



# *Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation*

February Newsletter, 2023

## The Humble Lunchbox Throughout History

The idea of preserving food and transporting it to be eaten later at another place is certainly nothing new. As far back as mankind began creating food, he has wanted to eat it somewhere else. The problem was, you couldn't put stew or soup in your pocket – even if you had pockets. The concept of the lunchbox goes back several thousand years.



*Excavation of burial with food containers - 6,000 B.C.*

Primitive containers, believed to be workers' "lunchboxes", were discovered in ruins surrounding Egypt's great pyramids and date to about 2490 B.C.



*Ruins of workers' village at Giza, Egypt, 2500 B.C.*

Containers at that time were used mainly for snacks of dried fruit and nuts. An Egyptian lunchbox was found in the tomb of Tutankhamun from 1323 B.C. and was still packed with dried fruits and meats.



*King Tutankhamun's "lunchbox", 1323 B.C.*

When Hannibal crossed the Alps to attack Rome with troops and the famous elephants in 218 B.C., pieces of wooden boxes were excavated along his route. These are thought to be the remains of soldiers' lunchboxes.



*Excavated lunchbox on Hannibal's route to Rome through Alps, 218 B.C.*

Throughout history, men and women have needed to take some form of nourishment to their workplaces. On long trips of emigration to America as well as other parts of the world, food from home was taken along. Usually in some dried form, food was carried in a wooden box or basket.



*Typical European lunchbox circa 1700*

Because of their construction using organic components, almost none of these containers have survived. Fast forward through history to approximately 1860, the use of tin containers became affordable and widespread. Tin containers served every purpose imaginable. One of the most popular and convenient uses was a makeshift lunchbox.





### *19th Century Lunchboxes*

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, school children regularly went home for lunch. Schools back then did not have cafeterias nor did they provide lunches. Children in rural communities did the same thing unless the distance traveled made it impossible to go home and get back in time for the afternoon session.



*Miners' / School Lunchbox*

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (post 1850), workers and children alike began using Dad's empty tobacco tin or Mom's empty lard tin as a container for portable food.



*Tins used as convenient lunchboxes*

In about 1902, someone had the brainstorm of making a tin box specifically for children to carry lunches to school.



*Single purpose children's lunchbox circa 1902.*

School days were transformed forever! The first licensed lunchbox image was from Walt Disney (who else?) and featured Mickey Mouse. This was 1935.



*Mickey Mouse Lunchbox, 1935*

The Gene Autry lunchbox hit the market with a bang in 1950 and was followed shortly by Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, The Lone Ranger and Tonto, The Rifleman, Daniel Boone, and on and on.



*Gene and Roy, 1950 - 1953*

The popular Barbie lunchbox (they were also called lunch kits) came out in 1962 as one of the first vinyl boxes.



*Barbie Lunch Kit, 1962*

For a time, your choice of lunchbox decoration told the world who you really were – or wanted to be. This writer relied on Roy and Gene to safeguard his peanut butter and jelly.

The rapid decline of metal lunchboxes began in the 1980's when horrified mothers discovered their little darlings were also using them as weapons. School life will never be the same.

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distribution list.**

The Historic Sutter Creek Grammar School is rich in Gold Rush history. This beautiful building is California's second oldest two-story brick schoolhouse. The Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation has restored the first and second floor making it a wonderful rental for any occasion. There are four

rooms within the Historic Grammar School that can be rented.



Contact the City of Sutter Creek for information on rates and availability - (209) 267-5647 ext. 230 or email [info@cityofsuttercreek.org](mailto:info@cityofsuttercreek.org)

*Whether it's a love of our heritage, a special connection to our town's diverse, deeply rooted cultures, or a desire to improve your community, every donor's passion for Sutter Creek is unique. A donation to Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation is the perfect way to fund your passion and watch it prosper. By connecting people who care with causes that matter, we help ensure a stronger, healthier tomorrow. We provide a simple, powerful and highly personal approach to giving.*

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