

COLFAX COBBLESTONES

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Remembering Gertrude Paul, a Founder of the Colfax Area Historical Society and the Museum

“Gertie” was a local historian, gardener, artist, musician, community servant, and devoted family leader

Gertrude Paul: December 21, 1918 – May 23, 2017

By Carlotta Wixon-Welker

Editors' note: Carlotta Wixon-Welker is a daughter of Gertrude Paul. Welker wrote this profile of her mother for Gertrude's funeral service.

Gertie was born December 21, 1918, in Redwood City, California, to Danish parents, George and Kamma Petersen. She lived in that city until 1949, when our family moved to Los Gatos, California. Her “official” schooling went up to high school, but she never stopped learning, even up until a few months before her death, when reading became difficult. She was always an avid reader, but I do not remember her ever reading novels just for entertainment, it was always to learn something new that was educational or historical.

She married my father, Fred Paul, on June 30, 1936, at the tender age of 17. They met when she was a 14-year-old church organist. My dad was the church usher and he fell for that cute, talented girl. They had a lifelong love affair with each other, and were married for 52 years. They raised my sister and me in a happy Christian home.

Her interests were so varied. She was involved in Girl Scout programs to be with her two girls. She excelled in and taught ceramics, weaving, leather crafts, copper tooling as well as many other arts and crafts. She loved family genealogy and spent years doing research of both sides of my family as well as my husband's family. In her later years, she must have crocheted hundreds of hats



Gertrude Paul, cofounder of the Colfax Area Historical Society, speaking at the Colfax Founders Day, 2007.

and scarves, which she gave away. She raised and showed dogs.

She was always a historian, being instrumental in forming the Colfax Area Historical Society and the Colfax Area Heritage Museum. She researched the buildings in Colfax and dedicated bronze plaques on all the old buildings. She was a lifelong gardener. Until recently, she was very active in the local, district, state, regional and national garden club organizations.

Her life was always centered around her church activities. She served as a church organist for many years. She sang in the choir, taught Sunday School, and actively led woman's groups. She always had a very close relationship with her various pastors. When my parents moved to Colfax in 1976, they moved into the historic old log cabin on the Rising Sun Gold Mine property. She loved that house, but eventually it became impractical for her to live there, as we did not want her hauling firewood in every winter to keep warm. While living in that house, she planted 200 rose bushes on the property.

She had some sadness in her life. My older sister, Diana, passed away in a tragic car accident in 1958, and I must say that was the greatest blow my parents had to face. She was saddened to lose her parents, family members and friends. Then the terrible blow of losing my father. She mourned the loss of mobility for her grandson, but was so proud of his continued zest for life. She recently lost her granddaughter, a great grandson, and her beloved son-in-law in the span of 2 years. In spite of these losses, she always kept her happy, positive outlook on life. We can rejoice that she is now with those loved ones in Heaven. What a glorious reunion there must have been!

Both of my parents were great role models and they were loving grandparents to my children. My mother,

even in her late 90's, was interested in what the young people in our family were doing. She always tried to teach them something when she was with them. She was thrilled when she eventually had four great-grandchildren come along, and then was more than thrilled to live to see five great-great-grandchildren born.

To mention the kind of person she was, her "plain pine box" was at her request. She was never a proud or pretentious person. She was humble about her accomplishments. She was the smartest woman I knew and was my dearest, closest friend, as well as my mother. I will miss her for the rest of my days, but rejoice she is now out of the continual pain from arthritis she suffered with for the last 25 years of her life.

One of her last conscious thoughts was for me. She told me that she was so glad I again have someone in my life "to look after me" when she was gone and that she was so fortunate she had lived long enough to see me happily married again.

I thank all of you for the part you played in my mother's long and productive life. I know each of you had a special place in her heart and for that I am very thankful.

—*Carlotta Wixon-Welker, along with the rest of Gertie's family.*

From the *Colfax Record*

The *Colfax Record* published many stories about Gertrude Paul over the years. On July 27, 2011, Martha Garcia, the *Record's* editor wrote that Gertrude Paul was one of the two people most responsible for creating the Colfax Area Historical Museum (Helen Wayland was the other person).

Gertrude and Helen were also founding members of the Colfax Area Historical Society, which collected and preserved oral and written histories, photographs, artifacts, and other historic materials.

In this article, Martha Garcia wrote,

Paul's preservation of Colfax's history is evident throughout the city. She spearheaded the historical society's placement of 15 bronze plaques marking the history of the buildings.

She also discovered a collection of more than 7,500 glass negatives by Grace Hubley, a commercial photographer who lived in Colfax and had studios in San Francisco and Sacramento in the early 1900s.

In a recent article published in the *Colfax Record*, on July 27, 2017, Carol Percy wrote,

As part of her work with the historical society, Paul researched Colfax's founding families and the histories of buildings along Main Street, [her daughter, Carlotta] Wixon-Welker said.

"Today, bronze plaques adorn these buildings," Wixon-Welker said.

On a visit to a yard sale at the historical Hubley house in Colfax, Paul discovered glass negatives that belonged to well-known portrait photographer Grace Hubley Jones.

Paul received permission to collect Jones's works and helped establish the Grace Hubley Foundation to preserve the photographer's works, according to Wixon-Welker.



Gertrude Paul, co-founder of the Colfax Area Historical Society and the Colfax Area Heritage Museum.

One of Colfax's treasures honored

Gertrude Paul earns the *Colfax Record's* 2010 Community Service award

Editors' note: The following article was published in the Colfax Record in 2010, when Gertrude Paul received the Colfax Record's Scoop Thurman Community Service Award. This article was written by Gloria Beverage, and it originally appeared in the Colfax Record in 2010.

By: Gloria Beverage, *Colfax Record*
January 20 2010

One of Colfax's living treasures, Gertrude Paul, will be awarded the Scoop Thurman Community Service Award during Friday's Colfax Chamber of Commerce annual luncheon.

The Colfax Record award is given annually to an individual who goes above and beyond in serving the community. The award is named for longtime Record Editor Alan "Scoop" Thurman, who in addition to being a successful businessman was also Colfax's postmaster and a member of the California Legislature for several years.

Last year, the award was given to Pene and Gary Todd, longtime business owners, who helped individuals and businesses throughout the area in countless ways.

Paul, who has lived in Colfax since 1976, has been instrumental in ensuring that many of Colfax's "treasures" are protected.

"Active in the Garden Club and with many others," wrote Helen Wayland and Nancy Hagman in their nomination letter, "she was a force for changing the downtown into a flowering garden."

Paul, 90, is being recognized not only for her efforts on behalf of the Colfax Garden Club, but also for her efforts with the Colfax Historical Society, the Placer County Historical Society and the Native Daughters.

"I just can't believe it. I have to sit here and digest it," said Paul after learning of the award. "I had no idea that I would ever be that meaningful to this community."

Paul's passion has been researching the stories of Colfax's historic buildings as well as collecting a wide variety of memorabilia and artifacts from area families for the museum, which opened in the historic Railroad Depot in 2005.

It all started in 1985 when Paul represented the Colfax Garden Club on a citywide committee attempting to obtain Main Street U.S.A. redevelopment funding.

One of the requirements for obtaining funding was an active historical society. To drum up members for the as-yet-unformed society, Paul pushed a wheelbarrow in the Fourth of July parade inviting folks to talk with her afterwards.

She set up a table near the caboose on Main Street and collected the names and addresses of 24 residents, including some members of historic families, such as the Coropassis and Paolis.

Within a month, the Colfax Area Historical Society had elected its first officers.

Although the Main Street program didn't materialize, Paul's love for Colfax's history remained steadfast. Through her efforts, the Historical Society placed 15 bronze markers to honor the history of buildings, some dating from 1865, throughout downtown Colfax. For that project, Paul devoted countless hours researching, documenting and collecting information on the buildings and the early settlers.

Her most treasured find, however, is a collection of more than 7,500 glass negatives by Grace Hubley, a commercial photographer who lived in Colfax and had studios in San Francisco and Sacramento in the early 1900s.

Thanks to Paul, the rare collection was donated to the Historical Society in the late 1990s. At 90, Paul has also remained active with the Red Hat Society, the 1918 Club and is an honorary member of E Clampus Vitus.

It was Paul's husband, Fred, who initiated the move to Colfax, she acknowledged in a 2007 Record interview.

"My husband liked Colfax," she recalled. "He had a trailer of birdhouses, trellis and shrines, selling them from Sacramento to Lake Tahoe, when he saw the (Rising Sun Mine Estates) subdivision at the (Cisco Grove) gift shop and heard about the Colfax property." They purchased the mine superintendent's log cabin in 1962 and moved to Colfax after his retirement in 1976.

In the past couple of years, she has enjoyed the "sew-cial" gathering at the Whistle Stop Quilt Shop in downtown Colfax. With the encouragement of the other quilters, last year Paul completed a Dresden Plate quilt she started when she was 12 years old. Although she has traveled extensively, including two trips to Israel, Paul still calls Colfax home.



Gertrude Paul, nee Petersen, 17 years old, on her honeymoon in 1936. She and her husband, Fred Paul, had gone to Tioga Pass, at Yosemite National Park. This photo was taken after they had climbed to 10,000 feet. Tenaya Lake was below them at 8,150 feet.

Join the Colfax Area Historical Society

We invite you to join the CAHS and support the work of the Society. You will receive the

Colfax Cobbblestones four times a year by mail. Each issue includes articles and photos about local history. Memberships are for one year, from July – June.

Memberships begin on July 1. However, if you join CAHS between October 1 and March 31, your membership will be prorated as explained on the form.

To join the Colfax Area Historical Society, 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 Individual membership (one person)

If you join between Oct. 1–Dec. 31, prorated membership is \$15

If you join between Jan. 1–Mar. 31, prorated membership is \$10

If you join April 1–June 30, membership is \$20 and begins July 1

☐ \$25 Family membership (including children)

If you join between Oct. 1–Dec. 31, prorated membership is \$19

If you join between Jan. 1–Mar. 31, prorated membership is \$13

If you join April 1–June 30, membership is \$25 and begins July 1

☐ \$35 Business or Non-Profit Organization

(includes an ad in each issue of *Colfax Cobbblestones*)

If you join between Oct. 1–Dec. 31, prorated membership is \$27

If you join between Jan. 1–Mar. 31, prorated membership is \$18

If you join April 1–June 30, membership is \$35 and begins July 1

Local Businesses and Organizations That 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 the former Colfax Amtrak passenger 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.

| | | |
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| American Legion Colfax Post 192 P.O. Box 311 Colfax, CA 95713 | Café Luna 38 North Main Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8833 | Colfax Dental Center 120 Whitcomb Avenue Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6244 |
| Colfax Elementary School District 24825 Ben Taylor Road Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2202 | Colfax Farm & Country Store 140 North Main Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2600 | Colfax Garden Club P.O. Box 1801 Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6215 |
| Colfax Market 2 North Main Street Colfax CA 95713 (530) 346-7029 | Colfax Record PO Box 755 Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2232 | Colfax Theater 2 North Main Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-7029 |
| Grace Hubley Foundation 24820 Ben Taylor Colfax, CA 95713 www.gracehubleyfoundation.org | Hills Flat Lumber 1000 South Canyon Way Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8685 | Kurtis H. Fox, M.D., Inc. 101 Grass Valley St. Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2281 |
| Mar-Val Sierra Market 575 South Auburn Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8338 | Pick-A-Flick Video & Gift Shop 6 North Main Street Colfax, Ca 95713 (530) 346-8808 | Sierra Business Services 520 South Auburn St, # D Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2455 barbkelly@foothill.net |
| Sierra Vista Community Center 55 School Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8726 svcc@colfaxnet.org | Teri Andrews-Murch, Realtor Lyon Real Estate 1900 Grass Valley Hwy, Auburn CA (530) 798-0215 www.FoothillsHotProperties.com | VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post 2003 P.O. Box 1213 Colfax, CA 95713 President: (530) 636-4242 |

Gold Rush Tales from Murderer's Bar

September 16, 2017, Meeting and Program

Kathryn Miller Marshall, Ph.D. will share "Gold Rush Tales from Murderer's Bar." Dr. Marshall is a frequent speaker at genealogical conferences and workshops, and she is the former Director of the Lodi Family History Center.

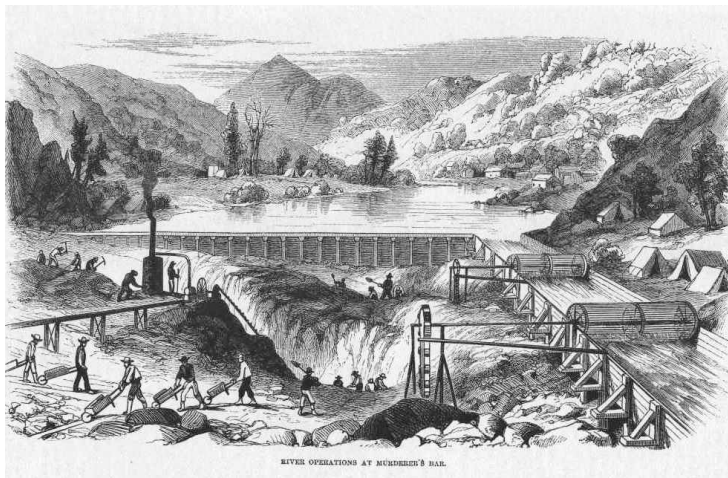
Saturday, Sept. 16, 2017, 7 p.m.

Colfax Passenger Depot
99 Railroad Street, Colfax

There is no charge. This meeting is open to all CAHS members and to the public. Visitors and guests are welcome. Refreshments will be provided. Bring a friend!

Murderer's Bar was the site of a rich gold discovery in 1848 by Tom Buckner and Ezekiel Merritt on the Middle Fork of the American River, upstream from Auburn. Ezekiel Merritt was a longtime mountain man who helped kick off the Bear Flag Revolt.

Large crowds followed friends to the site and soon swarmed over the area. Surmounting one challenge after another, 400 men united to build a dam and a 12-foot wide flume one mile long to divert the river from its bed in order to expose more gold.



River Operations at Murderers Bar

Legendary frontiersman and crack shot Orrin Porter Rockwell owned three trading posts/inns in the area. Rockwell's Round Tent Tavern at Murderer's Bar was the social center of the Auburn area's mining camps. Rockwell went by the name of James Brown to hide his true identity, in part because he was a deputy marshal searching for kidnappers of a young woman—until he was exposed in a shooting contest.

If there is time, Dr. Marshall will also talk about the Thomas Orr family of Salmon Falls, California, who struck it rich through trade and services, despite owning a tremendously rich gold claim of their own.

Kathryn Miller Marshall served as the Director of the Lodi Family History Center for 16 years. Today she is a frequent speaker at genealogical conferences and workshops. She has a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of California at Berkeley, where she taught for many years.



Kathryn Miller Marshall, Ph.D.

Dr. Marshall developed school-based substance abuse prevention programs funded by private foundations and three National Institutes of Health, and evaluated the nation's substance abuse programs for annual Congressional reports.

Back in California for her husband's last assignment as a military officer, Dr. Marshall served on the selection board for National Blue Ribbon Public Schools, and designed curriculum for "Odyssey of the Mind," a program for gifted students.

She began to specialize in the history of California between 1840 and 1865 when asked to prepare interpretive panels for museums and to edit books for fellow historians. She is the author of *Discovery of California Gold*, which is a curriculum augmentation book in use by schools throughout the state. She is currently writing a book on the voyage of the ship *Brooklyn*, which carried passengers like Sam Brannan, who helped kick off the California Gold Rush.

Dr. Marshall is a member of the Advisory Board for the California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, which provides living history re-enactors at state parks and preserves historical sites in California.

Colfax Cobbles is published quarterly by the Colfax Area Historical Society. Subscription information is on page 5. Editors are Dirk Gifford and Mel Couchman.

Inside this issue

This issue highlights the life and community contributions of **Gertrude Paul**, one of the cofounders of both the Colfax Area Historical Society and the Colfax Area Heritage Museum. Gertrude was described as a "historical sleuth" by her friends. **Gertrude Paul passed away on May 23, 2017.**

In 2011, Martha Garcia, *Colfax Record* editor interviewed Helen Wayland about Gertrude. Helen is also a cofounder of the Society and the Museum.

"Gertrude is a very important part of the museum," Wayland said. "She started hoping and dreaming of this when the society was first started." Wayland said her husband, Dick, remembers seeing Paul in a 4th of July parade, pushing a wheelbarrow. "It was promoting the historical society and her goal of getting a museum in Colfax," Wayland said.

Paul's preservation of Colfax's history is evident throughout the city. She spearheaded the historical society's placement of 15 bronze plaques marking the history of the buildings. She also discovered a collection of more than 7,500 glass negatives by Grace Hubley, a commercial photographer who lived in Colfax and had studios in San Francisco and Sacramento in the early 1900s.



Gertrude Paul (left) speaks at the 2007 Colfax Founders Day celebration. Janet Landauer is on the right.



The Colfax Area Historical Society

PO Box 185

Colfax CA 95713

Phone: (530) 346-8599

Email: museum.colfax@gmail.com

USPS mail: Mail for both the Colfax Area Heritage Museum and the Colfax Area Historical Society is received at PO Box 185, Colfax, CA 95713.

Museum location: The Colfax Area Heritage Museum is physically located at 99 Railroad St, Colfax CA 95713

