



What Was “Brownshasta?”

Museum News

Upcoming Events Our new *Siskiyou Stories* coordinator Gail Jenner has some great programs lined up. **FIRST UP: Terry Beverlin on Railroads & RR Collecting, Sat. Feb. 8 @ 1pm.** Also scheduled: Historic Schoolhouses with Melanie Fowle-Nelson, Monica Hall with Betty Hall’s collection of plants used by the Shasta Nation, and antique appraiser Erin. More dates and times will be announced soon.

Museum Family Fun Day - Sept. 27, 2025 Our 2024 Fun Day was the best ever, with nearly 500 visitors attending! We are grateful to Mechanics Bank for helping to sponsor this, our signature event. See you next September (and hopefully sooner)!

Outdoor Museum Upgrade and Restoration... is the Friends’ focus for 2025, and beyond. We are currently upgrading all the substandard electrical and working on securing funding for three new roofs and protective covers for the Big Wheels and Bulk Grain Wagon.

New Exhibits in the Works We will begin planning our new rotating entryway exhibits in January, so if you haven’t yet seen our Siskiyou County Hall of Fame exhibit, come see it SOON before it is taken down.

Membership Renewal Time! Remember, membership includes free admission. You can renew online @ siskiyoucountymuseumfriends.org, or download a printable form also from our website. Or, stop by the museum to renew or join.

Scholarship Season Applications due April 1, 2025. Applications available at high schools, at the museum and downloadable from our website siskiyoucountymuseumfriends.org

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Fanciful names are often given to estates, ranches and other larger parcels of private property by their proud owners. Such was the case with *Brownshasta*, an early 20th century thoroughbred horse ranch whose opulent “ranch house” you still pass by on the way out to Lake Siskiyou or Mt. Shasta Resort. Currently a Bed and Breakfast, the impressive structure is what remains of a 1,600 acre horse ranch founded by Harry D. Brown.

A self-made man of humble beginnings, Harry was born in Iowa in 1863. As a young man he worked on ranches in Montana, where he became interested in racing stock. Over time he became a famous breeder of race horses, a developer of several race tracks including a track in Cuba and Chicago’s famous Arlington Park, a large scale land owner, and an oil producer at the time automobiles were coming of age. At passing, he was a multimillionaire.

In 1918 “Curley” Brown arrived in Northern California seeking pasturage for his bloodline of race horses. Sisson, as Mt. Shasta city was called at that time, caught his eye. Citing its clean air, pure water, high altitude, and fine grasses, he purchased about 1,600 acres

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Cover of a Brownshasta souvenir pamphlet

of land southwest of town for his horse ranch. Brown's horse racing ventures came during an era when horse racing (and betting) opportunities were just beginning to make a comeback after a radical slump. Betting had been made illegal due to a series of race-fixing scandals at the turn of the century, and by 1908 there were only 25 race tracks left in the country, down from a high of 300. But in the 1920s state governments, looking to increase their revenues, began to again legalize race track wagers in exchange for imposing stiff taxes on the revenues going to the track investors. By the Depression years, race tracks were fully "back," and horse racing and baseball were competing to be the most popular American sport.

Brownshasta Ranch started taking shape in 1921 and was finished two years later. The house had five bedrooms, each with its own bath, and was extravagantly furnished with treasures acquired during Brown's extensive travels. The estate had four guest cottages and an eight-car garage. There was a tennis court, sunken to block the wind, a heated swimming pool, a huge terraced rose garden, an orchard with a variety of fruit, a 27-acre lake and an expansive lawn. Meanwhile, the 600 foot long barn was filling up with "Shastas." That is, horses named "Shasta," as they all were, each with an added suffix. There was Shasta Gold, Shasta Pine, Shasta Bullet, Shasta King. You get the picture. The barn sported 60 box stalls, each with running water and electricity. There was a 6-mile training track and an extensive trail system on the grounds.

Aside from the horses, this was a working ranch with a 24-cow dairy, 600 acres of alfalfa, and poultry and rabbits raised to sell. The property also had a stand of conifer forest and a sawmill to process the lumber. And let's not forget perhaps the ranch's greatest feature, the stunning head-on view of "the mountain."

When racing season came around, the horses left Mt. Shasta on the train. Tijuana, Mexico was a frequent destination, a famous track that had risen to prominence during the US betting ban. Brown raced 27 horses during Tijuana's winter 1925-6 racing season, which lasted 125 days. Shastas won 35 first places, after which the horses were sent "back east" for the summer season. Ultimately, 200 Brownshasta horses were sent to various races, and each won at least one race.



Brownshasta Entrance

For the locals, Brownshasta horses were also shown at the Siskiyou Golden Fair in Yreka in the 1920s.

Although Brown spent much time traveling during racing season, when shopping for blooded stock, and to tend to his many business interests, he remained a staunch supporter of all things Mt. Shasta. He pushed to change the town's name from "Sisson" to "Mt. Shasta," he had plans (and a federal permit) to build a tram to the top of Mt. Shasta (which never happened), and he was part of the push to build the Snowline Highway (now Everett Memorial) up the mountain, although he passed before it was constructed. He built the three story Brownshasta Building downtown that housed the post office and an auto showroom on the ground floor, banquet rooms and apartments upstairs. He was generous with the locals, most especially children, providing saddle horses on request, bags of newly minted dimes from the San Francisco mint at Christmas time, and paid for one half of the land on which to build a new elementary school.

Harry D. Brown clearly lived large, but his time in Siskiyou County was actually quite short. Curley was in failing health for a time and finally succumbed to a stroke in the spring of 1930 at the age of 67. His son Harry Jr. quickly sold all the Brownshasta stock and put the ranch up for sale. Curley's magnificent mansion has fortunately survived the various owners and assortment of businesses it has contained since 1930, although the attached property has been reduced to only 2.26 acres.

By Jill Livingston

The Falkenstein House

By Sarah Chandonait

Note: this is the fifth and final article written by museum volunteers for the 2024 *Journal of the Shaw Historical Library*. The library is located at Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls, OR.

Before the iconic Queen Annes were built to showcase Northern California's abundance, Yreka's first pioneer homes reflected their owners' modest gains and domestic optimism. Folk and pre-Victorian vernacular houses alike sprang up as some enterprising men and women of the Gold Rush found footholds that made settlement and family formation tenable. The town that began in 1851 as an unmoored collection of crude timber and canvas dwellings had, by the 1860s, evolved into a county hub anchored by brick-and-mortar merchants and services that continued to attract farmers, ranchers, and sawmills to the area even as the "Second Mother Lode" stopped panning out.

Several styled homes from this period still stand within Yreka's original townsite and remain valuable

monuments to the cultural knowledge and resources that early settlers brought with them, or were able to procure, from more eastern parts of the U.S. during these pre-railroad decades. Lumber was plentiful and millwork soon evolved beyond broad axe-hewn shakes and poles, so wood-framed structures of greater aesthetic complexity proliferated. Examples include a pair of wonderful Carpenter Gothic houses on Third Street commissioned in the late 1850s by Yreka's first telegraph operator and one of its foremost Native American advocates. The town was, however, bedeviled by structure fires throughout the nineteenth century, so some homeowners began constructing in masonry, which was already the preferred material for commercial buildings.

The Falkenstein House (ca. 1855), located at 401 South Gold St., is a listed National Register property and one of the oldest homes in Yreka. It is an understated Romantic Italianate-style cottage executed in four types of masonry, including a rustic concrete that was novel to the region at the time it was placed. The original 1855 structure encases just under 1200 square feet of floor area and is composed of large cut stone on the first floor with lighter brick above it on the second. Its façade was three-ranked with a centered entry and hipped roof. Characteristic ornamentation was restrained to paired S-curve cornice brackets that support moderately overhanging enclosed eaves; these are also a feature of a comparably handsome dark brick home a couple of blocks away at 515 West Center St., built a decade later. There are no ostentatious moldings around openings or competing for attention with the brackets—for an attractive frieze band with windows, look just behind you at 521 Butte St.—however, the original tall, sashed windows here were once flanked by hinged iron shutters. This was a common accessory on retail buildings of the period because the shutters could



Brownshasta's Heated Swimming Pool

Sources:

Internet:

Wikipedia

NPR website, "Racing in the Depression" article

Mt. Shasta Bed and Breakfast website

Siskiyou Playlander, 1972, "The Heyday of Brownshasta Ranch," Emilie Frank

Brownshasta, 1930s era souvenir booklet @ Siskiyou County Museum

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A Gold Miner's Diet – Oysters?!

Today, oysters are a luxury served up on special occasions, so it might surprise you that oysters were a common, even daily, working class American food in the second half of the 19th century. And as well, that oysters were a significant part of miners' diets during Gold Rush times, an anticipated, but not that rare reprieve from the usual bacon, bread and beans fare.

You could say there was an oyster "craze" in the late 1800s, when the average person ate 660 oysters per year. Today, that number is "3," (and for this writer, "0.") For gold miners working and living hundreds or thousands of miles from home, enjoying a meal of oysters was not just a small luxury to be savored on a good day but also a little taste of home.

But where did these western oysters come from?

From cans, for one. East coast estuaries and bays were teaming with oysters, at least until the craze eventually depleted the beds. The first American canning factory opened in New York in 1812, and oysters were among the initial food products to be preserved by this new method that had recently been imported from France. Canning was at first a slow, labor intensive process but by mid century new innovations meant that canned foods were readily available and affordable; oysters were actually less expensive than meat. Thus, canned oysters surely made their way north from ships docking in San Francisco to the Siskiyou gold fields soon after there was a demand.

And there was a demand, confirmed by a story related in *Well's History of Siskiyou County*. But this particular situation was, in fact, an Oyster Scam created by the appar-

CAPITOL CHOP HOUSE
— AND —
OYSTER PARLORS
Miner Street, Yreka, adj. Masonic Hall

MEALS AND LUNCH
Served at all hours, and prepared in a superior manner by a first-class cook.

FRESH OYSTERS
Kept constantly on hand and served in any style desired. Families supplied with fresh oysters by the can at the lowest rates.

Side entrance for Ladies and Families from Third Street, back of Masonic Hall.

J. R. Osgood, Prop.

Siskiyou Daily News ads from 1895 (above) and 1905 (below left).

ently unmet demand in this locale. A miner at Poorman's Bar on the Scott River confided in a fellow miner that he had found another kind of gold in the river, a bed of oysters, and proposed they go into business together, if he would be the salesman. These were, of course, actually fresh water muscles. The unwitting partner gathered a few tin plates, arranged the bounty attractively and added some vinegar from a jar of pickles and proceeded to a Scott Bar saloon to hawk his pseudo oysters. But the joke was on the budding businessman. His first customer was to be his last, however, as the "oysters" proved to be "as tough and elastic as a piece of rubber."

But California did have its own source of real oysters and to go with them, a homegrown Gold Rush era oyster recipe called Hangtown Fry, a concoction of bacon, eggs and oysters, basically an omelet. The dish was invented in Hangtown (Placerville) and became a Gold Rush staple that spread throughout the California gold fields.

Oyster Loaf Restaurant
COR. MINER AND OREGON STS.
First-class in Every Respect—=Prices Moderate
Patronage of Ladies, Gentlemen and Their Families Solicited.
Meals sent to your house. Telephone your orders for Meals, Oyster Loaves, Oysters, Fish, Crabs, Etc.
Phone Main 381

Falkenstein House, continued

be locked for security and provided the recessed windows with additional protection against exterior fires.

Given these details, it may come as no surprise that this home's original owner and craftsman was also the mason on four landmark businesses in Yreka's Miner Street Historic District.

Lewis Falkenstein was a German immigrant who sold his namesake house the same year he built it and moved to Scott Bar with his wife, Marguerita Weiss, where they raised ten children. By 1858 the home had settled into the possession of another family, and its patrician steward for the next three decades was L.R. Warren, a Senior

Warden of the Episcopal Church and father-in-law of a local church architect (St. Mark's). Mr. Warren purchased additional land around the property to care for renowned flower gardens and orchards that have since been supplanted by a residential neighborhood.

A material contribution of the Warrens that is still visible today and did not detract from the massing of the original façade is an 1873 single-story rear wing with a footprint about 1.7 times larger than the original home. The addition is notable for its bearing walls made of a do-it-yourself concrete slurry known as a "gravel wall," advocated by a contemporary residential master builder from New York and used here for the first time locally. The walls were coated with additional



cement tooled and polished to give the appearance of large cut stone coursework, the same finish the Warrens had applied to the rest of the house in the previous decade. At this time, too, an asymmetric wrap-around front porch was added.

When viewing the Gold Street façade, the most

prominent alteration is a mid-twentieth-century extension that added a side-gabled bay to the south side. This work in masonry unit blocks did not extend the adjacent penciled stucco motif but allowed the owner, County Recorder worker Effie Sarter Quigley Hamilton, to create apartments with kitchens on both floors. The property had been in the Sarter Family for almost fifty

years by this time because L.R.'s son, accomplished Yreka attorney Homer Warren, outlived his parents by less than a decade.

Today, the Falkenstein House is a pleasant walking distance between park benches from Yreka's historic Third Street residential row and its eatery-lined Miner Street business district. Its stony white walls still glint in the morning sun, not unlike the ephemeral gold that built them. The home is a Picturesque contribution to the area's early architectural styles that you can enjoy on a stroll that transports you out of your own story and into a rare physical exploration of Siskiyou County's past.

The first source of oysters in California was close at hand to the Sierra 49ers in the San Francisco Bay. These were the smaller, slow growing Olympic oysters that grew in most west coast bays and estuaries from Alaska to Mexico. The Bay was quickly over harvested and depleted. Estuaries further afield followed the same course. Willapa Bay in SW Washington was a major source but overharvesting had collapsed that enterprise as well by the turn of the 20th century. In the 21st century, Olympic oysters are once again being harvested and marketed out of Willapa Bay, and there is also a small Oly revival in Tomales Bay north of San Francisco.

But back to the 19th century, with the Olys gone, entrepreneurs then imported east coast species to farm them on private tidelands around the Bay. Writer Jack London wrote about his adventures as an oyster pirate, risking jail by secretly digging the bivalves at night and selling them in Oakland in the early morning.

Up our way, old *Siskiyou Daily News* have advertisements for oyster restaurants, although whether their "fresh" oysters were "Olys," east coast oysters, or actually canned oysters is unknown. But the ads do prove that, as in the rest of the country, Siskiyou County was not immune to the oyster obsession, and that the faze lasted for quite some time.

By Jill Livingston

Entrepreneurs and Rebels, The Saga of the Greathouse Brothers

By Karen Cleland

Who are the Greathouse Brothers you may ask? Have you noticed the historical marker on the Greathouse/Dewitt building at the corner of Miner and Main Streets in Yreka? That building housed the Greathouse & Bros Bank and was their stage stop. Or perhaps you have noticed the historical marker at the summit of Scott Mountain commemorating the California-Oregon Stage Road.

The brothers were here and contributing to the early growth of Siskiyou County. The fact that they left under a cloud in 1865 just makes the story more interesting.

The brothers were from Mayville, Mason County, Kentucky. George, the oldest, came to California with dreams of striking it rich as a gold miner. He tried mining for a year with very little luck. Broke and dispirited, he left the foothills and sought out his uncle in Sacramento in 1851. His uncle Lloyd Tevis, a successful attorney (and later a banker, a capitalist and the president of Wells Fargo) gave him good advice. He reminded him that everything that moved in California had to be transported by mules or wagons, and that every one of those trips generated income for the owner of the mules or wagons. Uncle Lloyd loaned him \$150.00 to buy two mules. George let it be known that he was "willing to carry passengers or all other matters for which people were willing to pay express prices." He was able to repay his uncle after the first two trips, and George's career was established.

George ran mule trains (20-40 mules) up the valley on the Shasta Route to Shasta City ("Old Shasta"), the gateway to the rich gold deposits in Trinity and Siskiyou Counties. In 1851 he moved his headquarters to Shasta City and began running mule trains over the Trinity and Scott Mountains and down to Callahan Ranch, at the head of Scott Valley. Brothers Henry and Ridgley ("Ridge") joined him in Shasta City.

Hugh Slicer was already running stagecoaches between Callahan and Yreka. He partnered with the Greathouse Brothers to create Greathouse & Slicer's Express in 1854. The company was able to offer a wide range of services; the daily coaches carried mail, passengers and packages, on Mondays and Thursdays the coaches carried "treasure" (gold and coin). The strongbox was kept under the coach driver's seat and was protected by an armed man. At Callahan's

**GREATHOUSE & SLICER'S
EXPRESS.**

**WE ARE NOW PREPARED TO RUN A
Daily Express** from our Office in
Yreka, to all parts of California and Oregon, con-
necting at Shasta with

WELLS, FARGO & CO.

Regular Messengers leave this Office every
MONDAY and **THURSDAY**, for carrying
Treasure.

Letter and Package Express Daily.

☞ Collections and Commissions attended to
with promptness and dispatch.

Checks on Wells, Fargo & Co.,
—PAYABLE AT—

SHASTA,
SACRAMENTO and
SAN FRANCISCO.

Drafts on any of the Atlantic Cities.

☞ Treasure received for shipment and in-
sured. Gold Dust bought at the highest market
rates.

GREATHOUSE & SLICER.
W. T. HANFORD, Agent.
Yreka, Dec. 22, 1855. d22-tf.

An advertisement in the Shasta Courier, December 22, 1855 (Newspapers.com)

Ranch, riders and cargo transferred to mules to be carried over the Scott and Trinity Mountains to Shasta City.

The Greathouse & Slicer stages followed a road from Callahan Ranch to Yreka which took them through the Scott Valley to Fort Jones, then on to the Deadwood mining district and, following Cherry Creek, up the mountain to the headwaters of Greenhorn Creek. It was all downhill to Yreka from there.

George returned to Kentucky in late 1855. He married Louise Lafferty in January, 1856 and returned to Shasta City with a new wife and two servants. They had their first child while in Shasta City in December, 1856. By 1860, the census shows the family living in Yreka with two children and two servants.

George left Shasta City to concentrate on banking in Yreka. The brothers had noted that banking provided high profits without being labor intensive, as their transportation and express services were. George handled their gold dust buying and financial services and Henry handled other investments. Greathouse & Bros advertised that they offered to buy gold dust, receive deposits,

make collections and negotiate loans. Their relationship with Wells Fargo waned and they found that Rothschilds was a more profitable partner.

Even though Greathouse & Slicer dissolved, the Greathouses always had a stage company. Every ounce of gold dust, every letter or box mailed, every coach passenger generated income for the Greathouses. While the Greathouses were not the only stage company, they certainly benefited from the business.

The brothers held all of their income as a joint account. This means that they were able to invest in large projects. They invested in new roads, ditches, land in Shasta and Scott Valleys etc. In 1859, they bought controlling interest in the Shasta River Canal Company (aka The Big Ditch / Yreka Ditch / Yreka Water Company). The ditch was completed in 1856 at the cost of \$2500 per mile and was 96 miles long. It was a huge project with many setbacks, but upon completion, provided the water necessary to miners in the Greenhorn, Yreka Flats and Hawkinsville mining districts. Gold production increased with a reliable water supply. Miners were charged 50 cents per miners' inch of water per day (about 9 gallons of water per minute). The ditch carried about 1,900 miners' inches of water.

By 1860, a wagon road had finally been built over Scott Mountain. and stagecoach trips to Shasta City were much shortened. In the winter, there were sleds pulled by oxen to convey passengers and goods between Shasta City and Yreka.

At the start of the Civil War in 1861, sentiments for the Union or Confederacy were getting more and more fervent. California was a Union State and recruited men to fight in the Union Army. But the Greathouse Bros were serious Secessionists. While George and Henry kept their feelings in check and tried to run their various businesses, in 1862 Ridgley left for the South to visit family. In order to get back through Yankee lines, he signed an Oath of Allegiance to the United States stating that he would support the constitution and never take up arms against the United States.

Asbury Harpending, Ridgley's friend and fellow supporter of the Confederacy also visited the south in 1862. He came by ship into Louisiana and traveled to Richmond to see the Provisional President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis. The Confederacy had no navy. Provisional President Davis had issued a proclamation offering to give official sanction, known

A monument to the stage road on Scott Mountain (Hwy.3)



as a *letter of marque*, to any armed private vessel willing to attack Northern ships, and Harpending wanted to provide that service. Davis gave him a blank letter of marque. This enabled him to seize the enemy's ships, impound the goods thereon and give all the profits to the Confederate government. Harpending returned to San Francisco via Panama.

There, Harpending, Alfred Rubery and Ridgley Greathouse gathered to make plans. Harpending had no money. Rubery had bank drafts drawn on an English bank that were not honored anywhere in San Francisco so it fell to Ridgley to finance the scheme. He used family finances to the purchase and outfit a 90 ton schooner, the *J.M. Chapman*. Ridgley, Harpending and Rubery loaded three brass cannons and ammunition aboard and trained the crew. The morning of their first voyage, the Federal Authorities boarded the ship and arrested everyone on board. The leaders were bound and chained and kept at Alcatraz. Ridgley was only in jail for a few days because his uncle Lloyd Tevis paid his bail and he was free until trial.

Unfortunately, his crew members would have to remain in prison. That didn't go down well with one crew member who decided to testify against Ridgely at the trial. The ongoing war between the states had caused pro Union sentiments in San Francisco to run high. After several weeks of testimony, the jury deliberated only four minutes and convicted Greathouse, Harpending and Rubery of treason. Rubery, because he was an English citizen, was released by a General Amnesty Act of December 8, 1863. The act was so general in nature

that Ridgley could also be released if he swore an Oath of Allegiance to support the Constitution of the United States. He signed and was a free man. Harpending, a true rebel, chose to stay in prison rather than swear allegiance to the United States.

In 1864, Ridgley returned to Yreka and was soon re-arrested. The Federal Government discovered the Oath of Allegiance that he signed in 1862 upon his return from the family visit. This time he was chained and sent to Fort Lafayette on an island between Staten Island and Long Island. He escaped and swam to shore. He escaped into Canada and thence to Scotland, England and finally to Mexico.

While Ridgley's acts must have felt exciting and daring, they reflected badly on his brothers. Henry left Yreka for the Idaho Territory where he started new stage company and eventually a bank. George stayed in Yreka and tried to continue his business as usual, but had awful financial setbacks. In 1861, he had invested in a road called Soda Springs Turnpike Road (aka Stone Turnpike) along the Sacramento River Canyon, which made quick passage to Red Bluff. It was very successful for a short period of time, until the torrential rains of the winter of 1861-1862 washed away most of the new roadway and all of the bridges. The road was never rebuilt. Then, the winter storms of 1862-1863 destroyed the flumes and miles of the Big (Yreka) Ditch. George borrowed \$30,000.00 from N.D. Julius to repair the ditch, but was soon bankrupt and his interest in the Shasta River Canal Company was put in receivership. George sold as much of his land and other properties as he could, but sentiments were against him. He stayed in Yreka until 1865, when he too moved to Boise, Idaho.

The *Shasta Courier*, June 3, 1865 stated as follows:

...Poor George! We knew him when good men sought him for his virtues, real or supposed, that they might grasp his hand in friendship, smile, and bid him God Speed as he passed through our town.—Now how changed! Good men shun him as they would a leper, and all because he would have torn the country of his birth from the map of the world. A mere trifle in 1860—, but in 1865 the thing was different. Now talking treason and "free speech" have different meanings in the eye of the law.

A short follow-up:

In 1865 Henry and George and families moved to

FSCM

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Board Meetings: Second Tuesdays @ 10:15 am



Museum volunteer Selma Schantz recently received a nice award from the Yreka Lions Club acknowledging her exceptional community volunteering.

Idaho Territory. Idaho was in the throes of its gold rush and it was said that North and South sentiments were less of an issue in the frenzy for gold. Greathouse & Bros again ran stages and became bankers. They were very well received in Boise and became active in the community.

In 1866 Ridgley returned to the United States and worked with George in their Idaho endeavors. After he left Idaho, he disappeared for about 20 years. He reappeared in Texas in 1900. He lived on the Matador Ranch, trapping and killing coyotes and prairie dogs. He died in 1902 on the ranch.

Henry left Boise in 1875 and moved to Decatur, Wise County, Texas where he was a successful banker and a rancher. Henry died in 1902.

George left Boise and moved to Santa Rosa, California and again became an agent for Wells Fargo from 1877 to 1879. He died of asthma in 1879.