

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

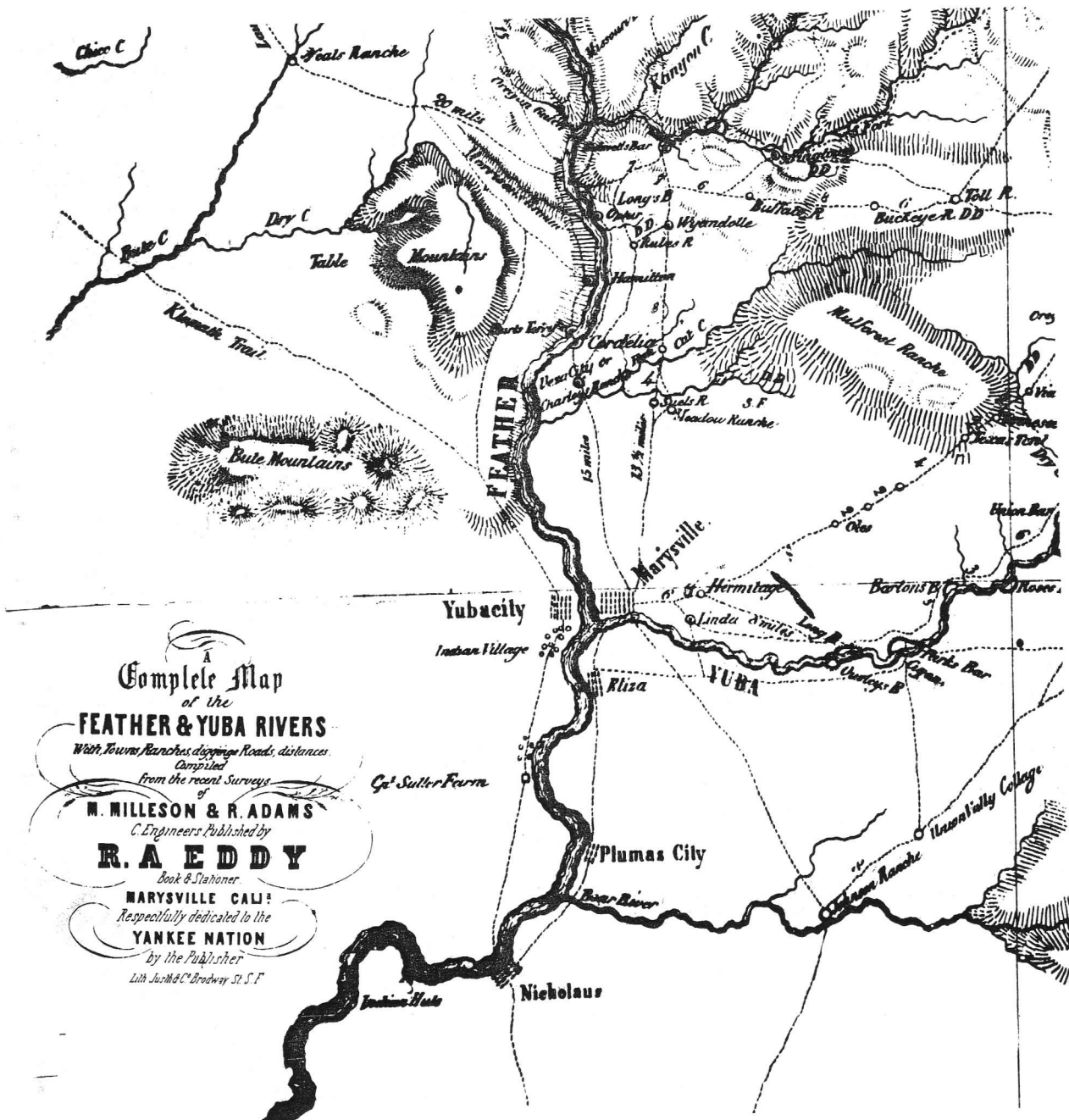
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NEWS BULLETIN

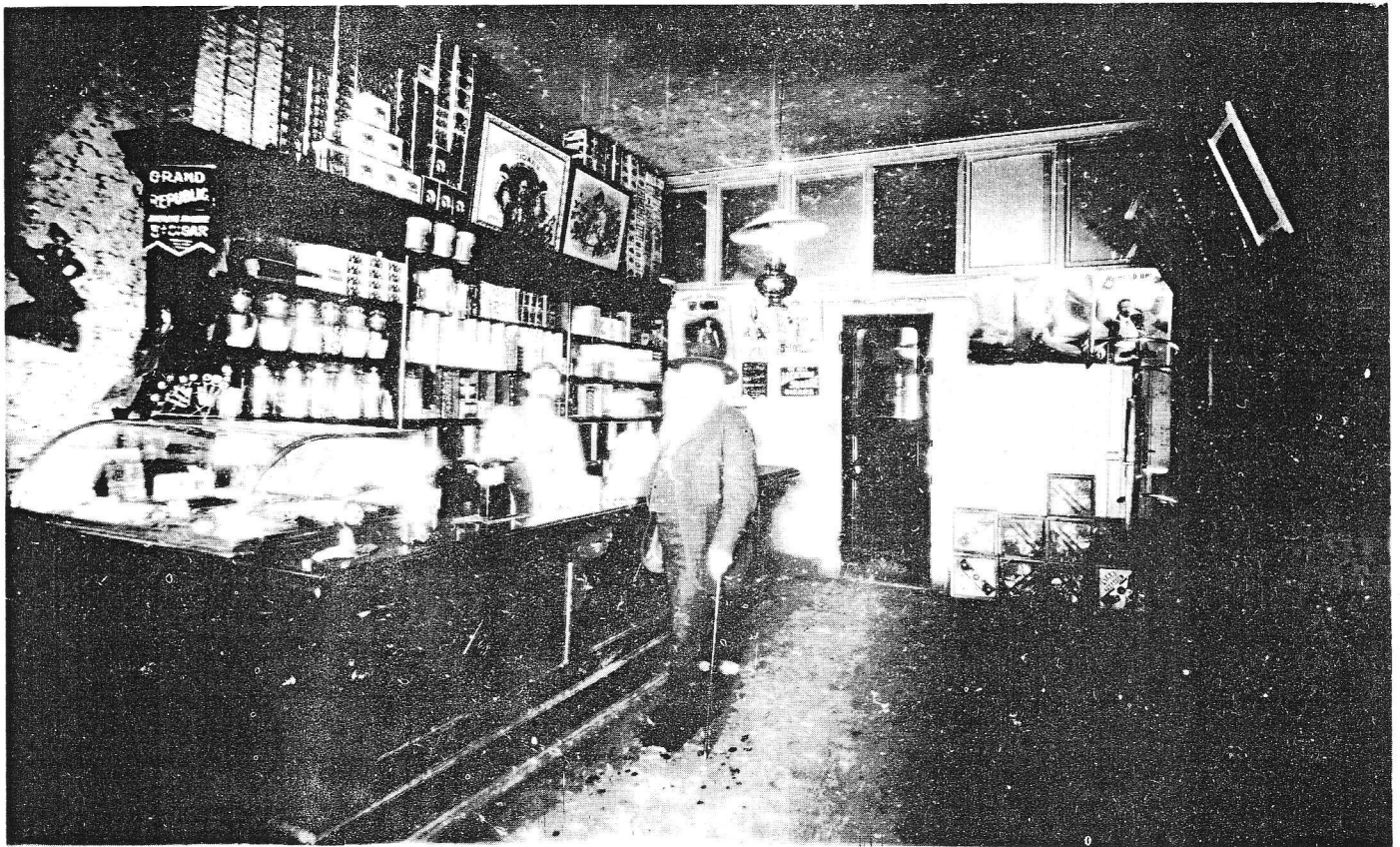
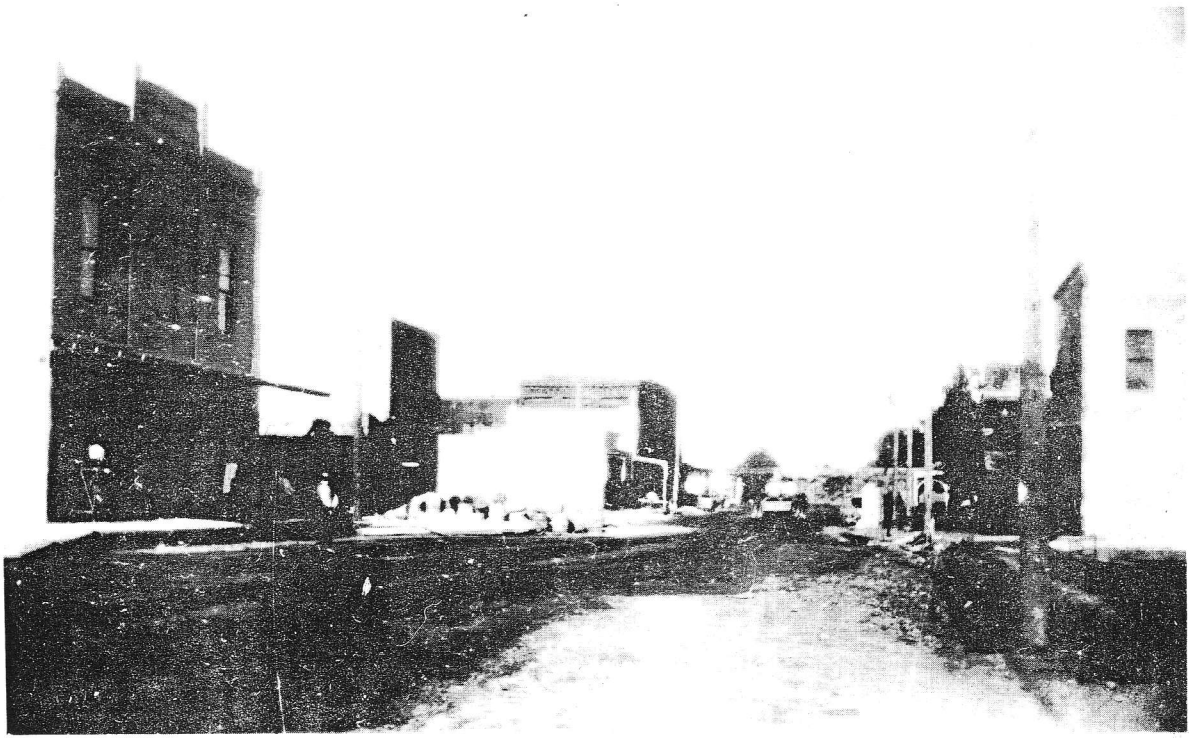
VOL 2 No. 7

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 18, 1960



A
Complete Map
 of the
FEATHER & YUBA RIVERS
 With Towns, Ranches, diggings, Roads, distances.
 Compiled
 from the recent Surveys
 of
M. MILLESON & R. ADAMS
 C. Engineers Published by
R. A. EDDY
 Book & Stationer
MARYSVILLE CALIF.
 Respectfully dedicated to the
YANKEE NATION
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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FALL MEETING

OCTOBER 18, 1960
TUESDAY EVENING - 8 P.M.

SUTTER COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING

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

PROGRAM

Speaker: Mrs. Ivy M. Loeber
St. Helena, California
Treasurer, Conference of
California Historical Societies

Topic: Junior Historical Societies

I am sure we will all be interested in hearing Mrs. Loeber tell about her Junior Historical Society in Napa Valley. She has much to tell us about the interests and activities of the young people of Napa Valley in preserving and doing action research on the history of the area.

Come out and enjoy a very pleasant evening. We also want to discuss our annual dinner meeting for January.

We will also be able to give a progress report on the Film project.

APOLOGY FROM THE EDITOR

Due to our haste in getting the July Bulletin in the mail, we inadvertently neglected to give one of our most prolific writers, Mrs. Honora Laney credit for the fine article on the McMurtry Family, Pioneer Settlers of Sutter County.

My most humble apology, Mrs. Laney!

THE CHEEVER FAMILY
and the
FOUNDING OF YUBA CITY
by Earl Ramey

The title of this account may be a little misleading because the word family usually includes some women and children. There were five male members of the Cheever family in Yuba City, but not any of them brought their women and children; and not any of them stayed long enough to acquire women and children. But these Cheevers came from one of America's oldest families.

The first Cheever came as a colonist from England to Massachusetts in 1635. The first descendant of whom we have any knowledge is one James Cheever, a soldier in Washington's army from 1776 to 1783. This soldier is credited with distinguished service in the revolutionary struggle.

To this revolutionary veteran a son, James W. Cheever, was born in 1791. The son became a seaman at an early age and by 1812 had qualified as master of sail vessels. During the war with England (the War of 1812) he was given command of a fighting ship of the United States Navy, a ship of twenty guns and a crew of 300, at the age of twenty-one years. He was thereafter known as Captain Cheever. His military career was also obviously a distinguished one.

Captain Cheever had three sons, Henry, David and Edward, who were to have a prominent role in the founding of Yuba City. The youngest of these sons was born in 1828, and the other two between 1812 and 1828, but we do not know the exact dates.

Henry, the oldest son, followed his father's example and went to sea at an early age. By 1840 he was master of his vessel and sailing out of Valparaiso, Chile where he made his headquarters and where he had business interests. It was a common practice of that time for the master of a ship to own an interest in the ship and even in a commercial establishment whose merchandise the ship was carrying. Such was Henry Cheever's interest in Chile and the Pacific.

By 1844 he had moved his headquarters to Honolulu where he established a wholesale and retail business, but from which place he yet sailed his brig Hannah to China, the Philippines and to west coast American ports. On one of these voyages in 1845 his ship was attacked by pirates off the coast of China. Cheever and his crew made an unsuccessful attempt to resist the attack, and the ship was plundered and the crew dispersed. There were rumors to the effect that he and the crew had failed to resist and had abandoned the ship in an unbecoming manner.

In order to refute this unfavorable rumor Cheever wrote a letter which was published in a Honolulu paper in which letter he gave a classic description of the pirate's attack, a description which would do credit to a Hollywood scenario writer. His letter ought to have exonerated him and the crew, but one suspects that he did not live down the disgrace. This was his last voyage as master of a ship. He retired from the sea and spent his time in the business of McClurg and Company of which he had become a partner.

In 1846 Cheever was named by the Chilean government to serve as Consular Agent for that Republic in Honolulu. But the official notice of the appointment published in the Polynesian added that "his majesty (the King of Hawaii) declines granting him an exequatur for reasons which the Minister of Foreign Relations has

been ordered to make known to the government of Chile." We were not told the "reasons", but again one suspects that his disgrace at sea was going against him.³

Later in 1846 Henry Cheever moved to Los Angeles, California where his firm, McClurg and Co., maintained a branch store. They also had a branch in San Francisco where he spent some of his time.⁴

The reader will recall that gold was discovered on the American River the last day of January 1848, but that the news of the discovery was not circulated at once. Only after two to three months was the event generally known as near as San Francisco. Henry Cheever happened to be in San Francisco when the news came to that place. And evidently he was one of the first to take the discovery seriously and to recognize its importance. He sent a letter to his father, Captain Cheever, in Salem, Massachusetts telling him of the discovery and advising his father to send merchandise to California, even suggesting the commodities which would be in demand. His father received the letter and had a shipment consisting of beef, pork, flour, hams, blankets, clothing, crowbars, picks, shovels, pans, liquors, wines and other items needed in California at the time, on board the Mary and Ellen which sailed October 28, 1848.⁵

At this point we must bring into the narrative the second brother, David Cheever. He had served as midshipman in the United States Navy during the war with Mexico and had participated in the siege of Vera Cruz. He had been discharged from the service during the summer of 1848 and was visiting relatives in Illinois when his father received the letter from Henry. But the father sent the news to David who was able to return to Salem in time to sail on the Mary and Ellen as supercargo of his father's goods. He arrived in San Francisco on March 28, 1849 after a voyage of five months around the Horn.⁶

In the meantime Henry Cheever had gone to Sutter's Fort where he entered into a business partnership with John Sutter and two other partners named Hastings and Gordon. These four under the name of Hastings and Company opened a store at Coloma where they traded supplies to the miners for gold dust. The important result of this close association with John Sutter - important to this present account - is that Henry Cheever became a partner with Sutter in the founding of Yuba City.⁷

There is some evidence to suggest, if not to prove, that the founding of Yuba City was provoked by the rivalry which developed between John Sutter and his son, John Sutter Jr. The conditions which brought about this rivalry are too complicated and involved to be described here. Only a brief reference to them will be made as follows:

When John Sutter Jr. arrived at the Fort from Europe the latter part of 1848 he found his father's business affairs in a bad state. He assumed complete control of the Fort and the grant while Sutter Sr. spent his time in the mountains at Coloma. During this period a large number of would-be speculators and promoters had gathered at the Fort. Some of them persuaded Sutter Jr. to lay out a town on the river near the Fort to be called Sacramento. But Sutter Sr. with other promoters had already established a town south of the Fort which they called Sutterville. There was a contest for survival between the two towns and Sacramento won.

Sutter Sr. was very much disappointed by the defeat of his pet project. Sutterville; so it was easy for a new alignment of promoters to persuade him to furnish the necessary land for a town near the Yuba mines on the Feather River.

On July 27, 1849 J.A. Sutter, party of the first part, deeded to himself, Samuel Brannan, Pierson B. Reading, and Henry Cheever, parties of the second part, for one dollar and other valuable inducements, lands on the western bank of the Feather River commencing at a point below and nearly opposite the mouth of the Yuba River (said point to be fixed by a survey to be made by the parties of the second part) running down the west bank of the Feather River at low water mark four miles; thence back from the Feather one mile; thence north-east parallel to the river to a point directly opposite the point of starting; thence to the point of beginning. The tract was to contain four square miles more or less.⁹

Again we must interrupt the narrative of the founding of Yuba City to introduce the third Cheever brother, Edward. This youngest of the three brothers was born 1828 being just twenty years of age in 1848. He was residing on a farm in Illinois when his father relayed to him the news carried in the letter from Henry. He could not leave his farm at once when David returned to Salem; so he was not able to come to California on the Mary and Ellen. But he sailed from Boston on the Saltillo December 27, 1848 and after transferring to the Sea Witch in Chile arrived in San Francisco June 15, 1849.¹⁰

Edward found his brother David yet in San Francisco. Just what David had been doing the two months since he had arrived in California we do not know. However, we know that he had been making preparations to go to the mines having purchased a whale boat with which to move merchandise up the rivers to get as close as possible by water to the diggings. So during the latter part of June David, Edward and some others made their way up to Sacramento in the whale boat. There they found Henry who had a room at the Fort where the three brothers spent some days together.

At this time (about the first of July) the plans for Yuba City were being made. On July 8th a party of interested persons made a trip to Hock Farm to see Captain Sutter. This party was made up of Henry Cheever, Jacob R. Snyder, Mr. Barlow, an engineer who was to survey the new town, James King of William, Henry Schoolcraft and a crew of five Indians to row the boat. Edward Cheever was allowed to go along; and this was fortunate for us because it is from an account of this trip which he wrote forty years later that we have the little first hand information available.

The party reached Hock Farm the third day and after a few hours visit with Sutter decided to return at once to Sacramento taking Sutter with them. But Edward, having no direct interest in the business affair, chose to remain and the next day, July 12th, rode up to the site of Yuba City. The next day, July 13th, he caught a ride in a boat with some miners and returned to the Fort. But before we follow further the adventures of Edward, we must give some attention to the activities of David.¹¹

David had become acquainted with a young printer named Tallman Rolfe. He probably met Rolfe first in San Francisco where the latter had been working for Sam Brannan getting out the California Star. But when the gold rush disturbed life around San Francisco, publication of the Star was suspended. So Rolfe had moved to Sacramento where he was working for Brannan in a store. Sometime during the months of July and August Rolfe and David Cheever formed a partnership to operate a store in Yuba City. They purchased, or probably received gratis, two lots from the proprietors, loaded the whale boat with building materials and merchandise (probably some of which had come on the Mary and Ellen) and moved to

the new settlement where they set up their business. But for details of this venture we depend on Edward; so we must turn again to his movements.¹²

After Edward returned to Sacramento July 13th from Hock Farm he made a tour of the mines. He went first to Coloma then to Greenwood Valley and over to Grass Valley trying his hand with little luck at extracting gold dust in the crowded diggings. From Grass Valley he moved over to the Yuba where he worked with some partners and succeeded in earning two ounces a day for some time. But early rains the last of August drove them out, and he returned to Sacramento where he learned of the store which David and Rolfe had established in Yuba City. By this time he had acquired a mule which he rode up the east side of the Sacramento and Feather and joined his brother in Yuba City the first part of September.

As has already been noted Edward Cheever gave us one of the few intimate accounts of the beginning of Yuba City, and we can best convey these details by quoting directly certain passages from him. He wrote: "When I returned from the mines to Sutter's Fort, I learned that my brother, David A. Cheever, and Tallman Rolfe had gone to Yuba City and opened a store. So I rode up there on my mule - up the eastern side of the Sacramento. When I reached Yuba City I found my brother and Rolfe the sole white inhabitants of the City." "The store was made of rough posts split from trees growing in the vicinity. These were set upright in a trench as palisades, and cotton cloth was stretched over a light ridge pole overhead to form a roof. A flat boat had been brought up from Sacramento loaded with goods of various kinds and including sufficient lumber to make the counters, shelves, door frames, etc. The store was located not far from the bank of the Feather River and above the Indian Village which was nearly opposite the mouth of the Yuba River!"

"Shortly after my arrival the first storm of the season came at night - high winds. The rain softened the earth around the sides of our house, and the wind pushed one side over towards us threatening the safety of the whole structure. We were compelled to stand all night as braces leaning against the wall.. The next morning we drove stakes outside and made the house secure by using guy ropes . ."

Edward Cheever has left a bit of testimony which we ought to consider in connection with the unsettled debate about the origin of the name Yuba. He states, "The name of Yuba City was spelled Yubu City on the first map of the townsite, this being done to preserve the original Indian name of the rancheria which also gave its name to the river. The Indians, however, pronounced the name Yubum (Youboom) and the village at Hock Farm was Hockem. But the newcomers changed the names to Yuba and Hock without regard to Indian origin or original pronunciation."

There is also a rare human interest story in Cheevers account as follows:

"Soon after the storm John Bidwell came and told us of two men who were destitute up the river a few miles. We had a wagon and a yoke of oxen and with these we brought them to the store. One was unconscious and dying and the other helpless. They had taken sick while traveling from the mines and had been exposed to the storm without fire, food or shelter. Both died and were buried side by side under an oak tree back from the store and towards the Buttes. We had to bury them without coffins because of the impossibility of getting lumber at the moment. These were the first white persons buried in Yuba City."

He accounts for the relative failure of Yuba City as a business center with this passage: "We lived quietly for some time at Yuba City before we received any increase of population... Before winter quite a large number of emigrants who had crossed the plane arrived, and many small houses were built for winter quarters.

Before Yuba City had much trade, however, the town of Marysville had been laid out.¹³

It is difficult to describe to the reader exact locations of these first settlements in Yuba City for several reasons. The first is that the original plan of numbering blocks and lots has been changed entirely. And another reason is that the lots occupied by these first settlers are under the levee. But fortunately the lots owned and occupied by Rolfe and Cheever were a part of a block which we can now identify very clearly as will be done shortly.

A further reason that it is difficult to locate early landmarks in terms of the modern city is that very few of the original streets have been retained either by name or by location. But again fortunately, three of the original streets which have been retained will serve to locate Rolfe and Cheever's store. These are Second, B, and C Streets.

The street of the original town which ran along the bank of the Feather River, and which logically ought to have been called First Street was called Water Street. Then to the west running parallel to Water Street came the present day Second Street followed by Third, Fourth, etc., but which no longer exist. The street on the north edge of the town running east and west and at right angles to Water Street was called A Street. Then to the south came the present day B and C Streets followed by D, E, F, etc. but which do not exist today.

Block number one of the original town was the northeast block bounded by Water, A, Second and B Streets. Then block number two was the next one to the south bounded by Water, B, Second, and C Streets. It was in this block number two that the first improvements of Yuba City were made.

Each block contained eight lots which measured 83 by 166 feet. In this block No. 2, Lot No. 1 was at the corner of Water and C Streets. They were numbered to the north so that lot No. 4 was on the corner of Water and B Streets. Lot No. 5 was on the corner of Second and B Streets, the numbers then running south with Lot No. 8 on the corner of Second and C.¹⁴

As has been stated, this block No. 2 can be identified easily because the west half of the block (or lots number 5, 6, 7 and 8) is now the site of the new county office building and library while the levee and river bank now cover the east half of lots Number 1, 2, 3 and 4.

When Rolfe and Cheever opened their store in August 1849 the proprietors gave them lots Number 3 and 4 of block No. 2, and it was somewhere on these lots that they constructed their first shelter of poles and canvas. But by April 1850 they had erected three board houses on Water Street facing the river. These lots were opposite the mouth of the Yuba River, and were chosen to be the beginning of the town because they were thought to be the most convenient spot to the miners coming down from the Yuba diggings. And this choice was later proved correct by the location of the first hotel (Western) on the corner of Water and B (Lot No. 4) and the landing for the first ferry connecting Yuba City and Marysville opposite the hotel.¹⁵

Two other members of the Cheever family came to Yuba City in the spring of 1850. They were George F. Cheever and Charles G. Cheever and were probably cousins of the three brothers, Henry, David and Edward. We have no record of their activity or occupation other than that they owned some lots. Their names appear as witnesses on deeds a few times.

It is not possible to state exactly how many lots in Yuba City were owned by members of the Cheever family because all of the early deeds were not recorded. This failure to record all deeds was the result of the fact that lots were being sold and deeds given as much as a year before the county government was fully organized. Many deeds were never brought in to be recorded after the Recorders office was opened.

Henry Cheever as one of the four original proprietors owned an undivided one fourth of the town before any lots were conveyed to individual purchasers. Each of the proprietors took title to certain lots in the beginning but left the larger fraction of the town as joint property. They jointly sold many lots and each one sold some of his lots individually. But inasmuch as all of the deeds were not recorded we cannot account for all ownership.

David Cheever as partner of Rolfe owned at least 24 lots and Edward owned a half dozen. The cousins, George F. and Charles G. owned only a few each. As will be noted later, the father, Captain James W. inherited Henry's holdings but we have no record of the extent of the property.

The partnership of David Cheever and Tallman Rolfe was dissolved in April 1850. Each one deeded to the other his interest in certain lots until there was no joint ownership.¹⁶ Rolfe became active in county politics and David took over the store which he operated with little success for a year or more. He left California in 1854, returning to Salem, Massachusetts, but later became a pioneer of the Territory of Colorado. There he became prominent in politics serving in the territorial legislature and as secretary to the governor. During President Grant's administration, he was appointed postmaster of Denver. He died in 1881.¹⁷

There is no evidence that Henry Cheever ever resided in Yuba City or had any active interest in the town other than ownership. In May, 1850 he sold one fourth of his one fourth interest in the unsold portion of the town (one sixteenth) to his two brothers, David and Edward, and his two cousins Charles G. and George F. He received 4000 dollars for this one sixteenth share, each of the four purchasers paying 1000 dollars for his one sixty-fourth share. A few years later David sold his one sixty-fourth for 400 dollars.¹⁸

Evidently Henry's business affairs were in a poor state, and he needed to secure some cash. He borrowed 17000 dollars from a group of four men including his father, Captain James W.; and as security he deeded his remaining three sixteenths interest in Yuba City to a trustee who was to sell as much property as possible to liquidate the debt. But before the debt was satisfied Henry died in San Francisco in 1853. His father paid off the other three creditors and was given possession of what remained of the three sixteenths.¹⁹

Edward Cheever remained in Yuba City for a year or more. In November of 1850 after the county government was operating the sheriff sold many lots for taxes including several owned by Edward One of these lots is of particular interest. It is the corner lot 83 by 166 at Second and C Streets now a part of the site of the court house. Edward had also speculated in some lots in Linda, but the sheriff of Yuba county sold them for taxes.²⁰

Edward returned to Salem with David in 1854 and later to Illinois where he had lived before coming to California. In 1862 he enlisted in the Illinois Volunteer Infantry with which he saw action in several of the principal battles of the Civil War.

He later joined his brother, David in Colorado, but in 1883 returned to California. He did newspaper work in San Francisco and was active in the Grand Army of the Republic and the Society of California Pioneers until his death in 1892.²¹

The father, Captain James W. Cheever probably never came to California. We have no record of his affairs after he assumed ownership of Henry's share of Yuba City. And we have no further record of the affairs of the two cousins, Charles G. and George F. We can be pretty certain that their property went the way of most town lots owned by the early settlers. It was sold for taxes because there was not enough demand for lots in Yuba City to justify paying taxes on more than a few on Water Street facing the river.

The last official record we have involving the Cheevers and Yuba City is a judgement given by Judge K. S. Mahon of the Superior Court of Sutter County. The California Fruit Cannery Association (the forerunners of C.F.C.) brought suit to quiet title to property "on the southerly side of B Street produced ... where the Northern California Railway intersects B Street ..." The judgement, handed down July 28, 1903, gave ownership in fee to the association. Among the twenty-two persons invited to appear in court to defend their claim to title were Henry, David, Edward, George F., Charles G. and James W. Cheever in accordance with the droll and macabre legal tradition of challenging dead men to come forth and do legal combat.²²

NOTES AND REFERENCES

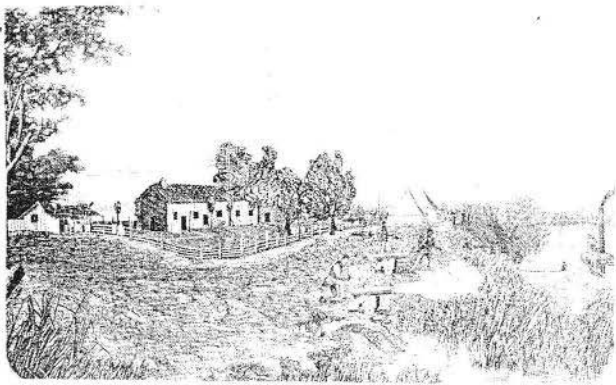
- 1 Frank E. Myers, Defenders of the Union
Overland Monthly, Second Series, San Francisco, Vol. 27, pp. 434-462
- 2 Polynesian, Honolulu, Marcy 15, 1845
- 3 Ibid., August 16, 1845; October 25, 1845; January 10, 1846; April 4, 1846;
July 18, 1846
- 4 Larkin Papers, George P. Hammond, Ed.
U.C. Press, Berkeley; Vol. VI, P. 152 and P. 339
- 5 John H. Eagleston, An Early California Voyage, Salem, 1874. p. 26
Captain Eagleston lost his crew in San Francisco. They jumped ship and went to the diggings. So he sold the Mary and Ellen and returned to Salem on other ships. He claims to have taken to Salem the first samples of California gold.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 26 Edward E. Cheever, First Settlement of Yuba City
Quarterly, Society of California Pioneers, December 1932, Vol. 9, p. 228
- 7 John A. Sutter, Jr., Statement
Allan R. Ottley, Ed. Sacramento 1943, p. 93
- 8 Ibid., p. 91
- 9 Book of Deeds A, P.1. Sutter County
This is not an exact and complete quotation of this deed
- 10 Edward E. Cheever, Through the Straits of Magellan in 1849
Quarterly, Society of California Pioneers, Vol. IV., PP 137-163
This article by Edward Cheever gives an excellent description of the difficulties a sail vessel had getting through the straits. He read the paper to a meeting of the California Historical Society at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco January 13, 1891. It was published some thirty years later in the Pioneers' Quarterly.

- 11 Ibid., PP 137-163
 Nearly all of the personal details of the Cheever brothers affairs have been taken from this article and his First Settlement of Yuba City
12. Thomson and West, History of Nevada County, p. 228
 Sacramento Union, November 22, 1872.
 These references pertain to Tallman Rolfe primarily, but his Yuba City venture is included.
- 13 These quotations are from the two articles by Edward Cheever already cited.
 Marysville was opened to purchasers of lots and residents in January, 1850.
- 14 "Map of Yuba City. Situated at the Head of Navigation on the Feather River opposite the Mouth of Yuba River as Surveyed by Jos. S. Ruth."
 Deed Book E, p. 63 Sutter County
- 15 Deed Book A, p. 6 Sutter County
 Hereafter these Sutter County deeds will be referred to by book and page only. Some readers perhaps need to be reminded at this point that in 1849 the mouth of the Yuba River was further to the north than its present location. In later years the channel was diverted to the south to allow a more gradual merging with the Feather.
- 16 Deeds A, pp. 20-22; A, 12.
- 17 E.E. Cheever, First Settlement . . . p. 228
- 18 Deeds D, pp. 236-237.
- 19 Deeds C, p. D, p. 335
- 20 Deeds C, p. 96.
 Book 5 of Deeds, Yuba County, p. 171
- 21 Myers, Defenders of the Union, (see note No. 1)
 Edward E. Cheever, The Indians of California
 The American Naturalist, Salem, Mass.
 Vol. IV. May 1870, No. 3, pp. 129-148
 Cheever was accepted as an authority on the Indians of California, but this treatise in the Naturalist is very general and formal and does not read as if the author were recording his observations.
 He served for several years as historian of the California Pioneers and is credited with inducing many pioneers to write memoirs. The Pioneers did not have ample publishing opportunity at the time, but these memoirs were kept and published in the Quarterly many years after Cheever's death.
- 22 Deeds 31, p. 109

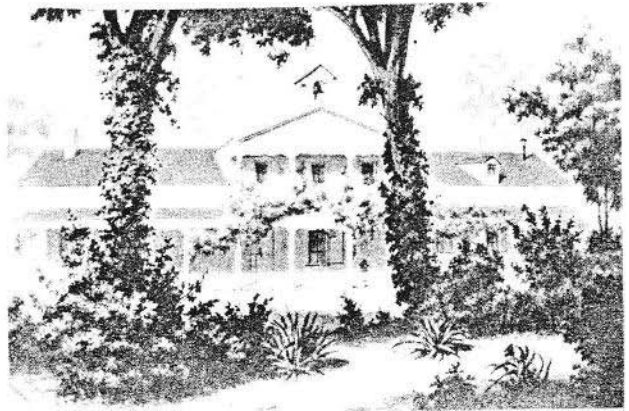
ERRATA

(Dr. William McMurtry)
 July 19th Issue

- Page 1 Joseph, the first, came over earlier than 1734.
- Page 1 William's great, great, great grandfather Joseph emigrated to Philadelphia.
 William's grandfather Joseph L. was the second Joseph.
 William's great grandfather James was a pioneer of Virginia.
- Page 5 Sarah Catherine born 1835; Louis born 1837. Imogen named after Shakespeare's heroine, is spelled without the final "e".
- Page 6 Second line from last reads - "I fired and the Indian jumped up and right there ran to the hills. "Right there" should read and "eight others."
- Page 6 It was William's brother, James, also a Doctor, who wished to go to California.
- Page 7 John Van Anglen, brother-in-law. Mark out the work "unlucky".
- Sarah Maria McMurtry died September 4, 1882.



HOCK FARM 1851
(Lithograph)
Cannon being fired in salute
to passing steamer by Alphonse Sutter
(youngest son)



HOCK FARM 1854
(Water color Sketch)

MOTION PICTURE FILM - Pictorial History of Sutter County
TIME - About 20 minutes with a maximum of 200 still pictures

Handsome opening and closing titles, off camera narration by a
professional performer

Sound effects and background music

Production handled by a crew of expert film artists and craftsmen

Price range, depending upon the technical requirements of the
script, would be \$200 to \$250 per minute of film.

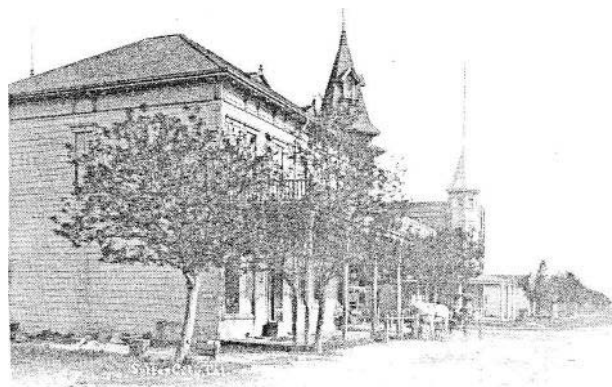
Price range includes all costs including one first class release
print and set of flat pictures used in production

Ownership of master film would be vested solely in Historical Society
of Sutter County

Bonanza Associates would have rights to handle all reproductions,
marketing and distribution of prints made from a duplicate negative

Price of prints - \$125

When fund has been established it will require 120 days to complete
the film.



SUTTER CITY HOTEL
Early 1900's
Burned at later date