

**SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**NEWS BULLETIN**

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**SUTTER COUNTY HOSPITAL MISS EMMA HEIER – NURSE IN CHARGE**  
(1918)

THE SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BULLETIN

Mrs. Bernice Gibson  
Editor

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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FALL MEETING: OCTOBER 17, 1967 - 7:30 P.M.  
(PLACE TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER)

PROGRAM: Mexico and The Sea of Cortez. (The Gulf of Lower  
California)

Mrs. Florence Arritt will show beautiful slides and artifacts which she and her husband have collected on their tours by trailer through the very interesting sections of the country, which preceded California in discovery and settlement.

We are looking for a new place to hold our regular meetings because some of us are allergic to stair climbing, including our president. We hope to find a comfortable location on the ground floor. Our age might be catching up with some of us but please keep it under cover.

ONE DAY TOUR BY BUS TO SAN FRANCISCO AND SAN RAFAEL

We have been invited to visit the old Presidio in San Francisco and Fort Point under Golden Gate Bridge with lunch planned for us in the officers mess hall of the Presidio. In the afternoon we are invited to visit the Pony Express Museum in San Rafael. We will be the guests of Waddell F. Smith, owner of the Pony Express Museum. We can charter a Greyhound bus for the trip if there are 30 or more people interested. The best time to make the trip would probably be on Saturday in the early part of October.

One day tour by bus to San Francisco and San Rafael

I am interested in taking such a tour in October;

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no. \_\_\_\_\_

Any other choice of date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please cut this part of the page off and mail to:

Mrs. Bernice Gibson, 360 Percy Avenue, Yuba City, Calif.

## FALL SYMPOSIUM SHAPING UP

The plans for the Northern California Fall Symposium of the Conference of California Historical Societies are shaping up very well, according to Mrs. Tom Mougovan, of Fort Bragg, who is the General Chairman for the event.

The Mendocino County Historical Society is hosting the affair, and it will be held at Fort Bragg on September 22-24. Fort Bragg is about eighty miles north of San Francisco on the coast.

Tours of the vicinity, and especially of the lumber industry in that region, are planned for the guests. This will include logging, tie making, tan bark, shipping, early railroad, etc.

Mrs. Mougovan says, "We plan to have some old-time square dancing with a real live caller, for entertainment. And the Indians, Yuki and Pomos, of that region, will be featured. Elsie Allen, one of the last of the Pomo basket weavers, (who is currently giving a course at the Mendocino Art Center) will speak on the art of basket weaving as practiced by her tribe, and, if possible, the Chief of the Stewart Point Indians and his wife, will demonstrate some of the tribal customs. Their program was much enjoyed by the Society recently, and was requested again."

Speakers have not yet been named for the program. We will have full details and program in the September issue of the Historian.

# HISTORY OF SUTTER COUNTY HOSPITAL

By Kirk Riley

Prior to the building of a county owned hospital, patient care in Sutter County was arranged by contract of the Board of Supervisors with the lowest bidder. The bidder had to provide room, board, equipment and a building; and was paid on the basis of a set amount per patient per day. Doctors services were also contract by the Board of Supervisors to the lowest bidder. The bidders were also required to post a bond to make sure the services would be supplied.<sup>1</sup>

From 1856 to May 1860, various people and doctors held contracts for care of people in need of medical attention. On May 9, 1860, Doctor B. W. Mitchell was authorized to treat county patients in his private hospital at Nicolaus at the rate or 400 per day per patient. C. E. Wilcoxon, county clerk, was authorized to certify the indigent sick to be cared for by Dr. Mitchell.<sup>2</sup>

In 1861, by virtue of agreement with the Yuba County Board of Supervisors, the 'Sutter County Board of Supervisors allowed Yuba County to care for all certified indigent sick

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, Volume A

<sup>2</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, May 9, 1860, Page 448, Volume A

of Sutter County at the rate of \$1.25 per patient per day for board, care and all medical treatment.<sup>3</sup> This co-operation lasted until February 10, 1866 when the sick were returned to Sutter County under a contract with J. A. Fox, who supplied care for \$1.25 per day per patient and Dr. E. B. Dunwell was hired at \$150 per quarter to treat them.<sup>4</sup>

From 1866 until 1876, the Board of Supervisors let people bid for supplying medical services each year. The Board of Supervisors visited some of the temporary hospitals during that time noting from time to time, as on February 3, 1869 that all was in good repair and nothing was needed for the convenience of the patients.

On August 17, 1875 the Sutter Weekly Banner carried an article stating the institution was a disgrace and should be investigated.

Probably as a result of this, in 1876, the Board of Supervisors purchased land for a County Hospital. On May 6, 1876 several pieces of land were appraised and on May 26, 1876 the hospital land was sold to the county by J. W. Thomas, the county clerk. The land was bought for \$1600 on July 5, 1876 and it was ordered accepted and surveyed on the same day.<sup>5</sup> Although no mention was found of it in the Board of Supervisors minutes, it is believed that a building was erected on the land shortly after this.

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<sup>3</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, May 17, 1861, Volume B

<sup>4</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, February 10, 1866, Volume B

<sup>5</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, July 5, 1876, Volume C

After 1876, the Board again advertised for bids for doctors and wardens and when they were received, business went on normally until the winter of 1880 when the hospital building was destroyed by flood. The Board of Supervisors then took bids for rebuilding the hospital and on September 26, 1881 the bid from Swift and Neal for \$1050 to build the building was accepted. The Board stated that the building must be completed within six weeks from October 1881.<sup>6</sup>

After the county took over the hospital completely in 1881, the Board of Supervisors hired a doctor, warden and nurses, directly, instead of taking bids for them and have continued to do so since. Food and other supplies, however, were still supplied by bid.

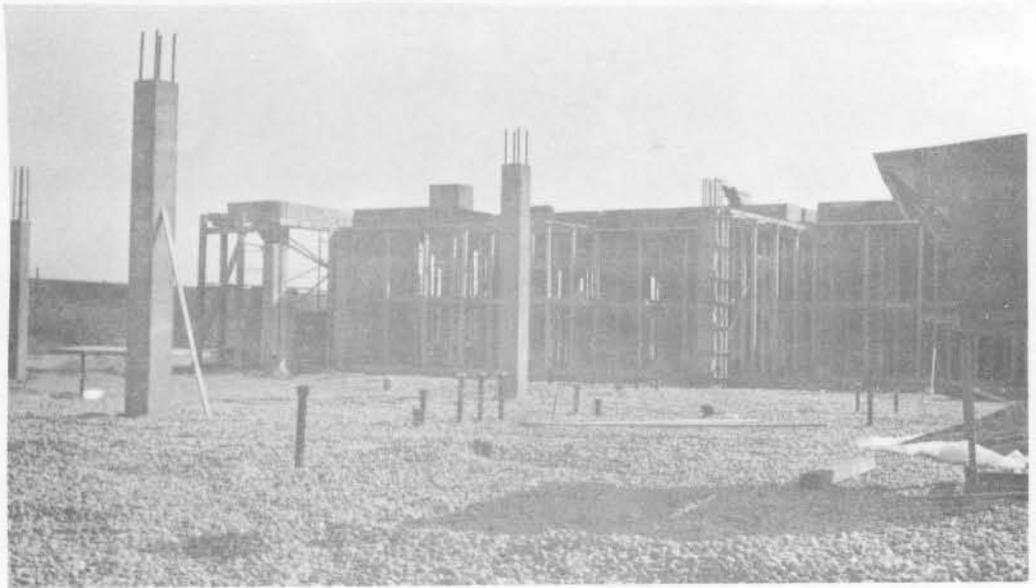
Between 1881 and 1916 the minutes of the Board of Supervisors meetings show various entries dealing with repairs, additions, modifications to the buildings and various entries dealing with the hiring of wardens and doctors. In 1891, a residence for the warden was built on the hospital grounds for the sum of \$419.00.<sup>7</sup>

By 1916 a need for a new, modern hospital had risen and plans were then made for erecting a forty bed one story structure.

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<sup>6</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, September 26, 1881, Volume C

<sup>7</sup> Board of Supervisors minutes, May 3, 1891, Volume D



The building of a new hospital was instigated because of a very critical inspection by the State Board of Charities and Correction. Both the jail and the hospital were declared to be out of date and unfit for use. The Board declared "the inmates of the hospital were getting good care and plenty of food and for the time can do without fancy buildings, which no doubt, would be an ornament to the county."

November 7, 1916 an election for a bond issue was called. The bond election called for \$320,000 of which \$20,000 was stipulated for a hospital.

The Board of Supervisors conferred with architect Chester Cole and Engineer N. B. Ellery and paid a visit to the hospital grounds accompanied by a representative from the State Board of Charities. Mr. Cole had two plans, one for a two story building and the other for a one story building with either reinforced concrete or steel lath and concrete finish. Both plans were fireproof structures. The one story building was favored by the State officials. The main building will be steam heated and wired for electricity, piped for water, etc. and be up to date in every respect.

In July 1918 the main part of the new County Hospital and south wing of same was completed and furniture installed. Warden Simons and wife, and nurse, Miss Emma Heier moved into the new quarters and proceeded to get everything in shape for the inmates. County Physician, Allen Gray had the operating room equipped and everything put in first class condition.

The north wing was soon completed which completed the structure of Mission style costing over \$30,000. The building was accepted by the Board of supervisors on August 6, 1918. Later the building was dedicated by giving a dance for the benefit of the Red Cross. This is the building which is still being used until another new one is completed in 1967.<sup>8</sup>

In April 1919, the Board of Supervisors decided to advertise the old hospital building to be sold at auction, May 6, 1919, in front of the Court House. On that date it was sold to C. A. Bonham for the sum of \$100, that amount being the best and highest bid.

As of June 30th, 1919 Miss Heier resigned as nurse and Warden Simon and wife also submitted their resignations. N. J. Wilcoxon was appointed warden of the County Hospital beginning July 1, 1919 and Mrs. N. J. Wilcoxon was appointed nurse for a term of one year beginning July 1, 1919.

The Wilcoxons operated the hospital for several years. In the late twenties Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bailey were appointed to operate the hospital. Mr. Bailey was appointed warden and Mrs. Bailey, a registered nurse, was complete charge and the part time doctor was Dr. T. P. Peery. They were assisted by Miss Pozzi, a practical nurse and such other help as was hired

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<sup>8</sup> Sutter County Farmer, February 9, 1917; April 5, 1918; June 7, 1918



CONSTRUCTION METHODS OF THE NEW COUNTY HOSPITAL.



NEW COUNTY HOSPITAL UNDER CONSTRUCTION REED G. CONDIE BUS. ADMIN. (1967)

by Mrs. Bailey. In 1938 Mrs. Bailey hired some graduate nurses to replace her practical nurses and then fired them for complaining of her methods. The fired nurses then made their charges against Mrs. Bailey public and the Board of Supervisors started an investigation.<sup>9</sup>

The Grand Jury took testimony from those concerned. The nurses charged that Mr. and Mrs. Bailey and Miss Pozzi made them do things that their life-time of training told them not to do. It was charged that nurses were handling obstetrical cases without a doctor present; that nurses were refused permission to wear gloves and gown while attending syphilitic patients when they had to attend to other patients immediately thereafter; that bedpans used for syphilitic patients were used for maternity patients without being disinfected; that Mrs. Bailey slapped the faces of patients and refused appalling filth existed. The nurses also objected to spending their time washing dishes and laundry instead of caring for patients. Mrs. Bailey claimed the charges were exaggerated and things were really not out of order. Dr. Peery said that because of over work he had made arrangements with Miss Pozzi for the nurses to handle deliveries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Independent Farmer, April 5, 1938

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

As a result of the investigations, Mr. and Bailey were fired along with Miss Pozzi and Dr. Peery was put in charge of the hospital. This bothered many people so the Board of Supervisors had a court trial to attempt to prove something against Dr. Peery. The trial was not successful in proving anything and on the 24th of June Dr. Peery was rehired for the coming year. Dr. Peery then resigned immediately and the Board hired Sr. Joseph Lentz, a Stanford Medical School student, as the Superintendent and full time doctor. After a year, Dr. Lentz needed an assistant and one was provided by the Board. In 1945, the Board of Supervisors hired a full time Superintendent so the doctor would be free from administrative work.

Local Medical Association members helped the county doctor and in 1955, when Dr. Lentz resigned, the medical association was made the body for recommending a new doctor.

Many of the doctors wanted to combine the two county hospitals at that time but the residents of Sutter County objected to such a plan. Some doctors are still working on this and will probably try again.

The only time the hospitals have tried to operate together was from July 1962 to June 1963 when Dr. Fratis served as medical director for both hospitals and he, Dr. Reeves, Dr. Gillis and Dr. Leavenworth provided medical service to both hospitals. Dr. Fratis hoped to get the two hospitals to operate as one at Yuba County Hospital. The Medical Society was bitter over this

and said they wouldn't help at the Sutter County Hospital anymore. In July of 1963 Dr. Leavenworth was hired as medical Director of Sutter County Hospital and is still here.

As early as 1962, plans had been formulated for building a new surgical wing on the present hospital to replace the very small operating room now in use but no action was taken in 1962-63 because Dr. Fratis was against it. By 1963, the Board of Supervisors decided it might be better to completely replace the old building, with the aid of Federal financing available through the Hill-Burton Act which provides aid in building hospitals in all the states across the nation. The money is appropriated by state and federal agencies with local agency providing about one third of the total. A request for Hill-Burton funds was made to the Government Advisory Board and a hospital survey to evaluate the local need was presented. It was decided that Sutter County had the greatest need for County Hospital beds in California and the request was granted in June of 1964 for the building of a forty-bed hospital. The Hill-Burton Act places a two year limit for starting the project, which set the date for starting in June 1966. If the deadline is not met the money goes buck to the United States Treasury. The State of California and Sutter County also had to contribute \$400,000 each to the project. Plans proceeded towards beginning of construction on the present site in June 1966 and is now, one year later, almost completed.