



A Publication of the Plumas County Museum Association, Inc.

Volume 45 • Number 3

www.plumasmuseum.org

August 2019

VISIONS OF VINTON

Grave Occasion Ventures to Sierra Valley

Join us Saturday, September 21st for this year's *Grave Occasion Cemetery Tour & Dinner*. This year's 10th anniversary takes us to the historic Vinton Cemetery perched on the sage covered hillside just off Highway 70 between Vinton and Chilcoot in Sierra Valley and features a cast of characters drawn from the many ranching and farming families that made (and still make) this area their home.

Swiss immigrants began settling here as early as the 1870s. During the next several decades, fleeing unfavorable political and economic conditions, over population, a shrinking land base, inefficient agricultural reforms, and crop shortages and failures in Switzerland, thousands of Swiss left their homeland for America where the lure of riches to be had in gold and silver, cheap and abundant land, and good crops, pointed to the promise of stability and a better life. Of the 27,000 Swiss

who left Switzerland from the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino (which includes the district of Val Leventina from which many of those that later settled in Sierra Valley originated), 20,000 came to California.

Although originally coming to California seeking work in the gold and silver mines or other ventures, Swiss and Italian immigrants re-located to Sierra Valley to work the various farms and ranches, and as time went by, began purchasing existing farms and ranches as their own. The products they produced on these farms and ranches fed the miners of the Comstock as well as the lumbermen of the area, and in this way, Sierra Valley, became, at one time, one of the largest Swiss settlements in California.

Our cemetery tour will uncover some of the stories of these Swiss and Italian families and may possibly include rancher and modernization booster Rudolph Ramelli and wife

Nellie, rancher, farmer, and dairyman Luigi Maddalena and wife Colombina, homesteader, lumberman, and rancher Giacomo Folchi and wife Lucia, and hotel operator Vincent Ponzi and wife Marie. Other spectral possibilities include dairyman and stage driver Alfred Roberti and wife Josephine, hotel operator Guiseppa Canonica, and members of the Bonta, Dotta, and Ede families. Sightings may also include an Irish haunt or two from the Flaherty family.

After the cemetery tour, we will gather at the tallest building in Vinton, the Sierra Grange Hall (built in 1934), to enjoy spirited bidding on silent auction items and a delicious dinner catered by the Sierra Valley Grange. Paired with a no host bar, this will be an evening meal "to die for."

Gathering for the event begins at 3:00 with wine and hors d'oeuvres, and we nail it shut around dusk (usually around 7 PM). Be sure to get your



Vinton Grave Angel.

tickets early as they tend to sell out quickly, and there are only a limited number available. Tickets can be purchased in person at the Museum, ordered over the phone using a credit card (a small processing fee will be applied), or by visiting our Museum Store at www.plumasmuseum.org and clicking on “Events.”

Tickets are also available from members of our Board of Trustees (listed on the back of this publication). Tickets for this annual fundraising event are \$50 for Members and \$60 for Non-Members. We encourage you to get your tickets today!

Vinton

The small town of Vinton is a product of the first railroad in Plumas County. The site of a depot for the Sierra Valley & Mohawk Railroad in the mid-1880s, it was originally called Cleveland. When this railroad went defunct, the depot was rebuilt into a general merchandise store and several other buildings soon arose around it. The town was renamed Vinton in honor of one of the daughters of Henry Bowen, the owner of the Sierra Valleys Railroad when he reopened the railroad line to Clairville (which was named after his other daughter). The town’s post office was established on February 16, 1897 when it was moved from Summit, now Chilcoot.

As the valley filled with ranchers and farmers, the need for a cemetery to serve the burgeoning Swiss-Italian community became apparent, and the cemetery was in use as early as 1889 with the burial of infant Adelina Canonica who was just 1 year, 1 month old. Attesting to the hardships of pioneer life in Sierra Valley, of the first ten burials (1889 – 1900), only one person was more than 13 years old and only two were over 3 years old, with six being less than a year old, and of the first twenty burials (1889 – 1907), only three lived beyond 50 years, sixteen were younger than 36, and eight were less than a year old.

This neat, orderly cemetery with its ornate gravestones

Cemetery

(many of them displaying photos of the deceased) sits on a rise just off Hwy 70 and bears an ongoing testament to the sacrifices and lives of the Swiss-Italian immigrants who settled this valley. The names forever etched in stone here are reflective of that distinctive heritage: Andreoli, Bonta, Canonica, Capovilla, Cattuzzo, Dotta, Ede, Folchi, Galeppi, Guidici, Maddalena, Pasquetti, Ramelli, Roberti, Sobrio, Solari, Trosi, Vanetti, Zamboni, as well as many others.

Today, 130 years after its first burial, the Vinton Cemetery continues to serve the community of Vinton and all of Sierra Valley, as an active cemetery and a historically important piece of Plumas County history.



Lodovico Dotta Grave.



Goodwin Law Office.

Goodwin Law Office Renovates into County Law Library

In an historic agreement between the County of Plumas, the Plumas County Law Library Trustees, and the Plumas County Museum Association, the Association's historic Goodwin Law office has now become the new home of the Plumas County Law Library. This move from the 4th floor of the County Courthouse to the Goodwin Law Office next to the Plumas County Museum makes the law library accessible to all who need it while continuing the building's role as the longest continuously used law office in California – having opened in 1860.

Once a contract was agreed to by all parties and the MOU was approved by the Board of Supervisors in June 2018, it was discovered that the main flooring of the Law Office, having weathered 159 years of hard use, the ravages of time, wood rot, and termites,

was now in need of a major overhaul. Once work on that project began, work also began to replace the decades old electrical wiring in the building to bring everything up to code, and the interior was literally gutted as work continued.

Over the better part of a year, work has continued on the renovation of the Law Office with hundreds of hours being spent readying the building for use: the County installed a handicap access ramp and railings, under flooring and structural work was shored up and replaced, interior was sheet rocked, Douglas fir flooring was installed, window framing was improved, old Law Library shelves were utilized to construct new library shelving, the interior was painted, and paintings and photos have been hung to decorate the interior. With donated labor and materials being utilized whenever possible, this long-

term commitment to restoring the Goodwin Law Office has paid off and the building is now beautifully restored to its former glory.

Many illustrious lawyers have either occupied or studied law in this building. Besides Judge John D. Goodwin who first practiced law here, occupants of the building include D.W. Jenks, J. O. Moncur, Louis Peter, M.C. Kerr, Morris Durrant, David Adrian, and Jeff Cunan.

Of special note is Ulysses S. Webb, who as a young school teacher in Johnsville, could not stand the odor of the garlic which his Italian students persisted in munching in his classroom, so he rode his

bicycle to Quincy to study law under Judge Goodwin in this office. Webb not only married Goodwin's daughter, but was admitted to the bar, became Plumas County District Attorney, and then ascended to the position of Attorney General of the State of California, a position he held for 35 years (the longest anyone has ever held that office), and died a multi-millionaire.

Another notable attorney who gained her knowledge of law in this office was Plumas County native, Annette Abbott Adams, who was born in Prattville in 1877. After graduating from Chico Normal School she went on to study

law at U.C. Berkeley earning her Bachelor of Law in 1904 and her Doctorate of Law in 1912. After working in Quincy with Louis Peter, she began a meteoric rise, eventually becoming the first woman ever to hold the position of Assistant Attorney General of the United States and later, the first woman to serve on the California Appellate Court, and the first woman to sit as an Associate Justice on California's Supreme Court.

With this renovation, we are pleased to have the Goodwin Law Office continue its service as a legal, professional, and community resource for generations to come.

Coming Soon

Beginning in September, the artwork of artist and musician Levi F. Mullen, will be on display in the Stella Fay Miller Mezzanine Gallery. A native of Quincy, Levi studied art

at Feather River College and continues to learn and grow as an artist. Using gel pens on black paper, Levi creates spontaneous, imaginative works that use different perspectives to create visually stunning, flowing, and rhythmic pieces. As a Maidu

artist, Levi strives to focus on the connections he has with the universe and use these as themes in his art. Please join us on Friday, September 6th from 5 – 7 PM for the opening of this show.

TRUSTEES

Ken Barnard, *Graeagle*
Don Clark, *Graeagle (President)*
Bill Coates, *American Valley*
Bob Edwards, *Quincy*
Denny Fitzpatrick, *Graeagle*
Dave Peters, *Quincy*
Dwight Pierson, *Quincy*
Jeff Turner, *Graeagle*
Diane Uchytel, *American Valley*
Linda Wallace, *Quincy*
Sam Wilbanks, *Beckwourth*

STAFF

Scott Lawson, *Director*

SUPPORTED BY:
Pam Bolton
Shannon Eccles
Paul Russell

DIRECTORS

Tandy Bozeman, *District 3*
Doug Ely, *District 4*
Norman Lamb, *District 2*
Helen Roberti, *District 1*
Richard Short, *District 5*
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors

Please check your mailing label for your membership EXPIRATION DATE. Due to increased printing and postage costs, we cannot send newsletters to non-renewing members.

Individual Membership \$25.00 - Family \$35.00 - Patron \$100.00 - Sustaining \$1000.00 - Corporate \$150.00 Please mail your check to **Plumas County Museum, 500 Jackson Street, Quincy, CA 95971** or pay online at the Museum e-store: www.plumasmuseum.org.

Hours: Tue-Sat • 10:00 - 4:00

Closed Monday & Holidays

Call (530) 283-6320 to confirm.