

COLFAX COBBLESTONES

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The 1966 White House's Christmas Tree Was Shipped from Colfax

On November 17, 1966 the front page story in the *Colfax Record*, was about the Christmas tree that had been shipped by rail from Colfax, California, to Washington, D.C., on the previous day. The tree had been cut by PG&E crews on Grouse Ridge in Nevada County and brought by flatbed truck to Colfax where it was loaded onto a rail-

road car headed to the east coast. Although the tree had been cut in Nevada County, the banner that was prepared for the tree's send-off wished a "Merry Christmas from Colfax, Calif. to L.B.J. and the U.S.A."

The following photo and the news article that is reprinted on page 2 were provided by Dick Wayland.



The original caption, 1966: Before the PG&E trucks lifted the Nation's Christmas Tree off the flatbed truck, Colfax Chamber of Commerce members reeled out a sign and placed it on the flatbed for picture taking. The sign was made by the Art Department at Colfax High School. Despite the rain, a good crowd was on hand for the short send-off ceremony. — *Colfax Record*.

The following is the story of the 1966 Nation's Christmas Tree, as it originally appeared in *The Colfax Record*, on Thursday, November 17, 1966. Dick Wayland had a copy of the original article and photo, which he provided for this newsletter.

Much Ado in Colfax over Nation's Christmas Tree

The Colfax Record

Thursday, November 17, 1966

Last year the nation's Christmas tree was furnished by Arizona. Next year the honored tree will hail from Vermont. But 1966 is California's year.

The tree selected to stand proudly in the Ellipse in front of the White House this year is a perfectly proportioned Red Fir, known as the George Washington Tree, that stood on Pacific Gas & Electric Company property on Grouse Ridge for 80 years or more.

PG&E crews, assisted by experts from Pacific Tree Company, cut the tree early Tuesday morning. The intricately planned transaction was watched by Congressman and Mrs. Harold "Bizz" Johnson, Placer County and PG&E dignitaries and the news media. In order to protect the branches so the tree would not be damaged, some of the limbs were secured and braced while the tree was still standing.

The "mechanical hands" of two huge PG&E trucks held the tree upright after cutting then slowly lowered it into the cradle prepared for it on the bed of a large truck.

During the rainy Tuesday noon hour the area along the tracks behind Sierra Fuel began bustling with trucks, men in hard hats and interested onlookers as the tree was being readied for transfer from truck to railroad car. A special send-off was arranged by the Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce under the direction of John Boehme, president. A shelter was provided for the Colfax High School Band by Quinn's Sierra Chapel.

City Councilman Jim Henry, representing the City of Colfax in the absence of Mayor Bob Marson, introduced Congressman Johnson who gave a brief review of what is in store for the fallen Grouse Ridge giant. Other people introduced were Assemblyman Gene Chappie and Will Jones, chairman of the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Also present was Jim Williams, Placer County executive and Syd Michaels of Auburn, Division Sales Manager for PG&E.

The Colfax High School Band played several numbers under the direction of Pete Hanson.

During the interval between the Tuesday noon ceremony and the departure Wednesday afternoon, the tree

was being wrapped for the journey. The Christmas Pageant of Peace at the White House will be carried on around the California tree throughout the holiday season. It will be decorated with 5 to 6 thousand white and yellow lights and metal stars. Fifty four smaller trees around it will sparkle with blue, green and white lights. President Johnson will light the trees December 16 and the lights will be turned off at midnight, January 2. Nightly programs will be presented by choral groups, concert bands and other musical organizations.

PG&E was responsible for the cutting, delivery to the railroad and loading of the Red Fir. Four rail lines share the responsibility for its safe journey to the east coast. Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, Norfolk and Western and the Baltimore and Ohio will relay the tree to its scheduled destination in Washington, D. C. around November 30. It will be transported by truck to the Ellipse. The National Community Christmas Tree has been an annual event in the National Capital since 1923. The first tree, a giant fir cut from the Green Mountains, was presented to President Calvin Coolidge by President Paul. D. Moody of Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont. This tree was erected in the Ellipse, just south of the White House. In 1924, a living tree, a Norway spruce, was presented to the President by the American Forestry Association and planted in Sherman Plaza in the Grounds South of the Executive Mansion. In 1925, the program was broadcast to the Nation for the first time. The ceremonies were transferred to Lafayette Park in 1934, and two Fraser Fir trees were installed in the park for this purpose, being used on alternate years until 1939, when the event was again moved to the Ellipse. From 1941 through 1953, the programs were held in the Executive Mansion grounds.

In 1954, the Christmas Pageant of Peace, Inc., was organized. The scope of the National Community Christmas Tree Celebration was broadened to emphasize the desire of this Nation and other nations of the world to find peace through the spirit and meaning of Christmas. An elaborate setting was arranged on the Ellipse south of the White House.

Colfax Chamber of Commerce members assisting in the ceremony were Boehme, Betty Velican, Melba James, Dick Wayland, Ken Quinn and Jim Henry.

Volunteers Needed at the Museum and the Chamber of Commerce

The **Colfax Heritage Museum** and the **Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce** share the Colfax Passenger Depot at 99 Railroad St., Colfax, California. The building also contains public restrooms and a public meeting room where visitors can wait for their trains and buses. Both the Museum and the Chamber sell snacks, drinks, books, and local souvenirs. The Depot provides travelers with a comfortable place to wait, where they can relax and also learn about Colfax's history and businesses.



Both the museum and the Chamber need additional volunteers. Are you interested in volunteering one day a week in either the Colfax Heritage Museum or the Chamber of Commerce? You'll meet hundreds of interesting people (including local residents who enjoy coming into the Chamber and museum). If you volunteer, you'll be trained so that you're comfortable answering questions and helping the public.

As a volunteer at the museum, you will be called a docent, because you will have opportunities to explain local history to visitors and answer questions. If interested, please call the museum at **(530) 346-8599**, send email to **museum.colfax@gmail.com**, or visit the museum and talk to the current docents or Museum Director. More information about the museum is available online at **www.colfaxhistory.org**.

The Chamber of Commerce also needs volunteers to answer questions about the Colfax Area and businesses,

provide information about train and bus schedules, and help passengers enjoy their stop in Colfax.

The Colfax Area Chamber of Commerce serves Colfax, Dutch Flat, Alta, and Gold Run. As a volunteer, you'll meet local residents, local business owners and other members of the Chamber. You'll learn more about the community and become involved in helping to encourage and develop the local community and economy. If interested, call the Chamber at **(530) 346-8888**, send email to **colfaxareachamber@gmail.com** or visit the Chamber and talk to the volunteers and Chamber of Commerce officers. More information about the Chamber is available online at **www.colfaxchamber.com**.

The Colfax Heritage Museum and the Colfax Chamber of Commerce are both located in the Colfax Passenger Depot, 99 Railroad St., Colfax, California. Their hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Restoration of the Bull and the Bear at the Colfax Passenger Depot

Swend Miller and Ron Nelson have completed the restoration of the Bull and Bear sculptures that are located next to the Colfax Passenger Depot, at 99 Railroad St., in Colfax.

Over the years, maintenance of the sculptures has included painting them with linseed oil, waterproof marine-grade sealers, and paint. As the sculptures aged and weathered, the Bear and Bull developed structural

problems related to vandalism and decay of the wood itself.

The Bull and the Bear sculptures were originally brought to Colfax from Mendocino, California in the 1940s and installed in front of the popular Bull and Bear restaurant on Canyon Way in Colfax. Roger Staab took the following photos of the restoration. To see the photos in color, go to the CAHS web site at www.colfaxhistory.org.



Ron Nelson, left, and Swend Miller work on the repaired Bear. Photo by Roger Staab, November 2018.



Ron Nelson, left, and Swend Miller paint the repaired Bull. Photo by Roger Staab, November 2018.



The restored Bear and Bull. Photo by Roger Staab, November 2018.

Museum and Archives

The Colfax Area Historical Society (CAHS) and the Colfax Heritage Museum (CHM) preserve the local history of Colfax, California, the surrounding area, and the railroads, by collecting stories, photographs, and artifacts about the people and buildings in this part of the Sierra foothills.

The CAHS and CHM have an Archives Room that is currently open to the public by appointment. The Archives Room is designed to accommodate research and access to the collections. The following are some of the items in the collections located in the Museum and the Archives.

- **Physical items**, such as Chinese ceramics and baskets, period clothing from 1800 to 1940, and WWII

memorabilia: uniforms, helmet, shells, and an album with pictures of Camp Placer

- **Historical books and other literature**, cemetery records from 1851 to 1984, and back copies of the *Colfax Record* newspaper
- **Maps and pictures** from 1870–1999 of the Colfax area and of many of the railroads
- **The Grace Hubley Jones Photographic Collection**: 10,000 glass plate negatives from the early 1900's

To schedule an appointment or find out when the Archives Room is open, please call the Colfax Area Heritage Museum before your visit, at (530) 346-8599.

The Current CAHS Officers

President: Jay MacIntyre

Vice President: Swend Miller

Treasurer: Barbara Kelly

Recording Secretary: Joann Geist

Membership Chair: Chris Miller

Corresponding Secretary: Lynda Couchman

Archives Director: Swend Miller

Museum Director: Rachel Christian

Member-At-Large: Bonnie Wilson

Member-At-Large: Walt Wilson

Cobblestones Editors: Dirk Gifford, Mel Couchman

Webmaster: Dirk Gifford

When You Join CAHS, How is the Money Used?

In addition to membership dues, CAHS raises money through sales, donations, and auctions. Membership dues and all money raised help us accomplish the following goals:

- Maintain the Colfax Heritage Museum in the Colfax Passenger Depot building, in Colfax.
- Maintain historical archives in a rented room at the Sierra Vista Community Center.
- Manage a growing collection of archival artifacts and make these available for research.
- Preserve and protect a collection of 10,000 glass negatives taken by Grace Hubley Jones, a successful commercial photographer of this area.
- Collect and catalog photographs of early Colfax families since the 1850s.
- Research and compile the history of early buildings in Colfax, with commemorative bronze plaques placed on buildings along Main Street.
- Recognize and register three historical areas (Colfax Passenger Depot, Freight Depot, and the Cape Horn

Overlook) as Historical Landmarks with the California State Preservation Commission.

- Research the history of various personalities in Colfax, such as Robert Fowler (aviator) and Pat Jones (journalist), and dedicate monuments to them.
- Develop a file system to assist persons searching for information on people and history of Colfax and surrounding area; start a collection of oral family histories on tape.
- Display archival and historical materials at public events.
- Publish and sell historical publications related to Colfax and other nearby communities

If your membership has expired, this will be the last issue of *Colfax Cobblestones* that you receive. To renew your membership, fill out and return the form on page 7 with your check.

Local Businesses and Organizations That Support CAHS

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

The 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. CAHS works with the 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.

<p>American Legion Colfax Post 192</p> <p>P.O. Box 311 Colfax, CA 95713</p>	<p>Colfax Dental Center</p> <p>120 Whitcomb Avenue Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6244</p>	<p>Colfax Garden Club</p> <p>P.O. Box 1801 Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-6215</p>
<p>Grace Hubley Foundation</p> <p>24820 Ben Taylor Colfax, CA 95713</p> <p>www.gracehubleyfoundation.org</p>	<p>Kurtis H. Fox, M.D., Inc.</p> <p>101 Grass Valley St. Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2281</p>	<p>Sierra Business Services</p> <p>520 South Auburn St, # D Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-2455 barbkelly@foothill.net</p>
<p>Sierra Vista Community Center</p> <p>55 School Street Colfax, CA 95713 (530) 346-8726 svcc@colfaxnet.org</p>	<p>Teri Andrews-Murch, Realtor</p> <p>Lyon Real Estate 1900 Grass Valley Hwy, Auburn CA (530) 798-0215 www.FoothillsHotProperties.com</p>	<p>VFW Auxiliary Post 2003</p> <p>P.O. Box 1213 Colfax, CA 95713 President: (530) 636-4242</p>

Join the Colfax Area Historical Society

We invite you to join the CAHS and support the work of the Society, which includes the Colfax Heritage Museum. You will receive the *Colfax Cobblestones* newsletter 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.**

<p>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.</p> <p>Your subscription will begin with the next quarterly issue.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ ZIP _____</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual membership (one person)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family membership (including children)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Business or Non-Profit Organization (includes an ad in each issue of <i>Colfax Cobblestones</i>)</p>
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In this issue: The story of the Christmas tree that was shipped from Colfax to Washington, D. C. in 1966.



The Colfax Area Historical Society

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Colfax CA 95713

Phone: (530) 346-8599

Email: museum.colfax@gmail.com

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

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

