

# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
1333 Butte House Road  
P. O. Box 1555  
Yuba City, CA 95991

## NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. XII, NO. 4

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95991

OCTOBER, 1973



Mr. and Mrs. John S. Wise

(Picture taken at the old Union Oil Company plant)

Mr. Wise came to East Nicolaus in 1913, built and operated a hotel and general merchandise store and did much for the good of the community.

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NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XII, No. 4

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THE FALL MEETING

The final 1973 meeting of the Sutter County Historical Society will take place at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 16 in the Assembly Room of the Sutter County Library in Yuba City.

The program will feature informal talks by Mrs. Sam Zell of District 10 and Mrs. J. L. Sullivan of Yuba City who are collaborating on a forthcoming book about interesting residences of this area of California.

Visitors will be welcome to attend the meeting.

NOTE PAPER SALE - Featuring:

1. The Tank House on the John A. Peter Ranch, East Nicolaus
2. The Meridian Bridge at Meridian, Sutter County
3. The Sutter County Hall of Records, Yuba City
4. The Sutter Buttes, Sutter County

Humphrey's Stationery, 621 Plumas Street, Yuba City  
The Sutter County Museum, 114 Carriage Square

The NEWS BULLETIN is published quarterly by the Society at Yuba City, California 95991. The annual membership dues include receiving the NEWS BULLETIN. Your remittance should be sent to Mrs. Wanda Rankin, Treasurer, 805 Orange Street, Yuba City. To insure delivery of your NEWS BULLETIN please notify the Treasurer of any change of address.

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## SUTTERANA

This letter from John Bidwell to Captain Sutter ought to have appeared on page eight of this Bulletin for January, 1972; The letter was written in April of 1851. Sutter had just proposed that Bidwell marry Eliza. And this is about the time that George Engler was courting Eliza much to the distaste of the Captain. It is doubtful that Eliza had been consulted about this plan of her father. Sutter was exercising that old world prerogative of parents to dispose of expendable daughters to the best advantage of the family. Bidwell was just the son-in-law he needed to salvage his tangled estate.

Here is an opportunity for the amateur historian to speculate about what might have been. While Bidwell might not have been able to liquidate Sutter's financial snarl, he would probably have provided a more comfortable life for the Captain and Mrs. Sutter in their declining years. And very surely Eliza's life would have been much happier because John Bidwell was far superior both intellectually and morally to the two husbands whom she married.

We learn two items of interest from Bidwell's letter --that Eliza spoke English and that her mother did not. We can also learn from biographies of John Bidwell that a few years later he weakened, broke his resolution and got married.

We quote this letter by permission of The Book Club of California from their publication of 1953. This may not be reproduced without permission. Pioneers of the Sacramento Introduction by Jane Grabhorn, Pages 7, 8 and 9.

Capt. J. A. Sutter

My Dear Sir,

Having spent a considerable portion of my life in your service; having partaken of your hospitality when a stranger in a strange land; having been with you under the variable circumstances through which it has been your fortune and misfortune to pass since I came to this country; and on all occasions, whether in prosperity or distress, finding you the same kind, agreeable, generous even to a fault, enterprising person, and manifesting the most unbounded confidence in myself; and finally to crown all your acts of attention and esteem you made me an offer -- and I know it must have been from the fullness of an affectionate heart and a sincere desire for my happiness -- of the hand of an only daughter.

Capt. Sutter I am not ungrateful, but I often want either means or ability to display my gratitude. I have felt the deepest interest in your welfare, on all occasions, whether in your employ or not, and I hope you will believe me sincere when I tell you, that in spite of all the changes of time, my grateful affection and friendship, which began with my first interview with you and have grown up and have become a part of myself and nature, can never be obliterated. I shall ever cherish the warmest regards for you and your family. During my recent calls at your farm on business, your family have shown me the politest attentions. I felt bad because they tried so much to make me comfortable -- for I was afraid they would discommode themselves.

Eliza speaks English very well and I was pleased with her accomplishments. I regretted much that I could not converse with Mrs. Sutter, but her attentions were unceasing and kind. Now Capt. Sutter I am at a loss to know what to say. My determination is made. I desire to prove to you on all occasions my gratitude. In matters of business you have only to say what you want done and it shall be done, so far as I can do. Whatever assistance I can render yourself or family in all time to come, I shall consider it a first duty.

You are identified with the history of California and your enterprise will form a theme for the historian, which shall transmit your name to all succeeding generations till the end of time. But you are known not in California alone, but in almost every other quarter of the globe. I saw no intelligent person during my visit to the U. States last year who did not inquire about Capt. Sutter, and I was really proud to answer that I had the honor of being intimately acquainted with him.

I desire to see you frequently, and to live, so long as we both may live, on terms of intimacy and friendship. I should be happy to visit you frequently-- have you do the same to me when convenient, and try and make life as pleasant as possible. But I cannot persuade myself to marry. I shall keep this offer a profound secret. I hate the very name of old bachelor, and yet I do not know that I shall ever marry. Let this be a secret between you and me. I remain Capt. Sutter, with the greatest

affection and esteem

Yours

J. Bidwell

PROGRESS REPORT #5

O U R M E M O R I A L P A R K

As of August 78 1973

HAVE YOU DRIVEN PAST IT LATELY?

VIEWED IT FROM ONSTOTT HIGHWAY AS YOU DRIVE SOUTH?

If so, you will see it's really beginning to look like a park with the 190 trees now planted and growing there (21 pines and six oaks having been planted since our last report).

Flat headed sun borers were discovered to be the culprits which ruined a number of birch trees (which will have to be replaced) but otherwise - with the regular watering, plus mulching around the base to conserve moisture, use of insecticides and whitewashing, as well as discing to keep down the weeds, all is progressing well.

However, this is but a good beginning for the beautiful memorial park which it can and will be with all of us working together! If every member of our Historical Society will participate both by direct gifts large or small, as well as tell their friends and neighbors about our project, Sutter County can the sooner boast of a true beauty spot. We need more publicity. Let people know what the Historical Society is striving to do, its obligation and everyone's privilege to share!

After all the trees are planted and well established will come the installation of a permanent watering system, grass and ground cover, shrubs, paths, picnic tables and benches, small children's playground equipment, etc., etc.. VISUALIZE THIS FINAL REALITY! Realize the opportunity given us now to be among the first of those that helped to make it possible!

Remember our gifts are tax deductible! Some are making outright gifts while the majority are making them in memory of a loved one. Acknowledgement cards will be sent to the families of those for whom such memorial gifts are made. All gifts are to be sent to the Bank of America, Colusa Avenue Branch. Envelopes may be obtained from the treasurer, Wanda Rankin, Randolph Schnabel, Norma Harter, or at the Museum.

List of donors continuing from our last Bulletin report:

Roberta McCoy in memory of their  
Marcella Hardy parents Marshall and  
Elizabeth Phillips Ann Shields  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Peters in memory of Thomas A. Gianella  
Jack Maxwell Howard in memory of Emsley Jackson Howard and  
Family  
Mr. and Mrs. Truman Wilson in memory of Clarence McBride  
Ernest and Marjorie Hauck in memory of the Hauck family  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Ferdinand Maris  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Kenyon T. Gregg  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Margaret Otto  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Herschel D. Graham  
Mr. and Mrs. Ulys E. Frye, Wheeler Frye, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A.  
Frye and Mr. and Mrs. Eugene H. Lonon in memory of Laura  
McAnulty  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Gwen McCart  
Howard and Norma Harter in memory of Esther Newfield

For a full list of donors\* from the beginning to date see special book on display at the County Library, as well as that containing the biographies or life histories of those in whose memories gifts of no less than \$50 have been made. We are still awaiting many of these to be sent in. Accompanying pictures are likewise welcomed.

Many members of our Historical Society are descendants of memorable old families whose life stories should thus be preserved for posterity. And how many veterans Sutter County has for whom no memorial exists! When our museum building becomes a reality these life stories will be permanently displayed. WILL YOURS BE THERE?

\*An alphabetical index of all donor names appear in the back of this book of donors, that they may be more readily ascertained.

EAST NICOLAUS

by

Phydelia "Deal" Murphy Wagner

Assisted by Mary Carlin Mulvany

East Nicolaus is on Highway 70 fifteen miles south of Yuba City in southern Sutter County. The town was started in 1905 when the Northern Electric Railroad was built. At this time the Sloss Security Company purchased 160 acres from John A. Peter and laid out the town site. The Northern Electric originally ran from Sacramento to Marysville but was later extended as far north as Chico.

In 1921 the Western Pacific acquired control of the Northern Electric from which time it was known as the Sacramento Northern. For several years there were passenger trains nearly every hour and daily freight trains. In 1918 a mail train arrived every morning at 9:30 carrying mail for Verona, Nicolaus and East Nicolaus. This train also picked up milk and cream brought to the depot from dairies in the vicinity.

In the beginning East Nicolaus consisted of two two-room houses, two four-room houses and some boxcars made into living quarters for the section hands. The Diamond Match Company opened a lumber yard, and there was a livery stable managed by the depot agent, James Berry. Gus Herring was the section foreman and William Kelly operated the electric substation.

At first the little settlement was called Nicolaus and was considered to be part of the older town two miles to the west. The name East Nicolaus was adopted when a post office was established on May 22, 1915. This first post office was in a corner of the store of John A. Wise. By 1960 it had

outgrown this location and L. J. Thornton erected a new post office building on North Palm Avenue. Evelyn S. Smith was the first postmaster and had served for thirty-five years when she retired in 1950. Phydalia Wagner took over the office and served until May 26, 1972. Anna Marr Drawver is now (1973) officer in charge until a new postmaster is appointed.

John A. Wise built and opened the first store in a small structure in 1913 but which was soon replaced by a larger building. Mr. Wise also built a hotel which became a very popular place. Some of the high school teachers who lived in the hotel included William Dawson, Stanley Hawthorne and Marian Ferguson Regli. Eber Beilby, retired supervisor of District No. 5, lived at the hotel while working for the Union Oil Company. Many salesmen stopped for meals when passing through to Marysville or Sacramento. The store and hotel burned in 1964 and were never replaced.

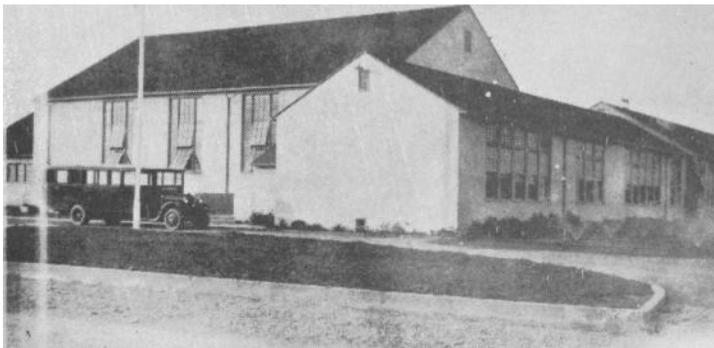
Other early places of business were a blacksmith shop operated by Nick Coupe in 1914 and a hardware store conducted by Charles Hudson who also served as constable. A butcher shop was owned by the brothers, John and Henry Wagner. They also ran a meat wagon supplying fresh meat to customers as far away as Verona and Tudor.

A storage warehouse was operated by C. M. Cerati as early as 1916. In 1926 he went to Italy and secured three drying units which had been patented by his brothers. With this equipment he established a rice drying plant in East Nicolaus which institution proved to be of great value to the growing rice industry. The plant was purchased from Mr. Cerati in 1938 by Carl F.



John A. Wise's First Store - 1913 or 1914

In the picture, left to right, Gertrude Herring Dorris, John A. Wise, Ruby Kelly, and Claude Reynolds.



East Nicolaus  
High School  
1930

Quiggle and later in 1962 was acquired by Souza Brothers who are yet (1973) operating the original equipment.

In 1924 the I.O.O.F. Lodge which previously held meetings in Pleasant Grove, constructed a two-story building in East Nicolaus. This building has furnished a meeting place for this lodge and others and has been used for many community activities.

The rental section of the Odd Fellows building at first was leased to John A. Wise for a grocery store and butcher shop. At the time Nathan D. Wise was the manager, Walter Finch the clerk and Henry Wagner the butcher. Later owners of the store were Elsworth Danforth, Frank Train and Ted Barker. The latter owner has been in possession for twenty-nine years. During the past twelve years he has been assisted by his son, James Barker.

Before 1924, students of the community attended the first two years of high school at Pleasant Grove but had to finish at Sutter. In 1924 the East Nicolaus branch of the Sutter Union High School was established to provide four years of high school training. In 1950 the East Nicolaus branch was separated from Sutter Union and became independent.

Miss Aileen Donovan was the first principal with Miss Dorothy Frahan and Gerald Walker as the other teachers. The first class to graduate after attending East Nicolaus High School for four years had five members. They were Ben Johnson, Clifford Coppin, Emil Scheiber, Ardel Sutton and Howard Van Dyke. In 1925 Miss Donovan was married to Lloyd Hudson who with his father, William Hudson, was one of the pioneer rice growers of the County. Stanley Hawthorne retired in 1969 after thirty-five years as teacher and now lives in Nicolaus. He continues

to serve as substitute teacher and drives a school bus. George McDougal has served as principal for the past fifteen years.

There are now (1973) fourteen teachers at East Nicolaus High School and the enrollment is 203. Bonds have been voted for a new building which is to be located at Trowbridge, one mile east of the present site.

Marcum Illinois Union Elementary School District is the result of the merger of the former smaller districts known as Marcum, Illinois, Lee, Nicolaus and Verona. The original Illinois school was located about two miles south of East Nicolaus but was moved to the new village soon after the settlement began. In later years one by one the other districts consolidated. In 1928 a new school was built and in 1972 the building was remodeled to make more rooms. Frank Gibson has served as principal for twenty-six years.

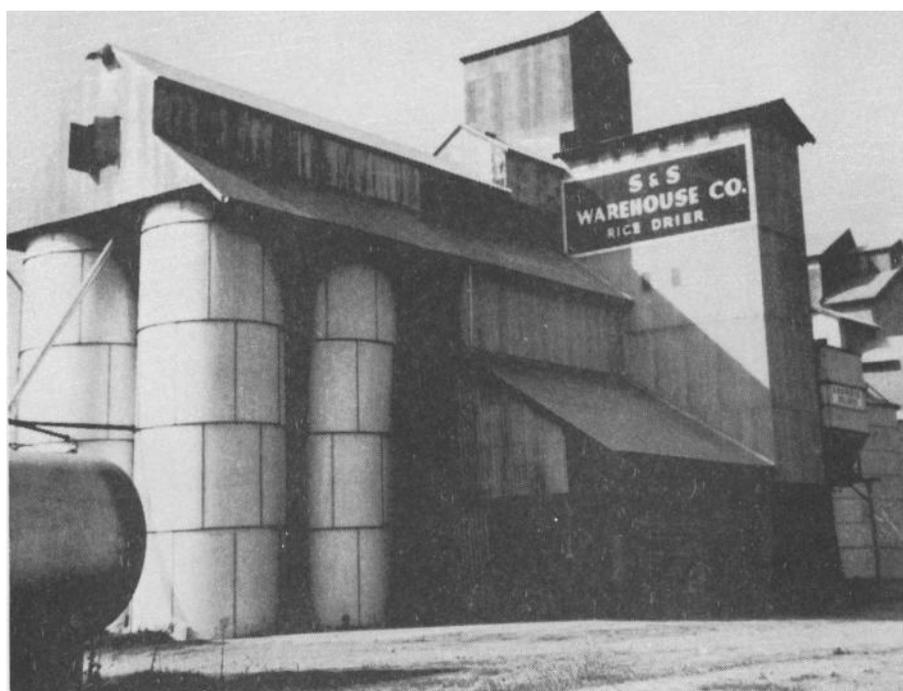
In 1950 L. J. Thornton started a propane distributing business with headquarters on Watt Avenue in East Nicolaus. He delivers to the communities of Pleasant Grove, Verona, Nicolaus, Tudor and Rio Oso.

Robert Schwall operates a general repair service from his home in East Nicolaus. This service was begun in the early 1950's and has been a benefit to the community in the ensuing years.

The South Sutter Recreation Club was organized in 1952. Money for community projects was raised by the sale of membership cards to pheasant hunters. The land for the hunting reserve was donated by farmers. In 1956 the Club purchased



**Mrs. Evelyn S. Smith**  
**First East Nicolaus Postmaster.**  
**Mrs. Smith served 35 years.**  
**(1915 - 1950)**



**The original rice drying**  
**plant was built and operated**  
**in East Nicolaus by C. M.**  
**Cerati and was the earliest**  
**rice drier in California.**

land from Albert Schwall, and a community swimming pool was built. Later, in 1960, a recreation hall was added nearby. The acreage donated by the farmers for hunting in 1958 was 27,000 acres. This total has declined in later years but still brings in a substantial sum for community projects.

East Nicolaus has joined with several neighboring settlements to maintain a volunteer fire fighting organization. Proper equipment and a resuscitator are available and on call when needed.

In 1939 the Pacific Gas and Electric Company built a sub-station in East Nicolaus. The last resident manager of the Nicolaus district was John Iribarren who served from 1944 to 1958. Upon the transfer of Mr. Iribarren to Manteca his assistant, George Call, then of Nicolaus, became manager. Mr. Call later moved to Rio Oso and continued to serve as manager until his retirement in 1972. Maintenance and services are now handled through the Marysville offices.

The little village which began as a rural stop on the electric railroad has not changed radically, but there has been a gradual growth. There are more residences. And the schools, the grocery store, the warehouse, the sub-station, a fruit stand, the Perozzi food drive-in, all of these additions, have given the settlement more of an urban character.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are extended to the friends who assisted me with their pictures, special information and remembrances of the past. I am especially indebted to Mrs. Anna Hawthorne and Mrs. Gertrude Dorris.

REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHING OF SITES OF  
HISTORICAL INTEREST IN SUTTER COUNTY

by

Jessica Bird

(From information compiled by Michael C. Andrews,  
chairman of the Historical Sites Committee of the  
Sutter County Historical Society)

Sutter County, one of the original 1850 California counties, which for many years has had but three marked sites of historical significance, soon will have nine as result of action taken through the Sutter County Historical Society.

Approved by the Sutter County Board of Supervisors on March 26, 1973, are seven such sites, only one of which previously had been recognized as important. They later were confirmed by the historical preservation section of the California Parks and Recreation Department.

Dr. Michael C. Andrews of Yuba City, chairman of the Historical Sites and Landmarks committee of the Sutter County Historical Society, presented detailed information to the county supervisors on locations considered of public interest. He suggested that the sites be suitably marked by directional signs and plaques and properly maintained.

Until this action there had been but two sites registered by the state within Sutter County. These are John A. Sutter's original Hock Farm of the 1840's not far from Yuba City, and the "courthouse" still standing in the town of Nicolaus, which was the original county seat community.

Also existing for many years is a roadside monument in the Sutter Buttes, which was placed there 50 years ago. It marks the spot where in 1846 General John C. Fremont and his troopers

once encamped. This now is maintained by the county road department, and is among the seven points of interest which the supervisors approved last March.

The other six "new" sites due for marking are not considered of state-wide importance, but are of cultural and historical value to the county. Dr. Andrews pointed out in his report to the board of supervisors, that of these six, there are four which would require very little upkeep by the county. The others would need some protective installations and maintenance.

The sites were listed as follows:

1. The former H. C. McLaughlin law office and courtroom, a wooden structure in Yuba City, now is located at 810 Shasta Street and used as a real estate office. It originally was situated on the east side of Second Street, having been erected there in 1863, across from the Sutter County Courthouse. Mr. McLaughlin, the original owner, was one of the early district attorneys of the county. Just prior to the 1953 erection of the county offices building on Second Street, the small building was moved. It has long been occupied by Hugh D. Moncur, both as justice of the peace and as municipal court judge. When sold for removal and placed in its present location, it first was used as an antique shop.

2. Another law office building, at 200 Second Street, corner of B Street in Yuba City, was built there by Attorney M. E. Sanborn in 1870. The original wooden building was covered by stucco in 1906. It also was used by Attorneys Lawrence Shillig and Desmond A. Winship. In 1908 this building

was locale of sessions resulting in the incorporation of Yuba City. It still is occupied by members of the legal profession, and contains the office of attorney John Winship, son of Desmond A. Winship.

3. A cannery in Yuba City at the southwest corner of B Street and Wilbur Avenue, was the first such institution located in Sutter County. The Sutter County Canning and Packing Company, organized in May of 1883, had a five and one-half acre tract alongside a railroad line. Its first building was put up there in 1884. It was of brick with a sheet-iron roof. A part of the structure still exists and is owned by a transportation firm. This cannery processed plums, peaches, apricots, pears and tomatoes, but its first packed fruit was raisins. The cannery continued operation until the early 1900's.

4. This point of interest is located south of Meridian, at the northeast corner of Meridian and Wilbur Roads and is a brick house built in 1872 by Sumner Paine, a miner and brick-maker who had come to California in 1852. (He also built the Western Hotel and the Methodist Church in Marysville.) The Meridian dwelling later was sold to the Alameda Sugar Company of San Francisco, as part of a promotional program by the Sacramento Northern Railroad. Eventually the sugar company became the Meridian Farm Lands Company, which subsequently changed to the Sutter Buttes Land Company. The brick structure originally was two stories high, with a front balcony supported by six wooden posts. It had an elaborate front elevation, symmetrical in design. The front door on each floor was balanced by two large, elongated windows flanking the entrance. Later

remodeling considerably changed the roof line and the upper story. When the Alameda Sugar Company owned the house it became headquarters for about 9,000 acres of surrounding land.

5 and 6, along with the existing Fremont monument mentioned above, as proposed by Dr. Andrews, may require some initial improvements to protect them.

5. This lists an entirely different type of site, being a boxlike cement watering trough near the Butte House Road, not far from the town of Sutter. This was placed at a pioneer stage stop on Butte House Road which was much traveled in early days to link Yuba City and Colusa. It was fabricated some time between 1910 and 1914 by the Sutter County road district, especially to provide water for the horses that drew the stages along the route. On the sides of the trough, lettered in the cement, are the names of several old-time business establishments. This advertising, paid for by the firms, helped defray the cost of installing the trough and a well beneath it. As needed, water was siphoned up to the trough by means of a hand pump. It is considered that this site marks the location of a building near Sutter called the "Butte House Station."

6. This site is perhaps least known among those listed for historical marking. It is in Sutter Basin near the Sacramento River, where a small church building once stood on a bit of high ground within a grove of oaks. Built around 1849 it long since has been removed. But near its site and also located in the grove, is what may have been one of the earliest cemeteries in Sutter County. (In pioneer years, lacking public cemeteries, settlers customarily established family graveyards

on their own lands.) In the grove is a marble headstone, marking the graves of two children who died shortly after the close of the Civil War. Carved on the headstone, which was made by McElroy & Fielve, is a dove and inscriptions are on both sides of the stone. One reads "Enoch Edwin, son of S. J. and J. A. Hunter, died September 22, 1865, age 6 years, 12 days." On the opposite face of the stone are the words "Jerry Lee, son of S. J. and J. A. Hunter, died June 17, 1867, age 1 year, 1 month." The Hunters were recorded owners of property near the gravesite. As there were no levees along the river at that time and the area was subject to floods, the church on high ground sometimes became a place of refuge for families nearby. Now known to residents of the area as "Wooley's Grave" (so-called for some reason yet undetermined by researchers) the graves of the two pioneer infants have been kept undisturbed and respected by farmers over the long years. There is some indication that a second small marker with a small lamb on top was adjacent to the one yet remaining in place. But this has been missing for some time and further research is necessary. (Any further information on this site, or the others, should be send to the historical society.)

The Hock Farm, known as the first large-scale agricultural development in this part of California, was founded on the bank of the Feather River, in the vicinity of what is now Yuba City, by General John A. Sutter in the early 1840's. It was located on part of a vast land grant made to Sutter by the Mexican Government before California became a part of the United States.

Although the original dwelling there was destroyed by fire in 1865, a portion of one of the farm buildings later was salvaged and used as a site marker. This stands near the entrance to the farm which is adjacent to Garden Highway near Messick Road.

The Fremont Monument long has been a recognized point of statewide interest and it is hoped that eventually it will be officially marked as an historical landmark. It was about the time of the Bear Flag Revolt, in 1846, that General Fremont and his mounted troopers made camp for a brief period within the shelter of the Buttes, nearby a flowing stream. The monument was erected in 1923 by the Bi-County Federation of Women's Clubs, an organization no longer in existence. After some years of neglect, maintenance was assumed by the county for the monument and its affixed plaque.

It was not until three years ago that the marking of Nicolaus as the first seat of Sutter County government took place. The town, which dates back to 1843, was scene on January 24, 1970, of a ceremony near the building that had served as the original county courthouse in 1850. The state has designated Nicolaus as a place of historic interest to California and to Sutter County. A plaque is affixed to a boulder near the "courthouse" and a state highway marker near the Feather River bridge directs travelers to the town. Former Supervisor Eber F. Beilby acted as chairman at the ceremony, and accepted the plaque on behalf of Sutter County. The event was sponsored by the East Nicolaus 4-H Club and was shared by the historical society.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 1974

TO: Mrs. Wanda Rankin, Treasurer  
Sutter County Historical  
Society 805 Orange Street  
Yuba City, California 95991

\_\_\_\_\_ Please renew my/our membership for 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please enroll me as a member for 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my/our check for

\$50 for a life membership.

\$10 for our firm/lodge/club membership.

\$ 5 for our family membership.

\$ 3 for my single membership/library/school.

No charge if 90 years of age and born in Sutter County.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Firm/lodge/club/school \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

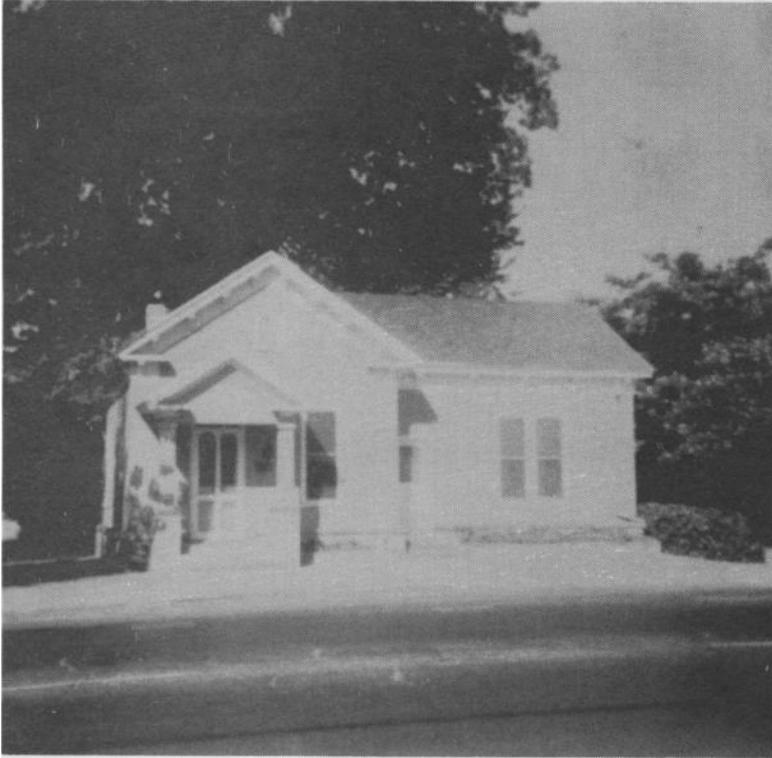
City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Marysville Appeal, May 13, 1864

Bad Appointment - It is reported that our old friend, Surveyor Upsom, has appointed J. Pennington of Sutter a deputy or to some other position under him. We can hardly believe the rumor true, because Mr. P. is a notorious copperhead. He was a candidate before the late county convention in Sutter for county surveyor, but failed to get the nomination.



M. E. Sanborn's law  
office built in 1870 at 200  
Second St., Yuba City.



The former H. C. McLaughlin  
law office at 810 Shasta  
Street, Yuba City.