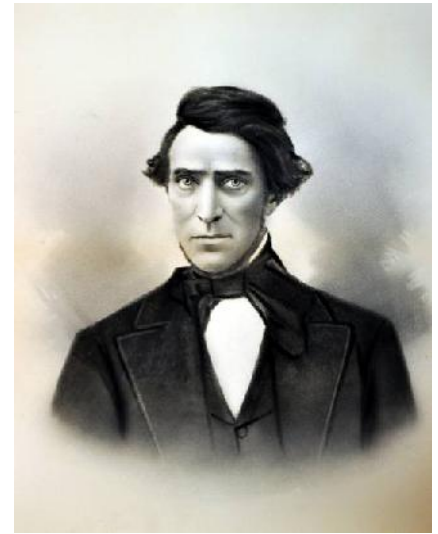


1868 Hay Press

The historic hay press on display in the Bridgeport barn was built in 1868 by Allen John Weldon at Quincy, Plumas County, CA. Weldon left New York in April 1850 for California via the Panama Isthmus. He began mining on the Yuba River and later went into Plumas County. Before leaving Plumas, he and two of his brothers, purchased the Illinois Ranch about five miles east of the present site of Quincy. In December, 1851, he returned to New York, sold his business interests there and the following June, accompanied by his wife, Lucina Morey Weldon, and son John, a child of two years, started again for California. They crossed the Isthmus on mule back during drenching rains, boarded the Winfield Scott for a 17-day voyage to San Francisco and arrived at Illinois Ranch in August 1852. The winter of 1852-53 was very severe, the storms beginning in November and lasting until late in the spring. Provisions were scarce. During the late fall, Jim Beckwourth arrived in Quincy with groceries, and the Weldon family bought an ample supply. In 1854, Weldon sold his interest in the Illinois Ranch and bought a mine on Richmond Hill, near Saw Pit Flat, where he mined. In July 1855 he purchased a farm two miles east of Quincy, where he and his family lived continuously until he passed away on August 2, 1885. Mrs. Weldon lived until October 2, 1911. Both are buried in the Quincy cemetery.

Early in 1868 Weldon began preparations to build a hay press. He had served an apprenticeship in a shipyard in New York and this experience enabled him to select suitable material and to work skillfully with tools. Weeks were spent by Weldon and his son John, then in his teens, searching the hills for an oak tree with size, length, straightness, and freedom from decay, knots, wind-checks and other imperfections so the thread of the screw would withstand the pressure to be placed upon it. The press design was done entirely by Mr. Weldon, as was the selecting of the material. It was difficult to obtain the proper tools. When the log was brought to the farm, Sam Dorothy, a carpenter, was hired to assist in the hewing to reduce it to a perfect cylinder. Cutting the thread of the screw was done by Weldon or under his supervision. Mr. Dorothy and a Mr. Dahlberg helped Weldon crafting the rest of the press structure. The press proved a success and hay was baled in it for years and sent to the mines of Virginia City packed on the backs of mules. (At about the same time freight wagons crossing the Bridgeport Covered Bridge were destined also for Virginia City.) Two bales were placed on the back of each mule. The weight of a bale ranged from 100 to 165 pounds, and the load on each mule was graded according to the strength of the animal. The press was sold about 1877 by Weldon to George Penman and was moved to Penman's farm near Spring Garden, Plumas County, California.

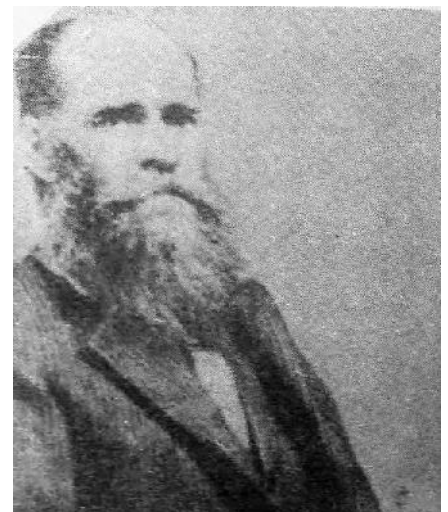
W.D. Thomas, a Sacramento lumberman, arranged to exhibit the press at the May 22-28, 1922 'Days of 49' in Sacramento. According to an October 1933 article in the Sacramento Bee, Thomas was persuaded by Curator Harry Peterson to present the press to the State in July 1922. Thomas had visited Spring Garden in Plumas Co looking for lumber sources in 1920 and perhaps saw the press at the Penman's Spring Garden ranch at that time. Thomas worked for the Superior Lumber & Fuel Co, Sacramento, and for Brown & Thomas, Sacramento, in the 1920s. The press has been on display at Sutter's



Allen John Weldon



Lucina Morey Weldon



George Penman

Fort and Plumas-Eureka State Parks, Plumas County Museum, and now at Bridgeport.

Timeline

- 1868 Allen John Weldon builds the hay press
- 1877 Weldon sells the press to John Penman
- 1922 W. D. Thomas exhibits the press at the Days of 49 in Sacramento
- 1922 The press is donated to the State of California and exhibited at Sutter's Fort
- 1959 The press is moved to Plumas-Eureka State Park
- 1987 The press is moved to the Loyalton Museum and restored by the Loyalton high school woodshop program
- 2006 The press is moved to South Yuba River State Park

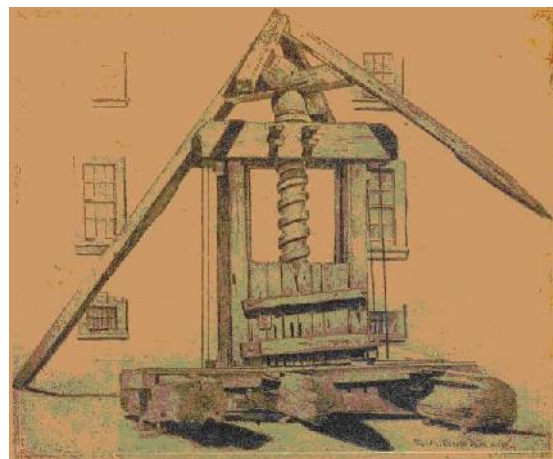
In November 2013 Tim and Darlene Buckhout of Clio, CA, relatives of George Penman, visited Bridgeport to see the press and discuss its history. They were joined by Donna Jones, DPR Curator, Don Denton, Barn Interpreter, and Steve Pauly, History Coordinator. Donna was involved with the transfer from the Plumas Museum to Bridgeport. Pictured (l to r) are Donna Jones, Darlene Buckhout, Tim Buckhout, Don Denton and Steve Pauly.

References

1. Weldon charcoal portraits, Plumas County Museum, donated by Ann Housley
2. History of a Hay-Press, Mrs. Lillian L. Grove, daughter of A. J. Weldon, 1925
3. Sketch of Hay Press at Sutter's Fort, E.A. Burbank, Imola, Calif., 1933

Note

In 2014 a search was begun to locate the 1922 donation papers in the archives of the State Department of Parks and Recreation. It is hoped these will define whether the donation was made by W.D. Thomas or George Penman's daughters.



Hay Press on Display at Sutter's Fort

