

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM

1333 Butte House Road

P. O. Box 1555

Yuba City, CA 95991

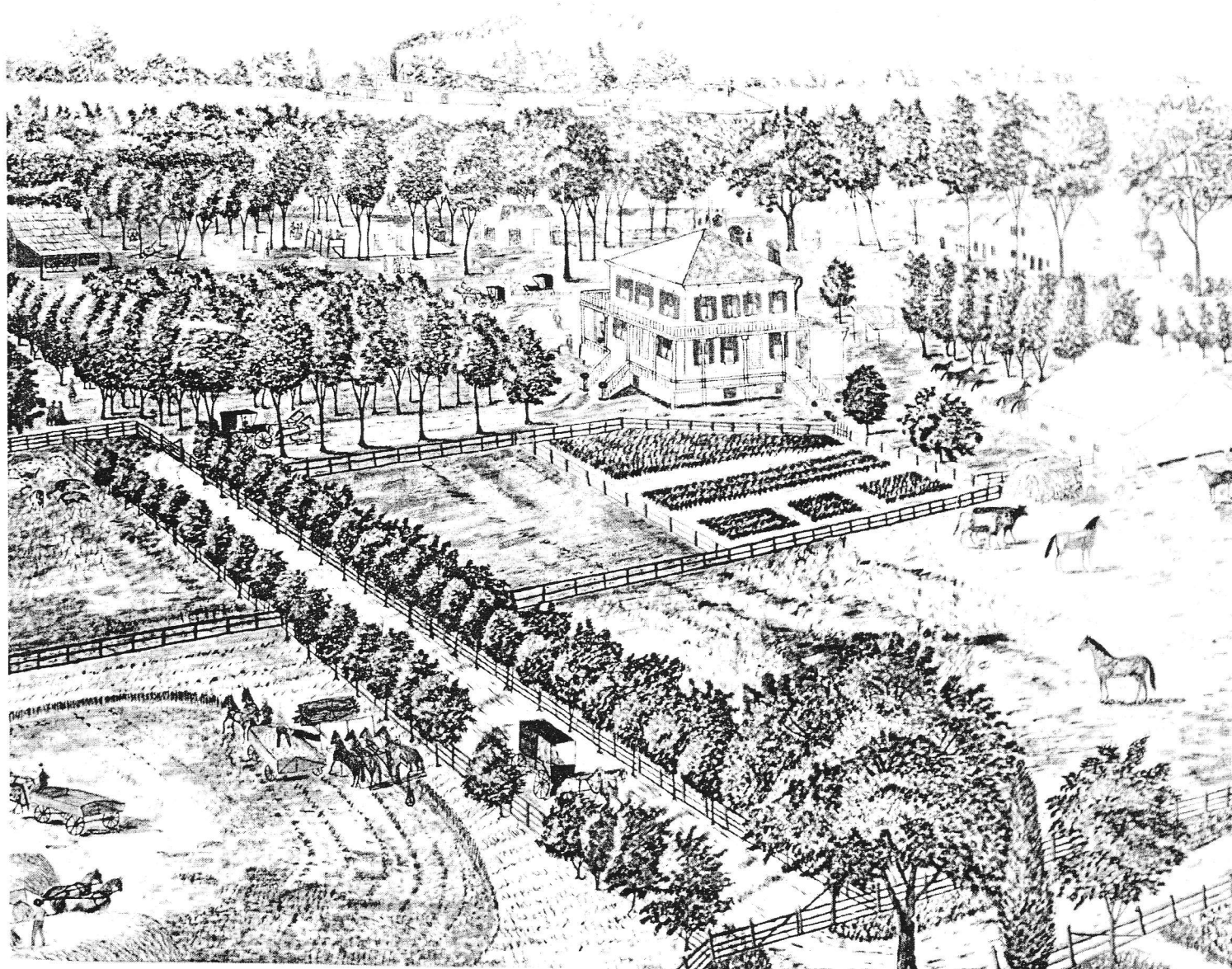
SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. I. NO. 6

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

JULY, 1956



HOCK FARM SUTTER COUNTY 1879

(Christian Schmidt Home)

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MID-SUMMER MEETING

July 17, 1956 - 8 P.M.

Board of Supervisors Chambers

SPEAKER: Mrs. Marie Potts
Publicity Agent
Federated Indians of California

Mrs. Potts will speak on the customs,
religion, foods, arts and crafts of the
California Indians of yesteryear.

Biographical Information
of
Mrs. Marie Potts

I am of the Maidu tribe of Plumas County.
I have been in Sacramento since December 1, 1942.

I was educated in Government schools, my first years
at Greenville, Plumas County, and later at Carlisle, Penn.

I graduated in 1915. My position among Indians is very
broad. I am publicity agent for the Federated Indians
of California, a statewide organization operating for
the interest and welfare of the Indians of California.
I am also the editor of a paper promoted by the Feder-
ated Indians of California, a publication of information
about legislation, state and national and any other news
of interest to the Indians in California

Our organization is also helping other Indians in other
states to promote or block legislation that is to their
interest.

* * * * *

A BIT OF NEWS

The telephone company is reproducing a photograph in color
of the Sutter Buttes on the telephone book for Yuba and Sutter counties
to be issued later this year.

Mrs. Honora Laney Attends
Conference in San Jose

We were very fortunate in having our President, Mrs. Honora
Laney, attend the State Conference for the Council of Historical Societies
of California. The conference was held in San Jose, June 21 and 22.

Mrs. Laney will give us a detailed report of the conference at
our July meeting.

* * * * *



Mr & Mrs Christian Schmidt

HISTORY OF THE HOCK FARM
FROM 1842 TO 1956

By
Honora Laney

One hundred and fifteen years have passed since Sutter first established the headquarters of a stock farm on the west bank of the Feather River at a site that history soon referred to as the Hock Farm. Here in 1841 - three years after arriving in California - Sutter located a temporary base from which vaqueros ranged out over the lush miles of grazing land that spread westward past the Buttes (Los Tres Picos), east-ward to the foothills and southward to the junction of the Sacramento and American rivers.

This camp stood near the northern most boundary of his domain, and a few miles below the junction of the Yuba and Feather rivers. This great area of eleven leagues was deeded Sutter by a land grant from the Mexican governor, Alvarado. Later in 1845 a second land grant of 22 leagues was deeded Sutter by Governor Micheltorena. In 1851, after the United States government had taken over California, this second land grant was declared null and void. The United States declared that California was in a state

of revolution in 1845 and that Micheltorena lacked the proper authority to make a land grant to Sutter. Sutter had supported Micheltorena during the insurrection and it was for this support that Micheltorena had been so lavish in the size of the land grant. The maximum size for the Mexican land grant was eleven leagues. With the capitulation of Micheltorena, California was left with no recognized leader, and two warring factions, the Castos and the Picos, with a Carillo thrown in for extra measure, vied for its control.

At this point the Americans under Fremont stepped in and, a few months later - on June 15, 1846 - established the Bear Flag Republic. Because of Sutter's nosiness, he had been told by Fremont that he might take off with the Mexicans. Sutter decided to retreat to his fort and have little to do with war-faring men.

One month after the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic, war had broken out between Mexico and the United States and on July 9th Commodore Sloat seized Monterey...At Cahuenga Pass, Fremont drew up the Cahuenga Capitulations and California's resistance to the Americans formally ended. With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, war with Mexico officially ended. California became a possession of the United States.

And now Sutter's troubles with the United States began. The confusion in regard to ownership of lands in California became so extensive that in March, 1851, Congress passed a law providing for a settlement of claims and in 1852 established the Land Commission in San Francisco for receiving these claims. It was not until 1865, however, that Sutter's grant of eleven leagues was confirmed. By 1846 Sutter was in serious financial trouble, and was using every possible ruse to delay, forestall and evade his creditors. What natural haven of rest and escape from his multiplicity of woes could picture itself in brighter, more luring hues than the oak and sycamore dotted park-like site at Hock Farm?

Here in 1843 young Bidwell had come to supervise further construction of more permanent buildings. Built in 1842, the adobe at the Hock Farm, was the first structure in California north of Sutter's Fort. Gradually Sutter beautified the grounds, by planting fruit trees and ornamental shrubs and laying out an extensive garden and a vineyard. He added more structures to the farm, and following a near financial catastrophe at the Fort in which he signed over the Fort properties to his son John Augustus Sutter, Jr., he transferred all movable property and live stock to the Hock Farm. With the advent of the gold seekers, Sutter's holdings melted away fast. Squatters, unscrupulous land agents, petitions to the Land Commission, lawyers and lawsuits, all made Sutter see the necessity of moving to the Farm. Sutter wrote, "In March, 1849, I moved to my Hock Farm which had been laid out in 1842. Bidwell had built a fine mansion for me there and had prepared everything for the reception of my family, whose arrival from Switzerland I was expecting just then".

Zallinger writes in Sutter, The Man and His Empire "The land belonging to the Hock Farm embraced excellent grazing ground with wide bands of extremely fertile grain and garden soil beside the placid Feather River and its willows and cottonwoods. The banks of the river were high enough to protect the farmlands from the winter floods. Magnificent old groves gave to the estate the aspect of a park out of

which the imposing pyramids of Los Tres Picos (Sutter's Buttes) rose like friendly guardians, adding immensely to the picturesqueness of the scenery.

The old, uncomfortable farm buildings, standing a few hundred feet away from the river were now augmented by new out houses and a new, large residence so as to form a large quadrangular court, in the center of which there was a well under an old sycamore. The residence, a half frame, half adobe building, was a two story house facing eastwards toward the river, and having a wide piazza in the New England style. A few poplar trees, planted so as to emphasize the formal but friendly symmetry of the front residence, stood in line with the flag pole staff on which at later festive occasions the Stars and Stripes was hoisted amid the boom of a cannon brought up from the Fort and fired by Alfons, beloved son of Sutter and would-be young soldier".

On numerous occasions during the fair season the grounds of Hock Farm were overrun with guests and their friends who spilled over the grounds and gathered to feast at the lavishly laden tables set up under the shady oaks and the fig trees. River boats from Sacramento discharged gay visitors, accompanied usually by a band (for Sutter loved music) upon the broad park-like grounds and there was much feasting and partying, with Sutter, ever the genial, meticulously garbed host, surveying all the festivity in the manner of a grande seignior.

All this time Sutter was beset by creditors whose wily traps to snare him, he as skillfully evaded. The loyal men who served him went without pay. Several dry years brought crop failures; his expenses spiralled upward; his income dried up at its source. More and more of his land was seized by squatters; his cattle were slaughtered by marauders who supplied the markets at Sacramento, and his horses were driven northward and sold in Oregon by rustlers and Indians.

In the devastating floods of 1848 and 1853, Sutter lost more livestock and property. In the flood of 1853 all buildings stood in several feet of water; old adobe walls dissolved or yielded to the pressure of the current and caved in. Only with the utmost exertion could Alfons save the cattle, driving them in the middle of the night to the top of a knoll, while his father and his mother fled in terror from one building to another.

Finally in 1857, after years of continued financial difficulty had persistently dogged Sutter, Sutter's two land grants (from Alvarado and Micheltorena) were confirmed by the Land Commission and the United States District Court for Northern California. The confirmation came just in the nick of time since the sheriff had put the Hock Farm on the auction block for the ridiculous sum of \$14,000. Fortunately and happily Sutter was able to redeem his farm. The following spring the steamship Governor Dana, with banners flying, a band playing, refreshments flowing, and loaded with Sutter's friends from Sacramento, steamed up to the Hock Farm. Here they disembarked and gathered together with Sutter and his family, not only to congratulate him but also to help him celebrate the just and fair decision of the District Court of Northern California. These affairs cost Sutter many thousands of dollars but what was money to this gracious squire.

All was not clear on Sutter's horizon, however, and storm clouds gradually built up for the deluge. Squatters appealed the District Court's

decision and in 1864, the Supreme Court, under pressure, reversed the decision of the United States District Court on the Micheltorena grant and declared it null and void. Since Sutter had sold much of this property, he now had to make this money good or return the land. For eleven years Sutter petitioned the Supreme Court for a return of the \$1.25 , per acre he had paid in taxes on the grant - the total of which amounted to \$122,000 (he actually requested a return of \$50,000, less than half). Sutter by this time had spent \$25,000 in petitions and lawyers fees and owed the lawyers still another \$10,000.

By 1862 the old Sutter couple were living alone at the Hock Farm. Sutter was forced to do manual labor in the fields and his infirm wife prepared the meals. For connection with the outside world, they were completely dependent on the teams of charitable neighbors.

The floods of 1862 gradually ruined the best parts of his orchard, and a levee was erected to protect the rest of the property from further encroachment.

On June 21, 1865, as if the greed of men and the ravages of nature were not enough, was added one more catastrophe to the many that tipped the scales so heavily against the pioneer. Early on that morning a fire broke out and the old residence burned fiercely and quickly. Sutter and his wife barely escaped with their lives. The flames which devoured the Hock Farm constituted one more disaster in the myriad disasters that plagued the man.

One June 22, 1865, the Marysville Weekly Appeal carried this news item: "The old residence of John Augustus Sutter at the Hock Farm was destroyed by fire on Wednesday, June 21. The fire also extended to a barley field. The house was completely destroyed - home, clothing, pictures, busts, curiosities - everything he had been accumulating for the past forty years except a few medals and the family portraits. His large collection of books was also destroyed. The fire was the work of an incendiary - supposed to be a discharged soldier who had been hanging about the premises the past few days and who had been caught stealing and had been punished by being tied up. There was no insurance."

A few months later Sutter visited the Hock Farm and then left for Washington D.C., where he resided until 1871.

In 1850 the United States Census presents the Hock Farm as follows: Improved acres of land, 200; unimproved, 1000; cash value of the farm \$100,000; farming implements and machinery, \$10,000; horses, 1000; asses and mules, 25; mild cows, 300; working oxen, 50; other cattle, 600; sheep, 500; swine, 60. The value of livestock, \$46,000; bushels of wheat, 200; bushels of Indian corn, 50, Sutter's petition for redress was repeatedly presented to Congress from 1866 until his death in 1880. In 1876, Congress recognized Sutter's claim as "just and proper," but no action was taken. In 1880 Congress again neglected to act upon the petition and Sutter, informed that for the sixteenth time no action had been taken, died shortly thereafter in his shabby hotel room in Washington, D.C.

In 1868 Frederick Low purchased a portion of the considerably reduced Hock Farm from John Augustus Sutter, through Charles Covillaud, trustee for the estate and legal representative for the Sutter family. Six hundred acres was purchased for \$5000, a mere shadow of its worth. Some months later in January 1870, Frederick Low sold the property (600 acres) to Charles Low for \$10,000. Six months later in July 1870, Charles Low sold

five hundred acres to Christian Schmidt for \$11,500.

Christian Schmidt, whose name next to Sutter's, has been most closely associated with the Hock Farm, came to California in 1858. In 1850, prior to his coming to California, he had married an Irish girl, Mary Eagan, who lived with him at Hock Farm until her death in 1874. There was one child by this marriage, a daughter, Mary Elizabeth, born in 1868. In 1875, Mr. Schmidt married a second time. The new Mrs. Schmidt, the young widow of Henry Heidoting, (later spelled Heydoting) had two sons, Henry and Joseph Heydoting.

Christian Schmidt had a fine new home built at Hock Farm sometime between 1875 and 1879. During this time also - the grounds were open to sponsored picnics and on picnic days several thousand people swarmed over the grounds spreading lavish lunches on the tables under the oak and the fig trees. As Harry Carden recalled, "April and May were the picnic months. These picnics were sponsored by the Grange, Odd Fellows, St. Joseph's, Herman Sons and many other religious and fraternal groups. The Native Sons and the Grange picnics were huge affairs with grease pig contests, prettiest baby contests, and every other kind of a contest that could be named. In the morning literary contests were held and he, Harry Carden, won \$5.00 - a large sum for a boy of ten, for reading "The Charge of The Light Brigade". Mrs. John Saunders (Lorraine Carpenter, then) won the prettiest baby contest at one of the picnics.

Merchants came to the picnics and set up displays, usually farm equipment, on the outskirts of the picnic ground. Many of the people from Marysville floated down the river to the picnic site on barges, fitted with railing around the sides. On the barges benches were placed in rows with a space in between the rows for a band. These barges were drawn by river steamers which with much whistling and tooting pulled the merrymakers on the hour and half trip down the river. The boat was met with a great deal of fanfare, the picnickers going out to meet the barge travelers."

Mr. Carden said that many of the elite travelled in shiny carriages that spun along behind matched and well-groomed pairs of blooded horses. The Sutter county people all were horsedrawn to the grounds.

Mrs. Charles Rednal (nee Berg) remarked that it took three hours or better to drive from the Berg ranch four miles north of Yuba City, to the Hock Farm. "It was an all day trip in the surrey. We often spent our time in the home of Christian Schmidt as the Schmidts were close friends of the family."

Long tables were taken over by individual families and much fuss was made to the spreading of the most lavish tables. Mr. Carden remembered Mrs. Slatterley's table especially, perhaps because she served Irish tea. At her table sat Father Coleman of St. Joseph's Parrish and the officials of the city of Marysville and Yuba county. It was a great day for the Irish! Mr. Carden and Mrs. Mary Bihlman thought that organizations paid a sum of money (\$75.00) for the use of the grounds.

Mrs. Ida Kerrigan and Mrs. Annie Littlejohn said that they remembered driving into the grounds and that the men in the family paid a small sum of money (50¢) and received a badge entitling them and their families to enter the picnic grounds.

All remembered a bar at the grounds. Mrs. L. D. Baun, Mrs. Kerrigan, Mrs. Bihlman and Mr. Carden thought only soft drinks were served. Mrs. Littlejohn was under the impression that hard liquor could be purchased as well. It was possible to buy picnic lunches at the bar -

but this was infrequently done. All were unanimous in stating that the Hock Farm was a beautiful place.

Mrs. Littlejohn remembered hearing "Lawyer Murphy" of the Donner Party speak time and again at the picnics. "Poor old soul, he kept saying the same things over and over again." She said that there were many decorative trees at Hock Farm, "just about everything that grew, Sutter had planted there."

Mrs. Kerrigan thought it was a pity that young people today couldn't see the farm as it was then. "It was the most beautiful spot in the world."

Mrs. Bihlman remembered the horses and buggies, rigs, surreys, carts and wagons that filled the tree-lined entrance road to the picnic grounds.

Mr. Carden was of the opinion that the picnics were discontinued about 1880. About that time river navigation was abandoned and the first trains were running on schedule into Marysville.

In 1880 Chris Schmidt died, leaving his daughter by his first marriage, his widow, Mary Elizabeth, and an infant that died not surviving its father by many months; Mary E. Heidoting Schmidt was named as heir to the larger portion of the estate and guardian of her stepdaughter. In 1886 Mary Elizabeth Schmidt (widow) purchased for \$11,000 the interest in Hock Farm of step-daughter Mary E. Schmidt. She managed the farm for six years and then married Thomas E. Holmes in 1886. Mr. Holmes had been engaged in farming in Yolo, Colusa and Sutter counties after his arrival in California in 1877. Prior to this marriage, the picnics as public affairs had been discontinued.

Mary Elizabeth died ten years later in 1896, leaving her two sons, Joseph and Henry Heydoting, and twins by her marriage to Mr. Holmes, Dora and Roy. Provision was made in the will for her sons; Mr. Holmes received the Hock Farm, and her brother, Henry Heier and her husband, Thomas Holmes, were made executors of her will.

In 1898, Mr. Holmes married Mary Dena Kettman, whose father had been an early Sutter county resident but who now lived in San Jose. There were five children from this marriage, Mrs. Mildred Davis, Mrs. Adele Da Caoose, Mrs. Louise Carlin, Mrs. Marie Gallagher, and Philip Holmes.

The widespread 1907 flood that broke the banks of the Feather in several places poured through the levees at the Hock Farm and gouged great gashes in the rich farm land. Mr. Holmes lost heavily in this flood. However, as after every flood, the farm recovered and was soon producing flourishing crops that yielded heavy harvests.

Mr. Holmes successfully farmed the Hock Farm until his death which occurred in 1920 while he was on a trip in the East. He was interred in Yuba City cemetery and his wife was left in charge of Hock Farm - one half of which was hers and the other half divided equally among the five children of the second marriage. Prior provisions had been made to Mr. Holmes' two children by the first marriage; however, a sum of money was left to the twins (at an earlier date Roy had been deeded a farm). The will named Mary Dena Holmes as executor. In the years that followed, the children sold their properties; now all that remained was a remnant of the once magnificent show place.

In 1921, Mrs. Holmes leased the ranch to a Mr. Anderson, a relative by marriage, and returned to San Jose, the home of her parents. Mr. Anderson lived at the Farm for the year of his lease. From 1922 to 1932 Adele Da Cosse, daughter of Mrs. Holmes, and her husband, Charles Da Cosse, operated the Farm. A portion of this time found the old house unoccupied, boarded up, and seemingly abandoned, although the greater part of the time it was the home of Adele and her husband. During the brief period of its un-occupancy a series of thefts occurred. Taken were many old Indian relics and other objects of historical value that had been part of the Farm's collection as well as interesting old light fixtures and other movable items. Even the gold leaf inserts on Victorian picture frames had been pried loose and carted away. Since no itemized inventory of the household objects had been fully kept, a complete record of the loss was difficult to determine. Many items that dated back to Sutter could not be accounted for.

During the 1920 period the Garden Highway was rerouted. No longer did it turn toward the Feather River just north of the ranch and then recontinue its leisurely southward jaunt to pass before the white picket fence, the tree-dotted lawn and the friendly door of the large, two-storied, white clap-boarded home, full of memories and history. Now the Garden Highway dashes past the western border of its farmlands, paralleling the property. Only by looking carefully and quickly down the road at right angles to the left as one hurries south from Yuba City can one catch a brief glimpse of the once celebrated home, standing in a grove of huge, wide-spreading oaks and walnut trees. The tall cottonwood that stood like a sentinel on the right north corner had become diseased and several years ago was cut down.

In 1932, Mrs. Holmes with her son Philip returned to the Farm and settled down once more to its operation, this time under Philip. During the depression she sold another portion of the holdings, leaving the Farm at its present size. In the meanwhile, much of the property willed the children by their father had been sold; consequently as the years passed, the one portion of the Hock Farm remaining intact was that small acreage still surrounding the home.

Mary Dena Holmes passed away in 1945. She willed the Farm to her five children with instructions for it to be equally distributed among them. Philip, her son, farmed the property and in 1947 bought the interests of his sisters, so that now, though the Farm is small, it is under one ownership.

In 1936, Philip Holmes married Eleanor Burroughs, daughter of a pioneer family, and since 1945, Phil and Eleanor have made their home at Hock Farm which is once more a show place in Sutter county. They have two sons, Barry, a sophomore at Stanford, and William (Bill) a junior at Yuba City Union High School.

The home has been carefully repaired and remodeled, still maintaining its traditional charm while boasting many modern conveniences. Air conditioning on the inside and a swimming pool on the outside add to its livability. Painstaking care was given to remodeling and redecorating of the interior. To the history-steeped furniture, pictures, portraits, silver and china pieces that belong to the home have been added many other historical items that make it one of our most important pioneer homes in

Sutter county, if not the most important. There are still treasures to be found, although the old adobe and the Indian quarters are gone and the Indian mound is now covered by the levee. From time to time some trinket from the past is identified or some old photograph is properly accounted for, the once unknown faces now strangely familiar in the procession of people associated with Hock Farm. One of the most interesting items uncovered and then misplaced again was an old map painted on canvas, a map of the Farm, its place names all in Spanish with the exception of the term "Hoch Farm" and "Hoch Indians" with the spelling as given, not "Hock" as spelled today. Who made the map, could the map-maker have made the error, or was it an error? Who knows?

One hundred and fifteen years have passed since Sutter deemed the Hock site a pleasant and suitable spot to establish a camp and homesite. The keenness of vision of that much-loved, much-abused pioneer has not dimmed with the years. Instead, with the passing of the years, this campsite became a famous name in California history as well as one of the most productive farms in California, a fitting tribute and a living memorial to his astute judgment and faith in the future of the land.