Junior** (not included in a family)

☐ **\$35 Business** (includes an ad in each issue of *Colfax Cobbles*)

☐ **\$35 Non-profit organizations**

From the Archives

Tom Passanisi, director of the CAHS archives, provides an example of the thousands of documents that have been contributed to the archive, and which are being scanned and indexed.

This home remedy for treating boils calls for mixing 6 tablespoons of Sulphur with 3 tablespoons of cream of tartar. The dose is one teaspoonful night and morning, in syrup or molasses.



CAHS Has a Web Site

Visit the CAHS web site at www.colfaxhistory.org. It contains news and information about the CAHS Museum and Archives, a calendar of meetings, and local history.



The Colfax Area Historical Society
PO Box 185
Colfax CA 95713

