

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM

1333 Butte House Road

P. O. Box 1555

Yuba City, CA 95991

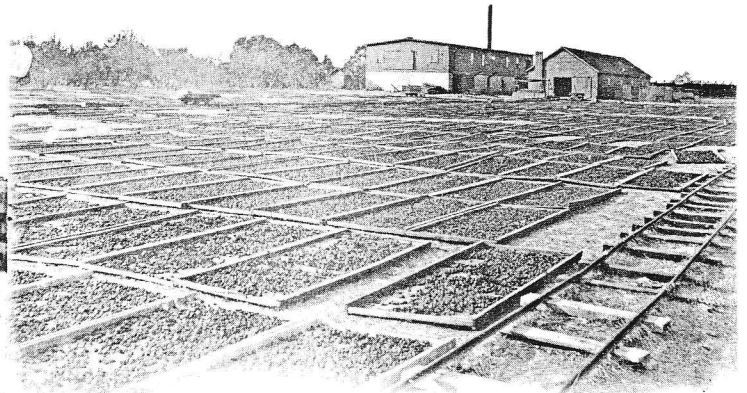
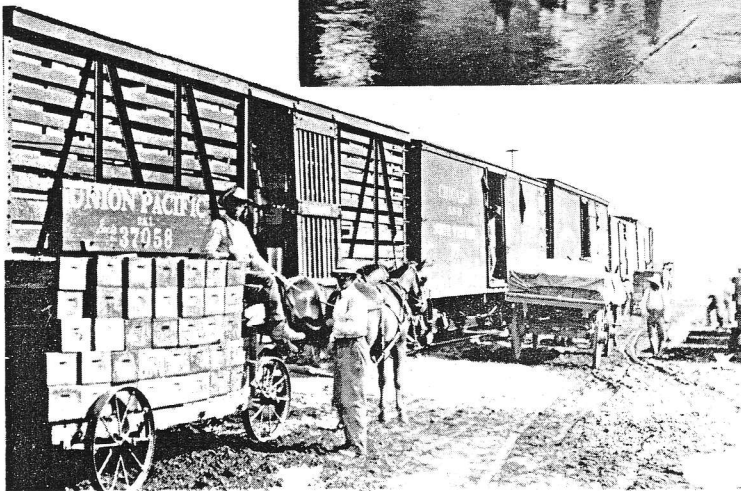
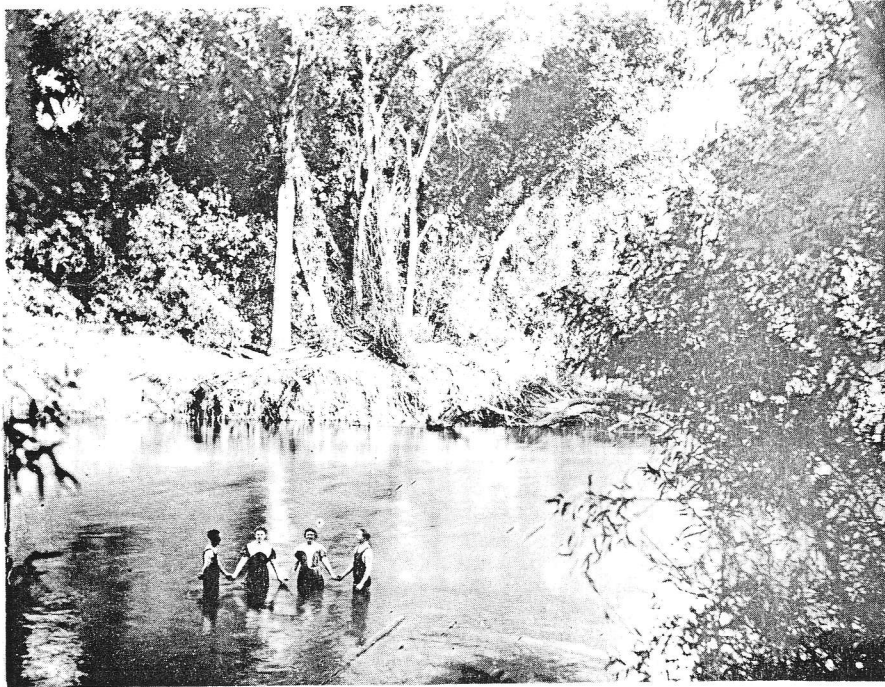
SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. 2 No. 6

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

JULY 19, 1960



" IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME "
YUBA CITY
AROUND 1900

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MIDSUMMER MEETING

July 19 - 1960

8 P.M.

SUTTER COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING

President - W.A. Greene, Jr.
Program Chairman - Randolph Schnabel

PROGRAM

Speaker - Mrs. Howard Cull

Topic - Recording by Painting and Picture Records

Report on Conference of Historical Societies

- Bakersfield _

Bernice Gibson

Frances Wiseman

* * * * *

NOTES FROM BAKERSFIELD
CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

A museum is obligated to become an essential serving cog in the machinery of life according to the modern concept of the historical museum defined by Richard Bailey, Director of the Kern County Museum.

The Kern County museum director gave the keynote address at the opening session of the sixth annual meeting of the Conference of California Historical Societies with headquarters at the Padre Hotel.

One hundred thirty-five delegates from all parts of the state were registered for the conference. All attention was centered around the workings of museums in all their aspects. Director Bailey in his address told the group.

The day is past when a museum can long endure on an ivory tower basis, much less as a repository for cultural objects too precious to be seen and commented on by the general public. Without contact with people, a museum is dead as the long departed dodo.

The Kern County museum was established by a citizens petition presented to the Board of Supervisors for a county museum. It was first established in the basement of the Chamber of Commerce Building. In 1950 the idea of an outdoor museum was presented to the Board of Supervisors which led to the establishment of Pioneer Village

on the old County Fair Grounds. The Kern County Explorers' group is largely instrumental in securing materials and buildings. At the present time many items of a duplicate nature must be refused.

Bailey pointed to the fact that the Kern County Museum attendance has grown from a handful of visitors to a total last year of 125,000 persons.

"Those who cannot remember the past must be condemned to repeat it."

The program for the remainder of the day, on Friday, was divided into three panels on the "Problems of the Historical Society Museum." The first speaker spoke on Physical Facilities and Organization. Mr. Jerry MacMullen, Director of the Serra Museum, San Diego, spoke very briefly on what to collect. He admonished all directors of museums to only collect materials which are of historical significance and reject all materials which you do not want. One must be tactful but firm in rejecting, otherwise, you will become a storage warehouse. Much material can be acquired through good relationship with Old Timers' Clubs, Pioneer Clubs, Hobby groups, Railroad fans, and he stated Friendship with the Horseless Carriage Club should be cultivated like a rich old uncle.

Newspapers are museums best friends but give them newsworthy materials and do not try to feed them free advertising. In the matter of ownership he told those interested to beware of loans or accepting materials on a loan basis, if you do, you are going into the free warehouse business.

Mr. Jack Dyson, California Division of Beaches and Parks, spoke with knowledge on historic houses.

Historical monuments, parks, museums, are storehouses of past experiences to be tapped by living present for their use and understanding. The use of models adds feeling of realism to interpretation. He closed with the statement that monuments, parks and museums were our heritage for "Enjoyment, Appreciation, and Understanding."

Panel No. 2 was designed to give us help in cataloging and storing historical materials. Frieda K. Fall, Registrar, Los Angeles County Museum, stated, "Registrars are referred to as the nerve center of a museum." She spoke of filing related objects together and taping and recording information and measurements. She also spoke of descriptive card file records.

Dr. Davis from the State Archives stated that Archival Institutions and archives are the original records. He spoke on the arrangement, description and storage of personal papers, court records and others. The place of deposit must be safe and fireproof, atmospheric conditions from 65° to 75°, relative humidity about 50% and insect control is a problem.

Allan R. Ottley, California Section Librarian, spoke on collecting, care and identifying books and photographs. "Books and photographs are the foundation stones of historical collections."

The luncheon speaker was W. W. Robinson, author of "Lawyers of Los Angeles" and many other books having historical significance.

He is often called upon as a professional writer to translate dry, sluggish prose into smooth readable narrative. A writer from the outside becomes a competitor of the local historian writer.

Mr. Robinson looks to many sources for references such as; Land Grant Files, United States Land Office Public Records, (Recorder's Office), newspapers, picturesque and humorous notes, Old Timers' stories. Stories must be made factual and a writer must watch for conflicts with what has already been written.

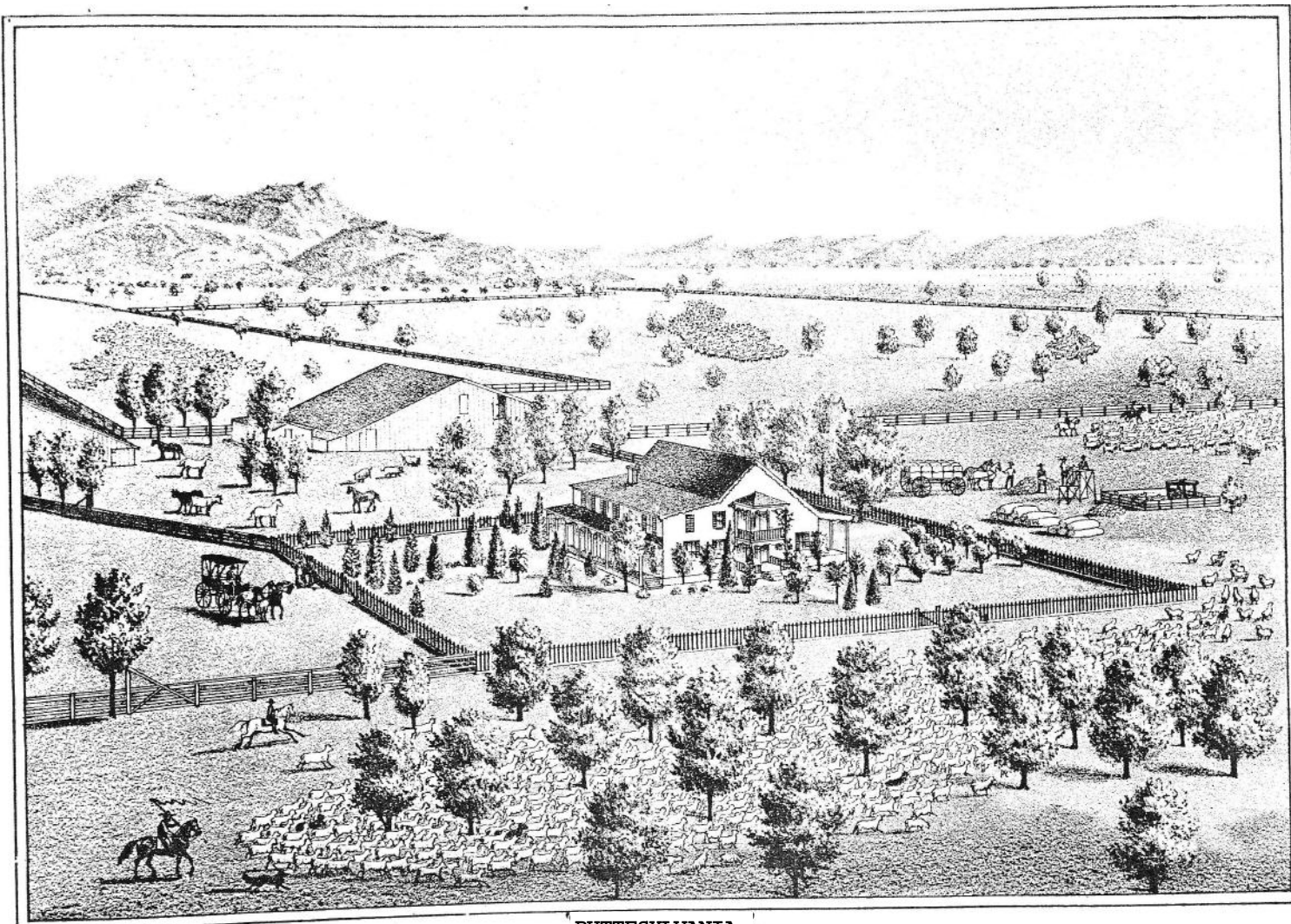
The banquet speaker was Dr. Donald Cutter, Associate Professor of History, University of Southern California. He spoke on "Malaspina in California, 1791". We all had a very wonderful opportunity to learn more of the early explorations of our great state.

The Junior Historical Society movement has taken hold throughout California and one of the most ardent promoters of the movement is Mrs. Ivy Loeber of St. Helena and Treasurer of the Conference of California Historical Societies. Mrs. Loeber's junior members from Napa County impressed all with the importance of the young people becoming interested in the preservation of our historical heritage.

This report would not be complete without giving recognition to the importance of the presence of our genial Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt, President Emeritus of our Societies.

Dr. Hunt installed the new officers at a very impressive ceremony during the last session and closed with the following quotation: "He who knows nothing of the past is but a child and acts as a child."

- Bernice B. Gibson, Vice President
Region 6



BUTTESYLVANIA.

2,500 ACRE RANCH, PROPERTY OF DR WM Mc MURTRY. NORTH BUTTE, SUTTER CO. CAL.

DR. WILLIAM MC MURTRY

The history of Sutter county is enriched by the far-seeing men and women who settled within its confines in the 1850's and 60's and determinedly developed its rich soil into one of the finest agriculture areas in the United States. Among those who saw Sutter county's tremendous possibilities and was enchanted by the beauty of "los tres picos" that dominate its landscape was D. William McMurtry who arrived in Grass Valley, California, in October 1849.

Pioneering to Dr. McMurtry was a business, having, himself, come from a long line of pioneers. The progenitor of the McMurtry family was Joseph McMurtry, (William's grandfather) a native of Wales, who came to the United States and settled in Philadelphia in 1734. In 1778 Joseph and his son John (William's father) along with Daniel Boone, crossed the Alleghenies into Kentucky and settled near Lexington, in Mercer county.

It was here at Harrodsburg, Kentucky on August 15, 1802, that William was born.

When the War of 1812 rolled around, young William aspired to be a drummer boy, plans that never materialized for it was during this period that his father John, making bullets for the U.S. government, developed Pneumonia and died.

William received his early education in the Kentucky schools and went on into the field of Medicine, studying under Dr. Tomlinson, a progressive and well known physician of that day.

By the time he was twenty, William was practicing medicine and in a few years amassed what was then considered a fortune. William, however, loved the land and the animals, the growing crops and the wilderness, consequently, he gave up his practice and purchased a farm 10 miles from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and there built a saw mill and a race track, besides raising fine horses. This venture did not prove successful, however, and he gave it up to resume the practice of his profession near Louisville.

In 1830 he married Sarah Mariah Van Anglen and five children were born of this marriage: John Van Anglen, 1831 (father of Imogene McMurtry) Cynthia, 1832 (wife of Sylvanus Sanborn); Sara Catherine 1833 (wife of Dr. T. W. Ferguson) Louis, 1838, (a judge in San Luis Obispo) and Junius, 1844.

During the period in which he was raising a family, William contracted Malaria and his health was somewhat impaired. Further William found hard times pressing upon him, especially so since the community he served was filled with poor people who were unable to pay their bills. William was practicing medicine at Big Springs, Kentucky when the news of the gold discovery reached the Eastern world. William became very much excited over the reports of the golden country and during the early months of 1849 made preparations, when spring should allow crossing the plains, to leave for California.

On April 20, 1849, William with his oldest son John, then 18, left Big Springs, Kentucky, traveled to St. Joseph, Missouri, by water and there purchased 4 yoke of oxen and a covered wagon and started on their long, wild, and dangerous journey.

They followed the most popular road west, that which followed the Platte River, out to Ft. Laramie, across the Rockies to Ft. Bridger, and crossing South Pass took the left turn which brought them through the Utah territory, past the Great Salt Lake and into Nevada Territory. Here they turned north across the Humboldt River to Honey Lake in Eastern California, thence came south along the Feather River to Oroville (Oro).

At Oroville, decision was made to continue to the gold regions of Nevada City and Grass Valley (Centerville) but it was October - five months taken in crossing - and early rains had set in making the road a quagmire since the oxen, worn out by their long trek, were unable to proceed in the belly-deep mud, Dr. McMurtry decided to spend the winter at Lawson's ranch south of Oroville. He and John erected a cabin about 10 miles below the mouth of Deer Creek, a dozen miles from any white settlement, but situated amidst numerous, friendly Indians.

Dr. McMurtry occupied his time during the winter months by making clapboards and in the spring he built a raft on which he started for Sacramento. The turbulent stream soon wrecked the raft which disintegrated and floated away in pieces.

Reaching Long's Bar, William and his son did some mining. The doctor's best investment, however, was in the purchase of cattle from the poor immigrants who were desperately short of funds. These cattle he purchased at \$30.00 per head, held them long enough to fatten them and sold them at \$90.00 per head, making a tidy profit. This he invested in 1851 in a restaurant, the Gold Hill Exchange, at Boston Ravine.

Pleased with the climate of California and intrigued with the tremendous potential for a happy and lucrative life, he decided to rent the restaurant and return to Kentucky for the rest of his family and make California his permanent home.

During his sojourn in the mining country, he had visited Marysville on several occasions and had been particularly fascinated by the Buttes. In riding around them he was particularly taken by the oak studded lands stretching away from the Northernmost slopes. Here the ground was high and flood free and here he decided to homestead 160 acres if possible, as the anchor point to expand future holdings.

At the end of 1851, William, leaving John in Grass Valley, left for the East for the purpose of gathering his family together and bringing them all to California as quickly as possible. William went to San Francisco, took a boat to the Isthmus, crossed over, took another boat to New Orleans, then up the Mississippi again to the point of debarkation for Big Springs, Kentucky.

His brother-in-law, John Van Anglen, excited by the tales of the rich and colorful land, rushed madly about attempting to convert all his assets into cash but ran into disaster when his biggest debtor fled the country with the bulk of Johns cash and 5 valuable colored workers.

John, bemoaning his unpropitious fate, sadly said goodbye to his sister Sarah on a March day in 1852, his 3 nephews, 2 nieces and his brother-in-law William, who were departing for St. Joseph, Missouri for the 5 month trip to California - the story of which was written by William's granddaughter Imogene McMurtry as a composition exercise &n December 8, 1902, for her teacher Miss Margaret Lawry, who taught the 4th grade at the Marysville Elementary then located at 7th and B Streets, Marysville (where office of Division of Highways now stands). With the help of her Aunt Cynthia McMurtry Sanborn, who, with her sister Catherine McMurtry Ferguson, walked across the plains along side their ox team, Imogene recreated the experience as follows:

"CROSSING PLAINS"

4th grade composition assignment at Old Marysville grammar at 7th & B - where Division of Hiways now stands. Teacher Miss Margaret Lawry assignment was given to class. Mrs. Cynthia Sanborn, aunt of Imogene McMurtry, who gave her information was the wife of Sylvanus Sanborn of New Hampshire came to California 1849 and later married Cynthia McMurtry and farmed in the North Butte area.

"It wax very hard to cross the plains in the early days because they did not have any cars, and had to go by wagons. They used oxen instead of horses.

My grandfather started from Louisville, Kentucky, the twenty-fourth day of March, 1849 He wanted to get gold in California. There were eleven in the party. They went to St. Joseph by steamer (river boat) when they got there, they brought their wagons and outfits for traveling. Then they started on their long journey across the plains, traveling about 15 miles a day. At night they camped on the wild Indian plains. They found water and grass for their oxen and wood to cook their dinner. On account of the Indians, they stationed two men every night to guard the wagons. At one o'clock they were relieved by two others. In that way they travelled a long while. The streams were a little difficult at times to cross.

The first place they came to was Fort Kearney in Nebraska on the Platte River. A fort is a place where United States troops were stationed to keep the Indians away. They traveled on until they came to Fort Laramie in Wyoming. It was a missionary school and the Indians were Sioux. It was near the fort that the party thought that they were going to be attacked by the Indians. They had camped for the night as usual when thirty Indians came up and surrounded the camp riding on ponies.

They were dressed in war costumes and their faces were painted. They rode around the wagons and looked in shouting and making a dreadful noise. Grandfather went to the fort and asked if the Indians were dangerous. The men at the fort said they did not think they were, that they were having a big Pow Wow, and for the people to be quiet and not annoy them in any way. So they went on getting the camp ready for the night. At last the Indians went off as they had come hooping and yelling.

When they got to they found a natural road. It was perfectly smooth and there were very few rocks. They went over with very little trouble.

Then they journeyed on until they came to Fort Bridger. There they had another incident with the Indians. They had been asleep a little while, when they heard the report of one of their guns. Grandfather went out and asked "what's the matter?" and the man replied "I saw something moving in the grass. I kept watching until I concluded it was an Indian, I fired and the Indian jumped up and right there ran to the hills." The party did not sleep anymore that night, but the Indians did not come back.

They rode on for a long time. The greatest trouble was crossing the Truckee Desert in the western part of Nevada, there was nothing but sand for forty miles. In the desert they passed the hot springs. The oxen had very little water. They had only what could be carried in barrels. They were a day and a night crossing. They traveled during the night. They had them come to the Truckee River in the Eastern part of California. They camped there for several days resting. It was then the last of September and the first of October it snowed. The second they started to go over the Sierra Nevada mountains, which they found very rocky, and got over with a great deal of trouble.

They passed Donner Lake where the Donner Party had perished. The cabin was still there and they saw the hole where they put their dead.

The fifth of October they arrived at Nevada City where they stayed through the winter. This was an end to the trip across the plains."

On this trip to California Dr. McMurtry followed the same route as before except that he decided to strike west across the Truckee Desert to the mouth of the Truckee River where it tumbles out of the hills of eastern California and starts its swing through Nevada. The closing days of the month of September were upon them and they rested a few days before going on. Snows falling on October first ended the idyl and mindful of the fate of the Donner Party, hastened their way across the Sierras to Grass Valley (Centerville).

Letters from home were few during the crossing of the plains, but the family back in Harrodsburg were anxious to hear from them and sent letters to them enroute, even as the emigrants themselves were able to send letters back to their loved ones.

John Van Anglen, the unlucky brother-in-law, wrote a letter, a portion of which appears below, to his sister Sarah, newly arrived in California.

Harrodsburg, Kentucky
October 14, 1852

Dear Sister:

"We have received three letters from you and Cynthia McMurtry since you left Harrodsburg, one was from St. Louis, one from Independence, and one from the camp, 60 miles from Laramie, dated July 17, 1852. Lewis McMurtry showed me a letter he got a day or two ago from your son John, in which he stated that he had heard that you and family are in a few days journey of Centerville. I hope that you have all got in safe and well. Lewis stated that John's letter contained a draft directed to him. Cynthia's description of your outfit, your mode of traveling, etc., is very graphic and interesting, and I half envy your trip (although I have no doubt that you have had a fatiguing journey). Still after all your difficulties, if you are satisfied with California, it will repay you for your risk and labor.

I suppose you have seen sublime and picturesque scenery on your route. You have viewed Indians, buffaloes, and other wild beasts. You have thought of deserts of Arabia, and the long, long caravans stretching over the dreary wastes, but you have had many an oasis on your route. Still after the first few days, the excitement of camping, cooking, and starting in the morning somewhat subsided and maybe (I do not know, however, it might have been a more dreary travel than I imagined - yet on your journey, there has been no doubt a great variety). When I was at New York, I saw the California Steamer go out crowded with passengers and the ladies fair waved their white kerchiefs to the breeze and bid adieu to friends on the shore....."

There was no envelope - the outer page of the letter was left blank, folded over, with the final section Lucked under the first section and sealed with wax. The unwritten section carried the address.

The McMurrys stayed in Grass Valley until 1854. In November of 1852, however, Dr. McMurry made the first improvements on the holdings he had staked out near the north end of the Buttes, fencing the property and putting hogs on it. (It is assumed he had taken over a 160 acre tract, the size allowed for homesteading or pre-empting - but nowhere was any record found of such action). While in Grass Valley, Dr. McMurry still continued the hotel business he had started before leaving for the East to pick up his family. Apparently Dr. McMurry was generous to the hard-up immigrants and "unlucky miners, since he made no profits in the hotel business. He gave credit fully and collected nothing. Soon he was virtually "dead broke". With his characteristic energy, he moved his family to the Sutter county ranch in 1854 and began farming anew, raising chickens and hogs, having only a few hogs and 300 chickens to begin with. Feed was high his bill for chicken feed alone for one year was \$500. Eggs though, were correspondingly high, averaging the year around 75¢ per dozen; consequently, at the close of the year he found himself \$1000.00 ahead.

December 3, 1854, Sarah Mariah recorded a declaration of "sole trader" as follows "I, Sarah M. McMurry, wife of William McMurry of the County of Sutter, in pursuance of ----- an act to authorize married women to transact business in their own name as sole traders, passed April 12, 1852 (do declare that I am in the) the business of the dairy, raising of stock of all descriptions: to wit; cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, and poultry, and the making of hay. I further declare that the sum invested does not exceed five thousand dollars.

Signed
Sarah M. McMurry"

(Why Sarah declared herself a sole trader is a question to be answered at a later date, since none is forthcoming now).

The first deeding of land recorded to the McMurry family again involves Sarah - a patent for the year 1861 from the U.S. Government for 40 acres in Section 26 of Township 17, Range 1 North.

From 1861-1875 the McMurry family acquired 2,744 acres in the northwest area of Sutter county. An acreage lying northwest of the Buttes and including range land on the Buttes where 4000 head of sheep roamed. Over 2,320 acres were purchased directly from the United States government; 424 acres were purchased from individuals. The highest price paid was \$100.00 per acre for 80 acres and the lowest, approximately \$1.20 per acre (apparently for Butte range land). The average price per acre was approximately \$39.50.

All the properties lay in Township 17 North, Range 1 East, and are portions of Section 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33 and 34. This great ranch, dotted with great groves of white oaks and clusters of the glossy-leaved live oak was given the appropriate name of Butte Sylvania. Here the handsome home was erected that held the McMurry family with until long after Sarah's death in 1882. The McMurry's were well known for their generosity and philanthropy. Dr. McMurry practiced medicine until he retired late in life. Many a night he saddled the horse and with medicine in saddlebags rode hurriedly to the bedside of a sick neighbor.

Mrs. McMurry who became a Methodist, practiced her religion faithfully and threw the doors open to the circuit riding ministers who administered to their flock in the Butte Circuit, one of the largest in Northern California. (The McMurry family religion was Scotch Presbyterian).

On Butte Sylvania, many acres were devoted to wheat raising and in the pioneer days the method of harvesting was quite primitive.

At first Indians with flails did the threshing, later to be replaced by the great harvesters which cut, threshed, and separated the grain and poured the golden kernels into sacks.

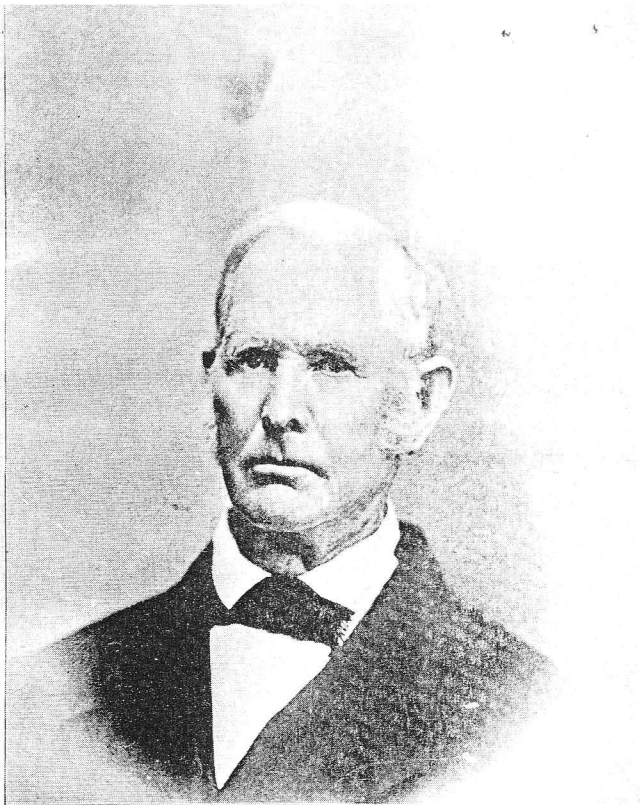
In 1868 Dr. McMurry donated land to be used for a school site and here was erected a one-room school house which served the Butte Sylvania District from 1868 to 1874 when it was absorbed into a new school district known as North Butte (still functioning today with a new school building dedicated in 1956.

Dr. McMurtry married Cynthia Van Anglen, sister of Sarah. They moved to Oakland where he died on March 6, 1892. The remains were brought to Live Oak and the funeral took place at North Butte. The obituary notice concluded: "Reverend A. P. Few officiated. A very large funeral cortege followed the remains to the last resting place in the North Butte cemetery. The following gentlemen were pall bearers: A. H. Lamme, J. H. Meyers, R. K. Stevenson, J. J. Bruce, E.M. Bragg and C. Williams".

There passed another pioneer of Sutter county, who, as a dedicated member of his community and as a leader of his time, has left enriched the legacy of our county and our state.

Paul Bunyan might well have had such a man in mind when he penned "So he passed over and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

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DR. WILLIAM M. McMURTRY
49 ER & OWNER OF BUTTE SYLVANIA



SARAH M. McMURTRY
1ST. WIFE OF DR. WILLIAM M. McMURTRY

