

Mission

Before 1971, a researcher who wanted to use historic Butte County records needed a lot of luck just to get a look at them. The records were housed in a dirt-floored basement several blocks from the Butte County Courthouse. County ledgers, tax rolls, judicial court records, voter's records, and coroner's reports were jumbled together in such disorder there was no way of knowing what was there. Only a researcher with a knowledge of what should be there, with help from a public official familiar with the basement depository--and willing to unlock doors and help hunt materials, could make use of such resources. Similar stories were repeated throughout the several counties of Northeastern California.

The county was unable to stop the deterioration and destruction of many records, but a small group of local citizens banded together in 1971 to form the Association of Northern California Records and Research, coined ANCHR. The aim of ANCHR was to collect, preserve, and facilitate retrieval of such historical records so researchers could use them. Under the generous auspices of the California State University, Chico Meriam Library, this was accomplished. The collection was maintained for over 30 years.

In 2002, due to the loss of storage space at the University and changes in State law and practices -- circumstances beyond ANCHR's control -- counties are now encouraged, if not required, to maintain physical control over and provide access to their many historical county records, ANCHR was able to return its entire county records collection to the various county offices and officers. ANCHR first inventoried the collection and then worked with some five counties, and many more county officials, to return all the county records to their origins. Most of the records were from Butte County. Candace Grubbs, the Butte County Clerk/Recorder, was instrumental in the Butte

County effort to retrieve, properly store and preserve that county's historical records. We found the same positive attitude from other counties in the region. For over 30 years, ANCHR proved to be an important harbor for these records until State law and interest in general historical record preservation reinvigorated the counties to take this responsibility themselves.

Today ANCHR's mission is to support Meriam Library and its Special Collections department in acquiring and preserving other historical documents--public and private papers, photographs, and maps--relating to Northeastern California. ANCHR supports research and publication assistance for local history researchers and writers. Our aim is to encourage more research and writing on local history topics, and to publish the resulting monographs and papers, making them available for sale at affordable prices through Special Collections, the ANCHR Website, and appropriate outside vendors.

From its beginning ANCHR has depended on membership support from interested citizens in the region and beyond to further its effort to preserve and make available historical documents and photographs through Meriam Library Special Collections, and to help and support researchers and authors to illuminate the history of Northeastern California through publications, the Internet, and other public access avenues. We invite you to join ANCHR as a member and welcome you as a contributor.

Local historical documents, photographs, and other records are the foundation for the writing of local history, and local history is the foundation for regional and national history. No longer do historians recognize "history" as just the exploits of prominent men, but as the story of the ordinary men and women who have staked their lives and fortunes in a particular landscape and have made their commitment to the future of a town, city, or region. As a promoter of the preservation of documents and the publication of local history, ANCHR plays an essential part in encouraging the continued study of the history of Northeastern California that leads to a wider understanding of our national heritage as well as our lives--past and future--as Californians.

Through its Publication Services ANCHR encourages original research and documentation of local history by assisting publication of historical essays, audio/video productions, or photographic collections. Each year ANCHR

produces at least one publication about some aspect of Northeastern California history. These publications have dealt with such diverse topics as military forts, Native Americans, historical geography and transportation, pioneer people, businesses and industries, and the experiences of the Blacks, Chinese and Japanese who helped settle this region.

In 1984, the ANCHR membership honored a long-time friend and member, Ruby Johnson Swartzlow, by donating funds to build an archival photographic darkroom dedicated to her memory as a fine teacher and researcher. This state-of-the-art facility enables the staff of Special Collections in the Meriam Library to copy and preserve historical images of the region. These images are available for reproduction to interested community members for a nominal fee through Special Collections.