

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. VIII, NO. 2

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA (95991)

JULY, 1969



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COVER PICTURE

Marysville-Yuba City Street Railroad car at 3d and D Streets, Marysville, about 1906. Schneider's Clothing Store in the background.

Published quarterly by the Society at Yuba City, California 95991. Annual membership dues of \$2.00 includes receiving the NEWS BULLETIN. Life membership is \$25.00. Send your remittance to Lola Case, Treasurer, P. O. Box 1266, Yuba City 95991.

THE SUMMER MEETING!

The regular July meeting of the Society will be held.
at 7:00 P. M., Tuesday, the 15th, at Sam Brannon Park,
Gray Avenue, Yuba City.

This will be a pot luck picnic. Details of the event.
will be published in the local papers. Expect a pleasant
evening with several features that will make the
affair well worth your time.

THE SUTTER COUNTY MUSEUM

and

Headquarters of the Society

114 Carriage Square, Yuba City Phone 673-7465

The hours of the Museum are from 10 A. M. - 4 P. M. Monday
through Friday.

THE SUTTER COUNTY LIBRARY

A resource agency for those of you interested in local history.

MATERIAL ON SUTTER COUNTY HISTORY IN THE SUTTER COUNTY LIBRARY

The most important Sutter County tools in the
library are the Thompson and West History of Sutter
County (1879) and the Peter Delay History of Yuba
and Sutter Counties (1924).

There are few copies in existence and they are not replaceable.

Other quick information may be had from History of the Sacramento Valley, 3 volumes. Two volumes are biographical, and many Sutter County citizens are listed with valuable information about them and their families.

A Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California is helpful at times if the families that are being searched for happen to be included. The Directories begin with McKenney's Directory of Yuba, Sutter, Butte and Tehama Counties printed in 1881 and followed in 1888 with Volume I of R. L. Polk's California State Gazetteer, which lists every little village in the state with slight description and the names and occupations of its citizenry. The Directories then extend to the present time.

The Sutter County Great Registers start with the year 1872. The old Registers give interesting information on the registered voter. The 1892 Register gives the name, height, complexion, color of eyes, color of hair, visible marks or scars if any and their locality, country of nativity, occupation, local residence and precinct, post office address, naturalization date, place and court. We do not have all the Registers. Some are missing but the overall coverage is good.

The Sutter County Historical Bulletins have been bound, and Mr. Earl Ramey has indexed them, making them easy to use.

- To be concluded in the next issue.

BERNICE BEST GIBSON



Bernice Best Gibson, former editor of the News Bulletin, has been honored for this achievement by the American Association for State and Local History, which awarded her a Certificate of Commendation.

The award was announced last December through the California Historical Society, which sponsored her nomination for the national citation as requested by the Sutter County Historical Society. She was one of two Californians among the 56 persons so honored in the United States and Canada in 1968.

One of the founders of Sutter County Historical Society, which was formed January 28, 1954, Mrs. Gibson served as its first secretary and then for several terms as president. She now is a life member. For about 14 years she edited the News Bulletin, serving without compensation.

Now a resident of Pacific Grove, Mrs. Gibson is a native of Sutter County. She is a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Best, members of a pioneer family of this area. She is the widow of Mr. Emmet Gibson, late of Yuba City.

She taught for many years before joining the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools staff. She was county superintendent from 1955 to 1963.

THE MARYSVILLE - YUBA CITY RAILROAD

by Winifred Peirano Greene

One of the names most frequently heard in accounts of early industrial developments of Marysville and the surrounding area up to 1900 was that of David E. Knight. Some of his enterprises included gas, woolen mills, navigation and the subject of this article, "The Marysville-Yuba City Railroad."

In the early 1860's attempts were begun to acquire franchises to operate railways on the streets of Marysville, and later some proposals were made to run a street railway line between Marysville and Yuba City.

These proposals involved promoters, city councils, boards of supervisors, and the state legislature; and the conflicts of interest could supply the subject for an entire article. Fears were expressed that the granting of a franchise would give the railroads complete control of the city streets.

In the spring of 1888, after assuring the Marysville City Council that the venture was in the public interest, an ordinance was adopted by the Council on May 14, granting a right of way for a railway over city streets, to David E. Knight, Charles Weeman, S. H. Bradley and S. C. Deaner.

As Yuba City was not yet incorporated, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors granted a franchise to these same four men to operate on Yuba City streets.

The company incorporated as The Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad Company, and had as its officers D. E. Knight, president; J. N. Jewett, treasurer; and W. T. Ellis, secretary.

Construction was started in Marysville in May of 1889, and shortly thereafter in Yuba City. Numerous legal difficulties were encountered and injunctions issued or threatened over some aspects of the right of way, methods of construction, weight of rails, etc., etc. Two buildings were acquired in Marysville, one facing on C Street and one on Oak Street just north of Second Street, and these were remodeled for use as the car barn and stable.

Four cars, two open and two closed, were ordered from Holt Brothers in Stockton. Seating capacity was 16 for the closed car and 20 to 30 for the open car. A span of mules was hitched offset so the animals would not have to walk on the rails.

The 19th of August, 1889, was the first regular day of operation, and it followed the route shown on the accompanying sketch.

The author's father, Thomas W. Peirano, who had been working for Mr. Knight since coming to Marysville from Kansas, was employed as one of his drivers. He was later promoted to "superintendent," and held this position until the service was supplanted by the Northern Electric Railroad in 1906.

Numerous happenings to himself and the other drivers were related by Tom Peirano to his daughters, some comic,

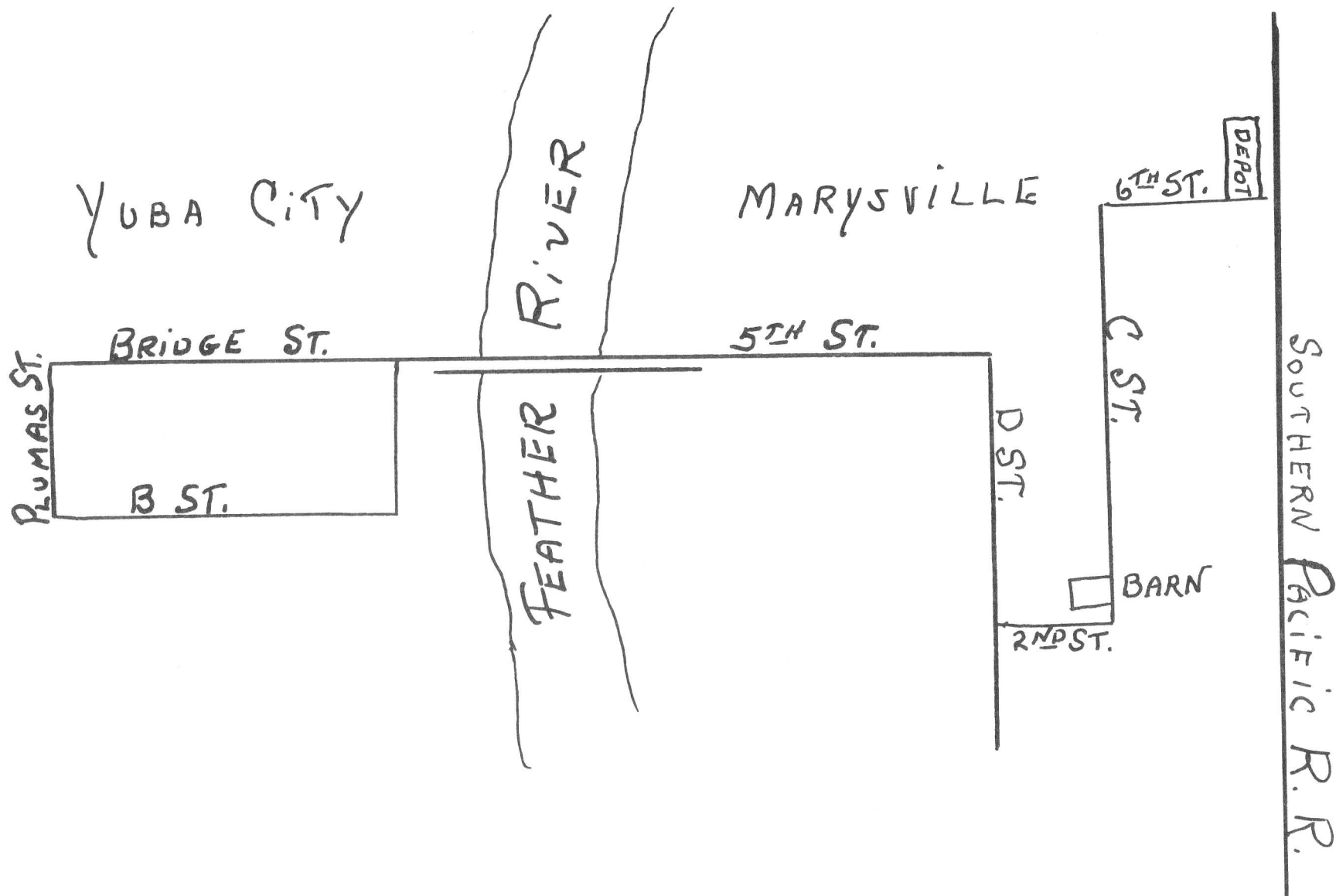
some serious. One of the drivers was held up at gun point by two armed robbers on B Street in Yuba City one night, and five passengers were relieved of a small amount of cash. An inebriated gentleman who had tarried too long at The Cliff House on the Marysville side of the bridge was discovered badly mangled near the tracks and was presumed to have been run over by the car. According to a later account in a Marysville paper, he had recovered sufficiently to resume drinking.

Groups of boys and young men would sneak up behind the car and attempt to derail it, and if the driver could reach them with his whip, they paid dearly for their fun. More often the boys were eager to assist by helping the driver hoist the car back on the tracks when it became derailed.

Another incident related was that of a group of pranksters placing a dummy on the tracks on the eve of April Fool's Day, which spooked the mules and caused the car to run over the supposed body, giving the driver a terrible scare.

A stub track extended from Second to First and D Streets, to the Marysville Theatre. The cars operated there each night for the convenience of the theatre patrons.

In 1893 Knight attempted to put a motor-driven car in operation, but after numerous trials, the idea was abandoned. The car was noisy, but the chief reason for discontinuing it was that it frightened horses.



MARYSVILLE YUBA CITY STREET RAILROAD

During the 1890's some of the streets were being paved in Marysville, and there was great contention between Mayor W. T. Ellis, Jr., the City Council and Knight over costs, and how the rails should be relaid after the streets were paved.

Knight passed away in 1900. In 1904 rumors began to be heard that the road was to be sold because of its franchise to an electric line that was then building toward Marysville and Yuba City. These rumors proved to be true, and in 1906 the Northern Electric Railway purchased a controlling interest in The Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad, and on November 2, 1906 mule car service was discontinued. The closed cars were moved out on the electric line going north from Yuba City and were used for temporary stations.

At country stations on the steam and electric roads where there was no agent, the trains did not stop, but a flag was available for the patron to wave to the engineer, indicating that he wanted the train to stop. At night a lantern was used or a handful of newspapers set afire.

One of Tom Peirano's sayings, evidently stemming from his railroad work, on seeing a scantily clad person was, "He didn't have enough clothes on to flag a handcar."

Special thanks are due Mr. Earl Ramey for his invaluable help in supplying data for this article.

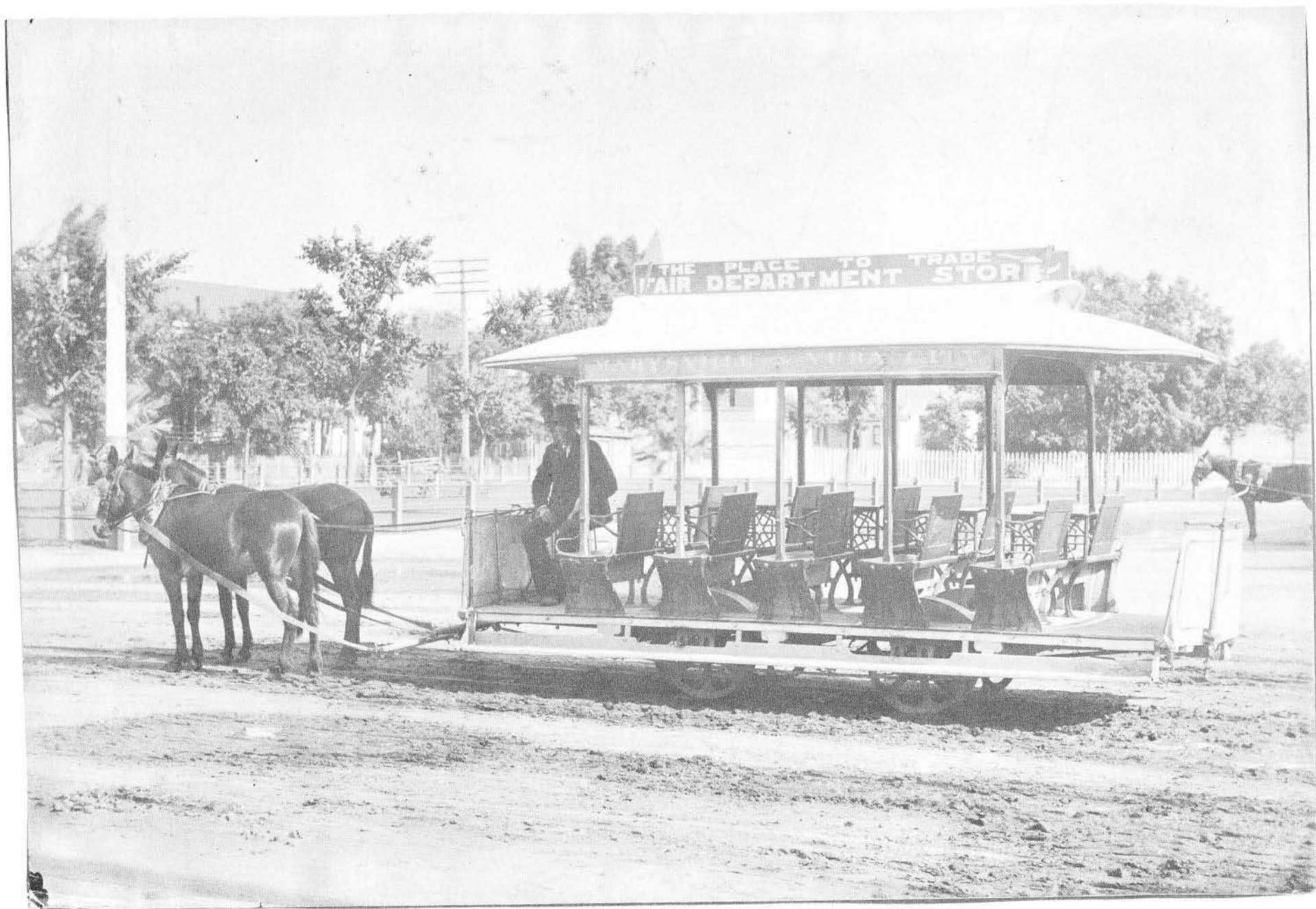
For persons desiring more details of the Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad, an excellent article appeared in The Western Railroader issue of August 1966, by Kirby M. Harris, railroad buff, formerly with the Marysville Fire Department.

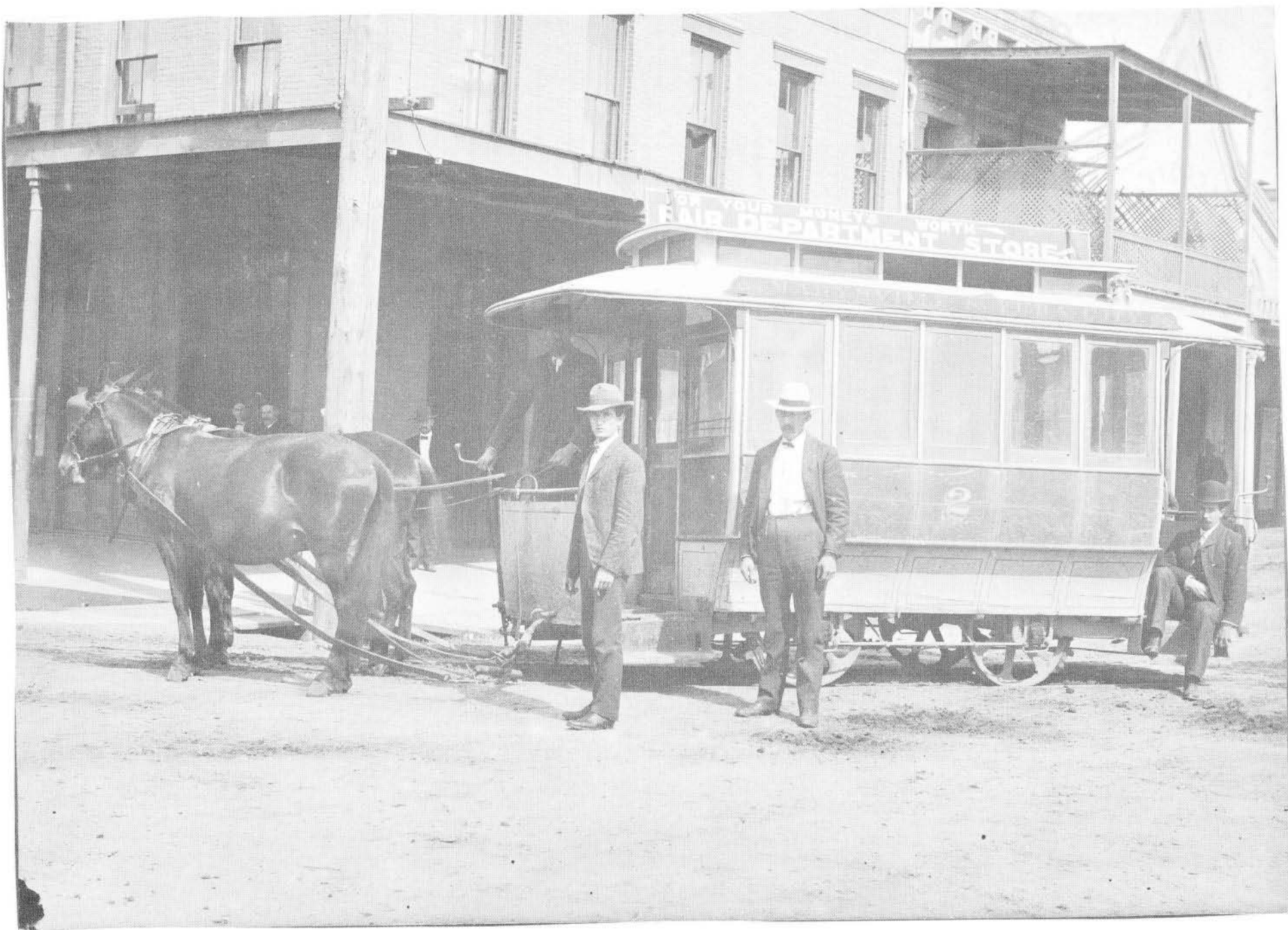
MARYSVILLE-YUBA CITY RAILROAD IN PICTURES

Courtesy of Edw. von Geldern

The following photographs are in this order:

1. One of the cars used in the summer. Hughes is the driver.
2. Car No. 2 turning the corner from C Street into 2d Street.
3. The baseball team and fans on D Street between 4th and 5th. H. B. P. Carden is the young man with the straw hat and white collar behind the mules. Mr. Pogue is at the extreme right.
4. Where are we? C Street looking north? D. Coughlin, Shoeing is the sign in the background. Notice that the mules are off center. One mule walked between the tracks and the other on the left of the car.
5. Looking east on 5th Street from the grade to the Feather River bridge. The steeple at the left center is the Presbyterian Church. The square tower farther left is the Episcopal Church.
6. The grade leading to the bridge across the Feather River looking west on 5th Street. Note the rails in the mud.
7. Car built by Edw. von Geldern in 1922 for the Peach Day Parade. James Barr is the boy standing in the window. The boy with chin on the window is Robert Morley. Von Geldern is on the back platform. Frank Ellis is the driver.
8. The same car as in the preceding picture but at a later parade. Robert Morley is the driver.





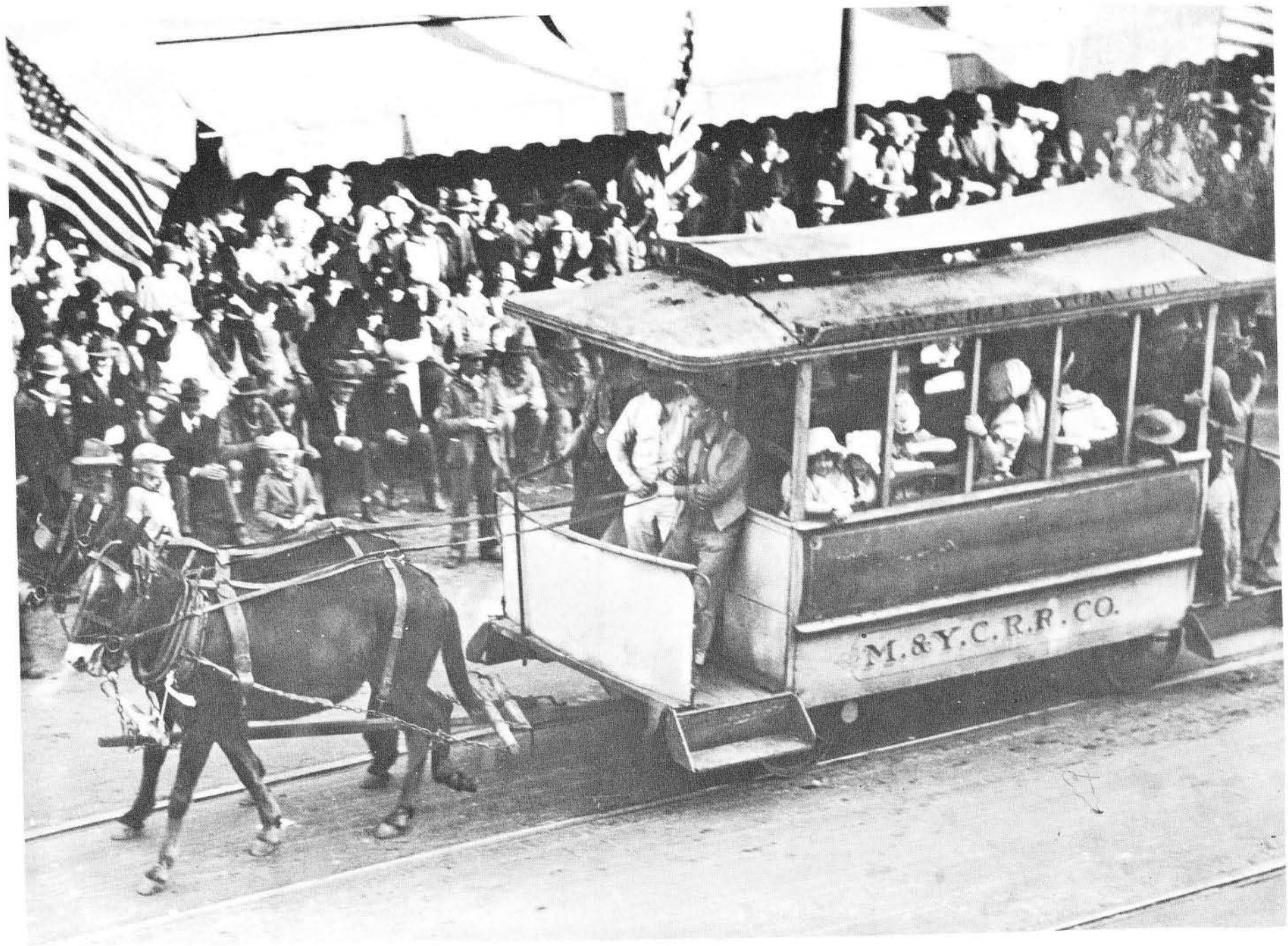








TH ST. GRADE. J. SYLL
MARCH 1889



THE MARYSVILLE APPEAL *
January 1, 1888

THE CITY OF MARYSVILLE A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE

(Fanciful paragraphs embodying many interesting possibilities.)

1. With a population of 100,000, Marysville ought to have more street car lines. The D Street road is overtaxed. An elevated road to the park is talked of.

2. The Minneapolis and Marysville road is selling first-class round-trip tickets this winter for \$20. Anybody can afford to visit California in these times.

3. Two thousand dollars an acre was refused last week for an orange orchard on Sunset Avenue, 10 miles west of Yuba City. The trees are ninety years old and pay a good interest on a larger sum. The land would bring \$1,000 an acre without any improvements.

4. An old photograph of "The Heights," taken during the period when they were known as "The Buttes," was brought to the Appeal office yesterday and excited much surprise. The picture represents the slopes, now so beautifully terraced and clothed in foliage, as positively bare.

* The editor indulged in a little fantasy, dreaming up conditions that have, in some instances, come true before the hundred years have passed.

THE MARYSVILLE APPEAL

January 5, 1888

UNITED STATES HOTEL

Corner of C and 3rd Streets

Marysville, California

L. Scheu and S. Lewek, Props.

The well-known popularity of the above named house and the untiring energy of the proprietors to make their house a favorite with the public is too well known to need any further recommendations. Our omnibus will be at the depot on the arrival of all trains, to convey passengers and baggage, free, to the house. Persons called for by all stages leaving the city. Terms to suit the times.

SUTTER CITY GOING AHEAD

J. Lyon, president of the Sutter County Land and Improvement and Reclamation Co. told an Appeal reporter last evening that he thinks the prospects are very good for rapid growth at Sutter City. There are eight new buildings there, and lumber is on the ground for three more. It is expected that an Odd Fellows hall will soon be constructed, and lots have been given for the purpose. There is a good demand for building lots, and vineyard and orchard tracts. There is solid financial backing behind Sutter City.