



Friends of the Siskiyou County Museum

Fall 2025 newsletter

Museum Family Fun Day 2025

Another banner year, with 800 visitors, three musical groups, some new participants and all the old favorites! This is the Friends' signature annual event and we hope to get better every year. Thank you Mechanic's Bank for your sponsorship.



Everyone loves an old fire truck! (Thank you YFD)

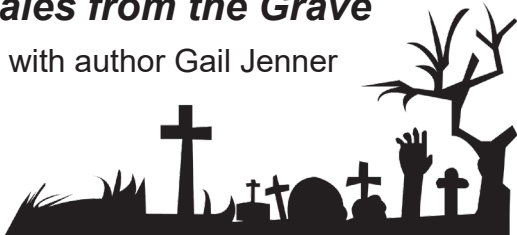
Upcoming Museum Events

Siskiyou Stories

Halloween Edition!

Tales from the Grave

with author Gail Jenner



Oct. 11 @ 1pm

Siskiyou Stories

Fiock Family History & Stories

with Shari Fiock Sandahl

Nov. 8 @ 1pm

Scholarship Donations!

Dec. 2,
2025

#GIVING
TUESDAY

www.northstategives.org



Karen the Greeter handed out Mechanic's Bank swag.



George the Shakemaker came back!



Also playing: Earth Circle Drummers, Chalada Sisters

*Clockwise from upper left:
Shawn the Blacksmith; Yreka Community Gardens;
making cornhusk dolls; county library history display and book giveaway; musicians Gene and Cynthia Bach; Elegant Bustles and Bows photo op set up.
Not pictured: Siskiyou Bee Club, Siskiyou First Five, Greenhorn Grange, US Forest Service, Siskiyou Native Plants, vintage car club, Gold Panning, 4-H Petting Zoo & Craft booth.*

An Early Tale of the Indians on the Salmon River

By Grace Johnson Balfrey

From the Museum files, this was written by Grace Johnson Balfrey about the experiences of her father, Alexander Morris Johnson. It was found in Grace's files following her death in 1974. When it was written is unknown. Alexander was born in 1829 and died in 1887 (age 58) in Etna. Judge for yourself if it is 100% accurate or perhaps a bit fictionalized. It's a classic tale of misunderstanding due to cultural differences.

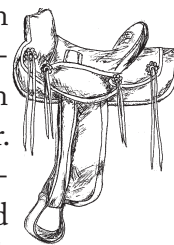
Just beyond Know-nothing Creek on the Salmon River is an old deserted mining camp. All its buildings have fallen into ruin, except for one little log cabin that has always had special interest for me. More than 40 years ago my father used it for a "store," or trading post.

During the early years of mining along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers Father was employed by Red Mill Mining Company to handle the gold dust brought in by the many miners and the Indians, and to conduct a trading post where supplies of various kinds were bartered for gold dust and nuggets.

Among the Indians who came most often was a young brave named Sen-ek-enek (or "Horse Breaker"). He was a fearless rider, wild and reckless, but Father liked him and they became fast friends. It was Father's duty to carry the gold dust over the Salmon Mountains at the end of every month. This entailed a trip on horseback of some 45 miles before the gold could be turned over to the express company to be shipped to the mint in San Francisco. This trip was an arduous one, and dangerous. On one of his return trips Father brought with him a splendid horse suitable for his needs, and a resplendent new saddle. This saddle had covered stirrups, high horn nickel-studded, shining russet leather, and best of all a pair of saddle bags to fit over the horn which were made of the fur of an ocelot. All in all it was such an outfit as none of the Indians had never seen before, and great was the admiration of Sen-ek-enek when he saw it. His black eyes fairly glittered when Father let him handle it. One day Father said to him laughingly, "You like to have that saddle, Sen-ek-enek?" "Oh," sighed the Indian, "Too high cost

for me. Maybe you like to trade something?"

Now in this tribe of Indians was a handsome young squaw by the name of Shoshone ("Fallen Leaf"). She was the sister of Sen-ek-enek, and Father had sometimes seen her at the Indian village down the river. In an idle spirit of playfulness, and forgetting that an Indian never jokes and is utterly devoid of humor, Father said, "How you like to trade Shoshone for saddle?"



The Indian said nothing, as was his want, and Father forgot the remark as soon as it was uttered, as it was Saturday and the store was crowded. After awhile Sen-ek-enek spoke. "Maybe you let me try new saddle on my horse." "Sure, ride around awhile if you like. I'll not be using it till tomorrow when I go on the outside," meaning over the mountains to Etna.

At dusk the Indian came riding back up the trail, hung the saddle on its peg and went silently away. A few weeks later, after Father returned from his trip, he was surprised one morning to see a procession of Indians winding up the trail. They halted in front of the store. Sen-ek-enek was riding a horse without a saddle. All the Indians were in gala dress and carried various baskets and bundles. Shoshone carried a beautiful handwoven basket. She and her brother dismounted and entered the store. Outside, the other Indians, one by one, deposited their offerings on the porch and, retiring to the edge of the clearing, waited.

Father was mystified. It was some sort of ceremonial, but what? Sen-ek-enek said nothing, apparently expecting Father to make the initial move. Shoshone

Continued on P. 4

Continued from P. 3

stood with downcast eyes, bashful, afraid. Her long black hair was gaily ornamented with beads and shells, and new moccasins were on her feet. Finally, she stepped forward, took from her basket a white deer skin and laid it at Father's feet. Appalled, he started back. A white deer skin was a rare and cherished symbol only given by the bride as a marriage gift.

"I bring you Shoshone, to trade for the saddle," said the brother, puzzled by the young whiteman's lack of eagerness. "We celebrate wedding now." What could Father do? To refuse this chief's sister, this flower of their tribe, was to give deadly insult. How could he explain it was just a joke, that he could not take this Indian maiden?

"I like you. I stay? Yes?" faltered the girl, looking at him with imploring eyes. She sensed that something was amiss, that the reluctance of this strange white man was not what she expected. To be rejected now was too humiliating to be endured. Never would anyone else seek her in marriage.

Father knew the situation to be desperate. He thought quickly, and lied glibly. "Sen-ek-enek, long time I wait for you to bring Shoshone. You said noth-

ing. I thought you meant 'No.' So, last time I was 'outside' I married another girl. I liked Shoshone. She is so beautiful. But I believed I could never have her. Now it is too late, but I will give you my saddle for a present to show what a great honor you have done me."

Sen-ek-enek stepped outside and joined his tribe. Angry mutterings arose at his news. Something more must be done quickly. Father led Shoshone out and spoke commandingly, "Let Shoshone choose a husband from her own people. For a wedding present for me and my wife I will give her a saddle to match this one." And he threw it with a grand gesture onto the horse, which the now-pleased Indian mounted. "In addition Shoshone shall give to the man who marries her, a bridle and spurs that shall be as splendid as the saddle. Take back your gifts and keep them until Shoshone decides which of you she shall honor with her presents."

Shoshone's importance once again established, the brother elated, the tribe mollified, the procession went whooping down the trail. Once again, all was peaceful and the trading post on the Salmon River again became a blissful retreat for father.

The Farmer Takes a Wife

By Gail Jenner

Finding a wife in the early days following the gold rush was not easy. The female population in Siskiyou County in the 1850s was sparse and only a handful of eligible young ladies were of marriageable age.

One tale recorded by Leroy Kidder in his journal (found in *Siskiyou Pioneer*, 1979), went like this: Brothers Tom and Bill Glendenning, of Scott Valley, had been bachelors for years. One day, in exasperation, Bill told Tom, "See here, Tom, you have to march off and get yourself a wife, or I will go and get me one. Now you take your choice, for this style of living has got to wind up. This thing of working in the field, and in the house, when there is many a good lass that would be glad to share it with you, is all nonsense."

Tom replied, "What good would a wife be to me? I wouldn't pay the dentist bill on the best woman in America."

So it was that Bill Glendenning packed his bag, traveled to San Francisco, caught a steamer to Panama, and returned to his boyhood home in the East to fetch the woman he'd felt a fondness for in his youth. In short order he returned to the ranch with his bride. Today, descendants of the Glendenning family still reside in Scott Valley.



The Civil War reenactors are a great addition to our Museum Family Fun Day

We Have Many
Wonderful Books
in the Museum Store



Including older
Siskiyou Pioneers
@ \$12.50 each

***Siskiyou Daily News* June 23, 1954**

TAKE YOUR CHOICE

Siskiyov Covnty Covrt Hovse? Siskiyou County Court House!

There's a Yrekan who's unhappy about the lettering on the new county courthouse.

He doesn't like the Roman V's in the lettering along the Fourth Street side of the new building.

And many other Siskiyouans agree with him, says the complainant, George Calkins.

Calkins says it'd ridiculas that the county's brand new building should sport V's instead of U's, just because the Romans didn't have a letter corresponding to the English U in their alphabet. "I want to see the building letteered in the American way, not a foreign way," he declares. "What is this? --Communism, Naxism, or what?"

Calkins is firmly enough convinced of the inadvisability of the Roman V's that he is considering circulating a pitition to demand the lettering be changed before the Supervisors accept the building.

But first he wants an expression of public opinion. So citizens are asked to write to him at 667 W. Miner St., Yreka, and tell him whether is should be

Siskiyov Covnty Covrt Hovse
or
Siskiyou County Court House

From the Yreka Flats to Nob Hill

Who Was Sheriff David Colton?

David Colton, the second Siskiyou County Sheriff (1853-55), was another one of the thousands of anxious young men leaving home in the East for the California gold fields. I was unaware of him until a recent re-reading of *The Big Four*, the story of the Central Pacific railroad tycoons who built the western part of the Transcontinental Railroad. Later in life, after his time in Siskiyou County, Colton became an associate of Crocker, Huntington, Hopkins, and Stanford, with designs to make himself so essential to their railroad business that a “Big Five” would ensue. (That didn’t happen.)

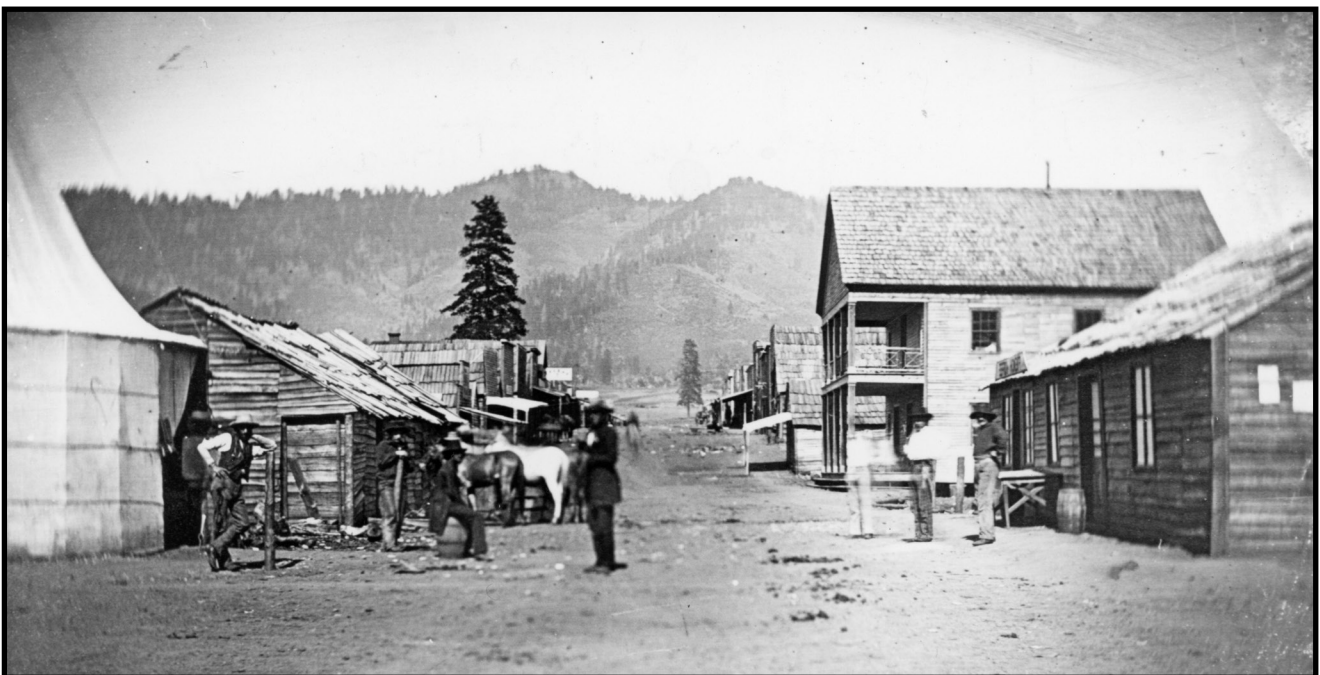
A single line in the book mentioned Colton’s connection to Siskiyou County, and so the quest began. What struck me about his tale, as with all the stories of young men heading west in that era, was the unbridled confidence it must have taken to set off across the country at age 19. As it turned out, he was to live only another 28 years, but he packed a lot into those years, although not all of his doings were exemplary.

A freshman in college in Illinois, David’s proposal to Ellen was turned down because her father said he

had no prospects. At that, David got a small loan from his own father, bought a light wagon and three horses and together with his classmate, Hiram Ferris, headed across the plains to California in the spring of 1850. The pair traveled alone, avoiding travel with a wagon train so to move faster and avoid the possibility of contracting cholera, the common and often fatal disease that spread quickly in wagon trains.

Arriving in Placerville, they sold two of the horses and started working a claim in the Sierras. They made enough money to pay off the loan, but then Colton spent weeks ill with typhoid fever, too weak to work. Eventually he made his way to San Francisco and shipped out to Portland, Oregon by himself, looking for new opportunities. Once recovered, he joined an expedition of miners that, lo and behold, headed back south and ended up in the Yreka Flats.

Yreka was a rough and tumble place in 1850-51. There was little city or county government; this area was technically part of Shasta County, and the county seat of Shasta City (near present day Redding) was more than 100 miles away. There was no law enforcement, unless



you count random whippings and lynchings administered by miners to other miners and Indians. By the spring of 1852, there was enough settlement in the area to incorporate a new county, Siskiyou, and elections were held.

David had political ambitions and had achieved a bit of notoriety during his short time in the area. For one, he had been involved in a “law enforcement” incident near Scott Bar. There Colton captured an Indian known as Chinook who had purportedly stolen a horse and killed a miner. There was a trial of sorts overseen by the “mayor” of Scott Bar which, unsurprisingly, resulted in a death sentence. The hanging was botched, and it was far from a compassionate death (if there is such a thing).

Nevertheless, Colton gained a reputation, and not a bad one. He was a popular choice to be the first county Sheriff, but alas, still only 20 years old, he was too young. Thus Charles McDermitt became Siskiyou’s first elected Sheriff, a position he himself had little interest in. Colton was appointed Undersheriff and attended to most of the duties of the office himself. In the fall of 1853 a second election was held, and after that they were on a steady 2 year schedule. Now 21, Colton handily won the Sheriff seat that year.

But how seriously did he take his duties? Less than two months later Colton set off on his notorious “wedding tour.” The Grand Jury had just indicted a man for the theft of two local cattle, and the man was said to be residing in the Sacramento area. But, as stated in *Well’s History of Siskiyou County*, Colton “applied a telescope to his vivid imagination,” stating that the culprit was likely now in Missouri. He applied to the Governor, and received, funds to go apprehend him. Colton was gone several months and on returning to Yreka via Panama, arrived not with the criminal, but with the self-same Ellen, now wearing a wedding ring.

Life went on, and Colton was an active participant in local business and politics. He served his two year Sheriff term (minus his taxpayer-supported wedding trip), during which time he aggressively managed the Greenhorn War between miners and disputed water rights, but he did not run for reelection. Colton, with

partners including his old friend Hiram Ferris, who had since shown up in Yreka, purchased the town’s first newspaper, renamed it the *Yreka Union* and got into many political battles via his editorials. Some of these word battles even led to near-duels, three times traveling to just over the border of Oregon (where dueling was legal), with guns, seconds and an entourage. Each ended in an uneasy truce. Another business interest was Yreka’s Colton Theater. He became a General in the local branch of the California Militia and fought a series of skirmishes with Modoc Indians in 1855 in which two militiamen were killed. He ran for State Senate, but lost because his Wedding Tour was brought to light by opponents.

Ready to move on, David Colton with his family left Yreka for New York to study law in 1858. After completing his studies he moved to San Francisco and set up a lucrative practice with a fellow law student. Colton grew wealthy from his many mining and real estate investments. He took a two year vacation all throughout Europe with his family. (He and Ellen had two daughters.) He built a mansion on Nob Hill (Charles Crocker built his mansion next door) and with his wealthy neighbors, designed and constructed the cable car line that would make getting back up the hill much easier. He got in-

Continued on Page 8



(left) Yreka as it looked when Colton arrived in 1851. (right) David Colton’s elaborate mausoleum in Mountain View Cemetery in the Bay Area.

a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, EIN 82-1833303
Friends of the Siskiyou County Museum
910 S. Main St., Yreka, CA 96097
FSCMuseum@gmail.com
President: Debbie Peters
koby.joe059@gmail.com
Vice President: Selma Schantz
selquilts2@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Caralee Scala
cmulelady@yahoo.com
Secretary: Jill Livingston
jandk@livinggoldpress.com
Members-at-Large:
Frances Stidham
John Lawrence

Kathryn Tierney
Grace Bennett
Karen Cleland
Newsletter Editor: Jill Livingston
Board Meetings:
Second Tuesdays @ 10:15 am
Everyone Welcome!

Continued from Page 7

volved in the railroad business with the "Big Four," becoming a Financial Director of the Central Pacific Railroad and later, vice president of the Southern Pacific Railroad. He even had a southern California railroad town named after himself, but he was never given the full seat at the table that his ego craved. Still, Colton continued to accumulate more wealth and bought a horse ranch on Mt. Diablo. And there, a fall from a horse resulted in internal injuries that ended his remarkably full life at the age of 47. © Jill Livingston

One of the Radio Spots written by Keith Arnold for the Siskiyou County Sesquicentennial in 2002.

Callahan

In October of 1852, Mathias Callahan, with his pregnant wife, their one and a half year old son, Winfield, and two Indian servants were traveling by horseback from Trinidad to Yreka. Mathias was moving to Yreka to take care of a store that he had opened there.

While crossing a fork of the Scott River, Mrs. Callahan's horse floundered, and she was swept downstream. The Indian boy servant managed to pull her to safety. The cold water and shock was too much for Mrs. Callahan, so the family found refuge in a nearby cabin. That same night, Mrs. Callahan gave birth to a son, Henry, who was frail and had to be kept warm in the brick oven of the cabin.

Callahan bought the cabin and property for two mules and some provisions. As the ranch, as it was called, was on the trail between Yreka and the gold fields of the Trinity and the Mother Lode area of California, there was a continuous stream of gold miners traveling in both directions. Mr. Callahan found it profitable to open a store and build a large log cabin, which was used as a hotel, and eventually as a stage stop after a wagon road was opened over the Trinity Mountains.

Around his hotel the town of Callahan was born.

