



A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE GOLD-MINING HISTORY OF JOHNSVILLE, CALIFORNIA

A Rare and Important JHS Donation: The Dearborn Album

BY BRUCE MACGREGOR

One of the lesser-known 19th-century Johnsville organizations was The Hope of Eureka Hill Lodge, a chapter of the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT), a nonpolitical, nonsectarian temperance society that began in America and Canada in 1851. The organization was notable for admitting women members and for not discriminating by race.

The organization's goals and values were consistent with the Methodist backgrounds of many of the Plumas-Eureka mine's workers, who were widely accepted into the Cornish community of Eureka Mills. The Hope of Eureka Hill Lodge produced the satirical play "John Barleycorn," dramatizing its strong anti-alcohol message, for public performances in Eureka Mills as late as 1881. But as Johnsville grew in the late 1870s, so did its religious and cultural diversity, and the IOGT became less visible.

In October 2025, new light was shed on the organization when a remarkable photo album of 45 black-and-white portraits was donated to the Johnsville Historical Society. The donor, Don Hansen, a resident of Tualatin, Oregon, is the great-grandson of the photo album's original owner, Emma Dearborn. Emma's husband, Ira, was a supplies manager at the Plumas-Eureka Mine in Johnsville.

Hansen's gift is a tremendous addition to JHS's historic collection. The album is not just a compendium of many Hope of Eureka Hill Lodge members, it's practically a who's-who of Johnsville leadership, including members of the William Johns family.

Continued on page 2



A portrait of John Nevill, sometimes called the Mayor of Johnsville, is one of 45 portraits in the historic photo album recently donated to JHS. Nevill owned several businesses in town, including a mercantile store and sawmill.

Continued from page 1

A RARE AND IMPORTANT JHS DONATION: THE DEARBORN ALBUM

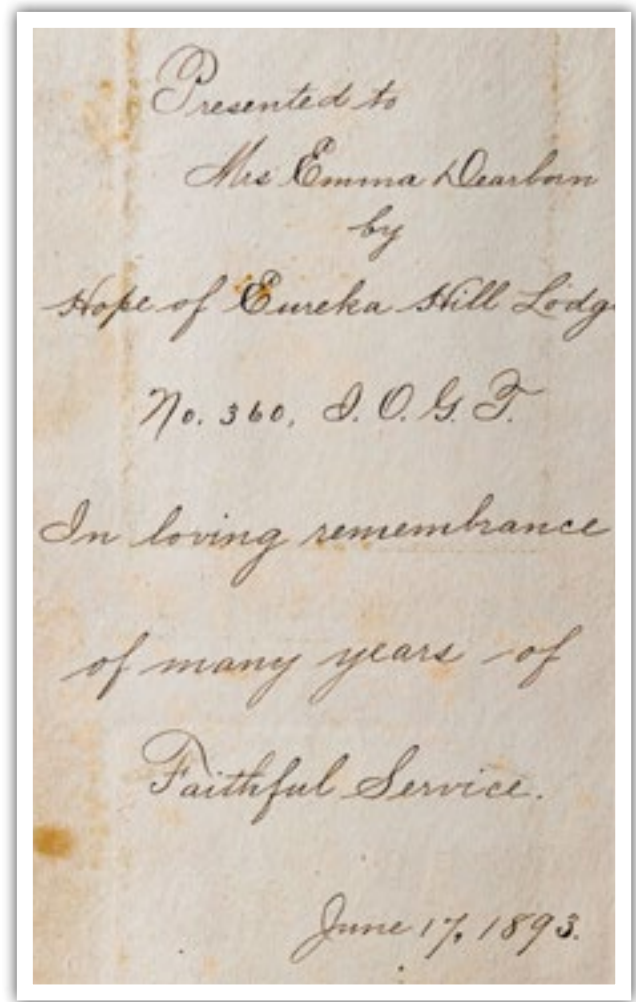
William Johns was the Plumas–Eureka Mine’s first superintendent and the likely namesake of Johnsville. The album also includes portraits of the town physician, Dr. Bolton; the Plumas–Eureka Mine Superintendent, William Hosking; the mine’s bookkeeper, Thomas Inch; and influential town merchants, such as John Nevill (pictured on page 1). Portraits of these leaders’ wives and their children also are featured prominently throughout the album. About 60 percent of the portraits are identified in light pencil notations; the remaining 40 percent are unidentified.

The intricately decorated album was donated to Emma Dearborn by the IOGT in 1893 “in loving remembrance of many years of faithful service” to The Hope of Eureka Hill Lodge. That inscription alone is testimony to IOGT’s stereotype-defying ethical code. By recognizing Emma Dearborn as a Johnsville leader, the album demonstrates that IOGT’s members practiced what they preached, even in the male-dominated mining town of Johnsville, California.


Editor’s Note: If the Johnsville Historical Society can secure the funding, The Dearborn Album will be posted on its website, johnsville.org.



The 16-inch by 7.5-inch Dearborn album cover features raised lettering spelling “Album” on blue fabric. Its 15 double-sided pages hold 45 portraits of notable Johnsville residents and their families from the late 19th century.



The inscription to Mrs. Emma Dearborn on the first page of the Dearborn photo album, dated June 17, 1893, was written by an unknown member of The Hope of Eureka Hill Lodge in Johnsville.



This year's walking tour of Johnsville featured 17 illustrated posters mounted on two-sided easels set up throughout the town, including this one in front of the Iron Door restaurant, a building originally used as Johnsville's mercantile. Highlights of interest to children were added to many of the displays, such as the early history of commercial candy.

THE SECOND JOHNSVILLE WALKING TOUR & KIDS' ACTIVITIES

BY BRUCE MACGREGOR

More than 300 people participated in the second Walking Tour of the historic town of Johnsville on July 19 and 20, which was expanded this year to include many free, family-friendly activities. Since the tour's inception at the 2024 Gold Discovery Days event, the walking tour has offered a stroll through Johnsville's past, using illustrated posters to interpret what Johnsville was like 125 years ago.

At this year's Gold Discovery Days, new illustrated posters were added to the tour, bringing the total to 17, including posters with history lessons for children focusing on topics such as the one-room Johnsville school house, children's clothing fashions of the 19th century, and types of candy likely sold in the Johnsville mercantile. For older history buffs, posters featuring the origins of the Johnsville Hotel, Iron Door restaurant, Fire House, and Woodward House were among the highlights.

During the two-day event, children and their families also visited the Johnsville church to experience 19th-century games and activities, including decorating Victorian paper dolls, playing Chinese checkers and cornhole, and painting wooden blocks. The Plumas County Library provided an exhibit of popular 19th-century children's books to leaf through.

Developed and advertised in collaboration with the Plumas–Eureka State Park Association (PESPA), the event required the wide range of skills and talents of the JHS board members and many of their friends. The event was free, but donations were generous and sales of homemade lemonade and cookies helped bring the proceeds to \$3,600, which will help JHS preserve its historical collection and maintain the church building and grounds. But perhaps more importantly, the event shined a light on Johnsville's unique and inspiring history—the core mission of the Johnsville Historical Society.



Many Johnsville walking tour participants traveled by horse-drawn wagon from Plumas–Eureka State Park's museum to the Johnsville church.



Families played with a variety of games set up inside and outside the Johnsville church, including this board game played by Ann MacGregor and her 8-year-old daughter, Addie.

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP—AND HELP US GO GREEN

The nonprofit Johnsville Historical Society (JHS) could not continue to preserve its fragile and extensive Gold Rush-era collection, as well as the Johnsville church and surrounding trees, without your help. Your JHS membership and renewal fees are our primary source of income. We are trying to cut down the cost of our newsletters by greatly reducing the number of printed copies we mail to members, as printing and postage costs continue to soar. To help us with this effort, please write your email address on your membership check so we can email the newsletter to you instead of sending it through the mail. Emailed newsletters also include live links to pertinent web pages.

Need a gift idea? Please consider the gift of a JHS membership. Just include the gift recipient's name and email address along with a check to JHS.

Annual membership fees: **\$25 Individual** | **\$50 Family** | **\$100 Patron** | **\$150 Business** | **\$250 Founder**

Please send a check made out to JHS, along with your name and email address, to:

Johnsville Historical Society
P.O. Box 1458
Graeagle, California 96103

Questions? Email us at johnsvillegold@gmail.com.

JHS is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation and all gifts and donations are tax deductible. Thank you. We greatly appreciate your support.



JOHNSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERS

Kathy Osher, President
Katie Agnew, Board Member
Rebecca Forée, Board Member
Molly Hallenberger, Secretary
Bruce MacGregor, Board Member
Colleen McKeown, Board Member
Mitchell Olson, Board Member
Kathy O'Neil, Treasurer

Newsletter design by Wes Breazell
 Editor, Rebecca Forée

A horse-drawn carriage on Johnsville's
 Main Street in 1906.