

History: Retracing the steps of the Barton family

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By Marie Walsh, Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Special program guest for the annual meeting was Alva Barton, a well-known Tahoe pioneer who had much to share with her audience.



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Miss Barton is a 66-year Tahoe resident, having lived here continuously since the year 1906. She also has the unique distinction of being a direct descendant of one of the Lake Tahoe's earliest pioneer families, a family whose name has long since become legend at Tahoe.

Alva Barton began her talk by taking her listeners back to well over a century ago when her grandparents came west from New York on the train that brought the news of President Lincoln's assassination. After first settling at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento [her grandmother cooked the first Thanksgiving dinner at the fort, and her mother was the first white child to be born at the fort], they moved to the Sierra foothills and spent their summers ranching at Tahoe – over in Hope

Valley, and on property they homesteaded in the Meyers area that today is the site of the Lake Tahoe Country Club.

Her own parents the Wm. D. Barton's, dardied at Webber Lake [where she was born outdoors in a mountain meadow], and then move to the South Shore in 1915. They settled on property that today is occupied by the South Lake Tahoe Airport, and established a dairy that was known as Meadow Edge.

Later on, she and her parents and her sister Fay ran a milk route which took them, every morning, to Echo Lakes, Camp Sacramento, Twin Bridges, Tahoe Meadow, Beecher's Country Club [where Harrah's is now], and to Camp Chinokis [then located behind the present Crescent V Shopping Center].

Several years later her parents built a one-room cabin [which today still exist as part of Miss Barton's tidy green and white home] just south of the present Tahoe Valley Y. "This was when the Y area was wide-open land, and when the only 'road' in the Basin was Pioneer Trail," recalled Miss Barton. It was in this cabin that the dozen or so youngsters in the Basin at the time attended school – "until 30 children showed up one day, and we had to move school over to Lampson's Market."

At the Y, the Barton Family also ran a 200 horse stable and rented horses to such groups as the Mt. Ralston Fish Planting Club. Interestingly, it was her parents' horses that were used in the movies "Lightnin" [made at Emerald Bay in 1939 and starring Will Rogers], and "Rose Marie" [made in 1935 at Emerald Bay and starring Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald]. "Those fancy horses from Hollywood just weren't used to this altitude and the cold water, so we painted Papa's horse and let them jump in the lake!"

By 1927, the Barton Ranch in Tahoe Valley has grown to 1,000 acres, encompassing land which extended from the Y, along Pioneer Trail to the old garbage dump, then running north

through Barton Meadow by the present hospital and continuing all the way to Camp Chinokis.

The Barton family name is still very much a part of the Lake Tahoe today, not only in lore but in natural and physical elements also. It was Alva Barton and her sister, Fay, who donated the land for the Barton Memorial Hospital, named in memory of their pioneering parents, William Delos Barton and Ouida Kyburz Barton.