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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. XVII NO. 1

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95991

JANUARY 1978



Early 1900's Sportsmen In Location Where Wadsworth Canal Was Built Later,
Sutter Buttes in the distance. Courtesy of Miriam Coon

In This Issue - Hunting Waterfowl - by Margit and Richard Epperson
Recollections -- A Letter From Bernard I. Fontana

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XVII, No. 1

January, 1978

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NOTE: THE APRIL ISSUE WILL INCLUDE AN ARTICLE BY MR. BALWANTS BRAR ON THE EAST INDIANS IN SUTTER COUNTY AND THEIR HISTORY.

* * * * *

THE JANUARY MEETING

The Meeting will be held on January 17, 1978 at 7:30 p.m.
 at the Community Memorial Museum on Butte House Road, Yuba
 City.

* * * * *

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 MEETING - OCTOBER 18, 1977

July 20, 1977

Bank of America	\$1,117.87	
Financial Savings	399.33	
		\$1,517.20

DEPOSITS

July 27, 1977	Dues	24.00	
August 2, 1977	Dues and Bulletins	115.00	
August 12, 1977	Dues, Bulletins and Notepaper	20.12	
August 23, 1977	Dues and Notepaper	20.72	
August 29, 1977	Dues, Notepaper and Bulletins	12.48	
Sept. 23, 1977	Notepaper and Bulletins	13.48	
Sept. 30, 1977	Interest-Financial Savings	9.39	215.69
			1,732.89

EXPENSES

July 22, 1977	William Dawson - bulk mailing	10.00	
August 18, 1977	William Dawson - Bulletin exp.	39.50	
August 20, 1977	Sutter County - July printing	164.24	
Sept. 18, 1977	William Dawson - Bulletin exp.	50.37	
October 14, 1977	Sutter County - Sept. printing	46.74	
October 15, 1977	Conference California Historical Societies - Dues	15.00	325.85
			1,407.04

Bank of America	\$ 497.82	
Financial Savings	909.22	
		1,407.04

WANDA RANKIN

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We were very much pleased to receive favorable notices in the Appeal-Democrat and the Morning Herald praising our last issue which contained the baseball history by Harold "Sam" Sperbeck. Complimentary notices of this kind encourage us to continue our plan to present "people" history in addition to more formal and documentary accounts of political and economic conditions of the past.

* * * * *

Friends of Professor Fontana will be interested to learn that he, in collaboration with a colleague, Daniel S. Matson, has edited a rare historical manuscript entitled Reports to the Kings. This work was published this year by the University of Arizona Press at Tucson.

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM NOTES

Jean Gustin, Curator

The fourth in the series of plates featuring historic scenes of Sutter County is available for sale at the museum. The subject of this plate, the Craddock-Winship house on Second Street in Yuba City, presented us with an unanticipated research problem. In trying to pin down the year and builder of the house, we were again made aware of the gaps in written records and of how much information is lost in a relatively brief passage of time -- in this case a little more than 100 years. By making educated assumptions on some written references to the house, we felt we could only make the rather vague statement that it was "probably built by Judge J. H. Craddock shortly after he purchased the land in 1872." Somewhere there may exist the documentation to pin down the circumstances of the building of this house, but it does not exist at present in public records or in those resources available in the museum and in the two county libraries.

This all points up to me the importance of documentary material, photographs, and oral histories placed in a site where they are available for research. In the museum we have found photographs especially helpful. Sometimes it is not the subject of the picture, (the person, place, or thing that was the reason for the photo being taken,) but something in the accidental background (a building, a sign in a window) that has "solved" a research problem. More of this historically important material needs to make it out of the attics and trunks and into the museum where it can be studied, preserved and hopefully someday provide that clue to an otherwise unsolvable mystery.

List of Donors to the Community Memorial Museum Trust
Fund - Continued from the October, 1977 Bulletin

Mr. & Mrs. John H. Palmer	in memory of Dorothy Elice Emery Engelund
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Romilda Peri Gould	in memory of Barbara Barr Kline
Fred & Joyce Benzel	in memory of Robert Haller
Fred & Joyce Benzel	in memory of Ada Bender

* * * * *

Appeal, November 2, 1860

Jimtown Jimocracy. They have spoken. Their resolution reads:
"Resolved, That at first the Jimtown Democracy was in favor of James
Burcannin, and would abin yit if he had abin nominated, but now
their first choice is Duglis and always was."

SUTTERANA

Independence Day at Hock Farm.

Those who wish to celebrate our national anniversary in a pleasant and agreeable manner will find the

Hock Farm Gardens

a place to their liking.

These gardens, which were designed and brought to their present state of perfection, by the Veteran Pioneer of California, are universally allowed to be the most pleasant place of resort in the State.

Everything will be prepared for the accommodation of visitors on the Fourth, and all kinds of Refreshments will be served up at city prices.

M. Levinson, Lessee.

Marysville Appeal, July 3, 1860.

* * * * *

A Republican made a wager with a Democrat. The Republican bet \$100 that he could name 15 states which would go for Lincoln. Then he made a second bet that he could name an additional 5 states which would go for Lincoln. This second bet was for \$500. On the first bet he named 15 southern or border states, and for the second bet he named five New England states. His net gain was \$400.

Marysville Appeal, November 25, 1860.

An editor makes this comment:

The model city dwelling is yet unbuilt. The nineteenth century should produce no more Victoria Bridges, Mammoth Presses or Atlantic Cables until it has brought forth the comfortable, elegant and inexpensive home for the houseless thousands of the town and city.

Appeal, November 23, 1860.

RECOLLECTIONS
A Letter to HAROLD ROCKHOLT
From BERNARD FONTANA

ARIZONA STATE MUSEUM
The University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

April 27, 1977

Mr. Harold Rockholt
c/o Sutter County Historical
Society
P. O. Box 1004
Yuba City, CA 95991

Dear Harold:

I just received my April issue of the SCHS Bulletin and read with great interest -- while awash in a sea of nostalgia -- your "Reflections" on Rockholt Way.

My most important early memories are of "the alley". That's where we moved from Oakland, California in 1937 when my father got a job with the Production Credit Association. We lived in a little rented house at 800, later changed to 801, Rockholt Way. I think it belonged to a man whom I knew as "Mr. Kirk." In 1937 there was a family who lived in a big house facing on Plumas Street whose back yard, filled with a wonderful stand of bamboo (we call it "carrizo" here in the Southwest), faced our house. Sad was the day that the house and our bamboo jungle made way for a grocery store. It was called the Cardinal Market. Mario Del Pero and his brother had a meat market inside the store.

Maybe we should organize a Rockholt Way alumni association. On one side we lived next door to John and Frances Kirby and John's son, Jack. John later owned a Plumas Street store called Radio Centre as well as other businesses in Yuba City and Marysville. I have no idea what became of Jack, his son, who was about a year younger than I.

Next to Kirby's was the Gingrich family. One of the Gingrich boys, Bill, got a degree in school administration and the last I heard was principal of a school somewhere in Northern California.

Next door to us on the other side was a fairly large house, one elevated above the ground over a spacious basement. When we moved

to Yuba City its occupants were a Reverend Mince and his family. He was the preacher in the nearby Baptist church; his sons were Johnny and Emory. And after the Minces moved away, David Hall, Sr., and his family moved in. Dave had the job of getting the mail delivered to La Porte and points in between. One of his sons, Leland, became an architect and -- the last I heard -- was plying his trade somewhere in the Bay Area. Dave's oldest son was Dave, Jr., who for many years was an engineer with the California highway department but who now lives in a small town in southern Oregon. As for Dave, Sr., after his first wife died he moved to Mexico, was remarried, and still lives in retirement in Mexico.

Next door to the Halls was the Wright family. Raymond Wright was a year ahead of me in school. He later went to Occidental College, got a degree in psychology, and is now goodness-knows-where. I recall that of all the gang in the alley, Ray was your mother's favorite. We used to spend a lot of time in your house.

And there were others. Danny Smith and his sister, Lita. She was a tomboy and could hit a soft ball farther than anyone else in the neighborhood. And Edwin Mitchell and his sister. He became a policeman; his sister graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. Their father was a retired Army captain. And Bill Poole.

There was also a big barn on the alley. It belonged to the King family whose house fronted on Shasta Street. I remember Albert "Sonny" King. And the barn contained a magnificent old stake truck that belonged to a member of the King family whom I recall only as "Jiggs." The truck must have been pre-World War I because it had solid rubber tires on it rather than pneumatic tires. It was a blunt-nosed affair, and early-day Volkswagen van. Maybe it was a Reo.

Across the alley and down toward the ambulance entrance to the hospital there was a girl named Zoe Glass. I think she became a ballerina and opened Zorina's Dance Studio somewhere. And also across the alley, right next to your shop, was a young man, a bachelor, named Cunningham. I think it was Robert Cunningham. All the kids in the alley used to have great water fights with him in the summer.

But most of all, I remember that magnificent sawdust pile that was almost always at the rear of your shop in the alley. I would play in it by the hours. In fact, I played so long in it one summer's evening that I failed to remember it was time for supper. My parents were frantic, and they searched and called for me everywhere but in the right place. When I finally went home as it got dark, I was covered with rich, warm sawdust from end to end.

I remember your place as Rockholt Boats, and I remember going to boat races at Ellis Lake -- always rooting for Harold Rockholt.

My mother died many years ago. But my father, who is now in his 80's, lives with my sister and her husband in Carmichael. My brother, Ralph, who lived on Rockholt Way until he enlisted in the Army in 1914, is a dentist in Guerneville, California. I graduated in anthropology from the University of California; spent a couple of years in Alaska in the army; got a Ph.D in anthropology here at the University of Arizona, and have been with the Arizona State Museum since 1962.

Thanks, Harold, for the wave of very pleasant memories. Rockholt Way was a perfect alley on which to start to grow up.

If you're ever in Tucson, please look me up. My office is on the University of Arizona campus.

Best Regards,

Bernard I. Fontana
Ethnologist

THE AUTHOR

Many of our readers who may have been in Yuba City High School at the time of this author (in the 1940's) will remember that even then he was especially interested in the Sutter County Buttes. This small mountain range was called by some the "Marysville Buttes", and by others the "Colusa Buttes" or even the "Sacramento Buttes."

It is believed that at that early age Bernard Fontana began to arrange to have the name changed to what it now is, by "writing to his congressman" and by other means.

Hopefully, we may hear from him more of this long procedure and its effective conclusion in a future Bulletin.

GLEANINGS

A Congressman was boasting about following the wishes of his constituents but was challenged by the postmaster of his town. "Dam you. You don't have any constituents but us postmasters. We called the convention which nominated you. There were 40 delegates, all postmasters, and they elected you because we told them to. So don't talk to us about your constituents." Appeal, November 20, 1860.

Military Visit -- One of the companies of the New York regiment proposes a visit to England, provided the British Government will allow them to come in military organization in uniform and bearing their arms. The Government replies that they may come as a citizens' rifle corps, but doubts the expediency of establishing the precedent of a visit by a military body with guns. The matter is still under advisement. The company would like to go with 100 men and a full band. Appeal, November 28, 1860.

In the campaign of 1860 Henry Plumer was candidate for sheriff of Nevada County. His platform as declared by his supporters and his enemies included:

Early rains; epidemic of influenza; disapproval of the next war; good diggings; proper pitch of bedrock; water the year around; equitable temperature; moonlight nights; and a general improvement in everything.

Quoted from a letter from Tallman Rolfe.

HUNTING WATERFOWL
by
Margit and Richard Epperson

"... Some sportsmen conceal themselves in a tule bunch and waylay the juicy mallard as they come by. The most successful usually don old clothing and gum boots and trust to their workmanship for the number they bag..." Marysville Daily Appeal, 1890.

At this time, 1890, there was no limit on the bag of ducks or when they could be hunted. This was all to change the next year when a limit of fifty ducks per day commenced and they could only hunt from October 15 to February 15. The season pretty well covered the migration time of the waterfowl, so the ardent duck hunter should not have been hampered too much.

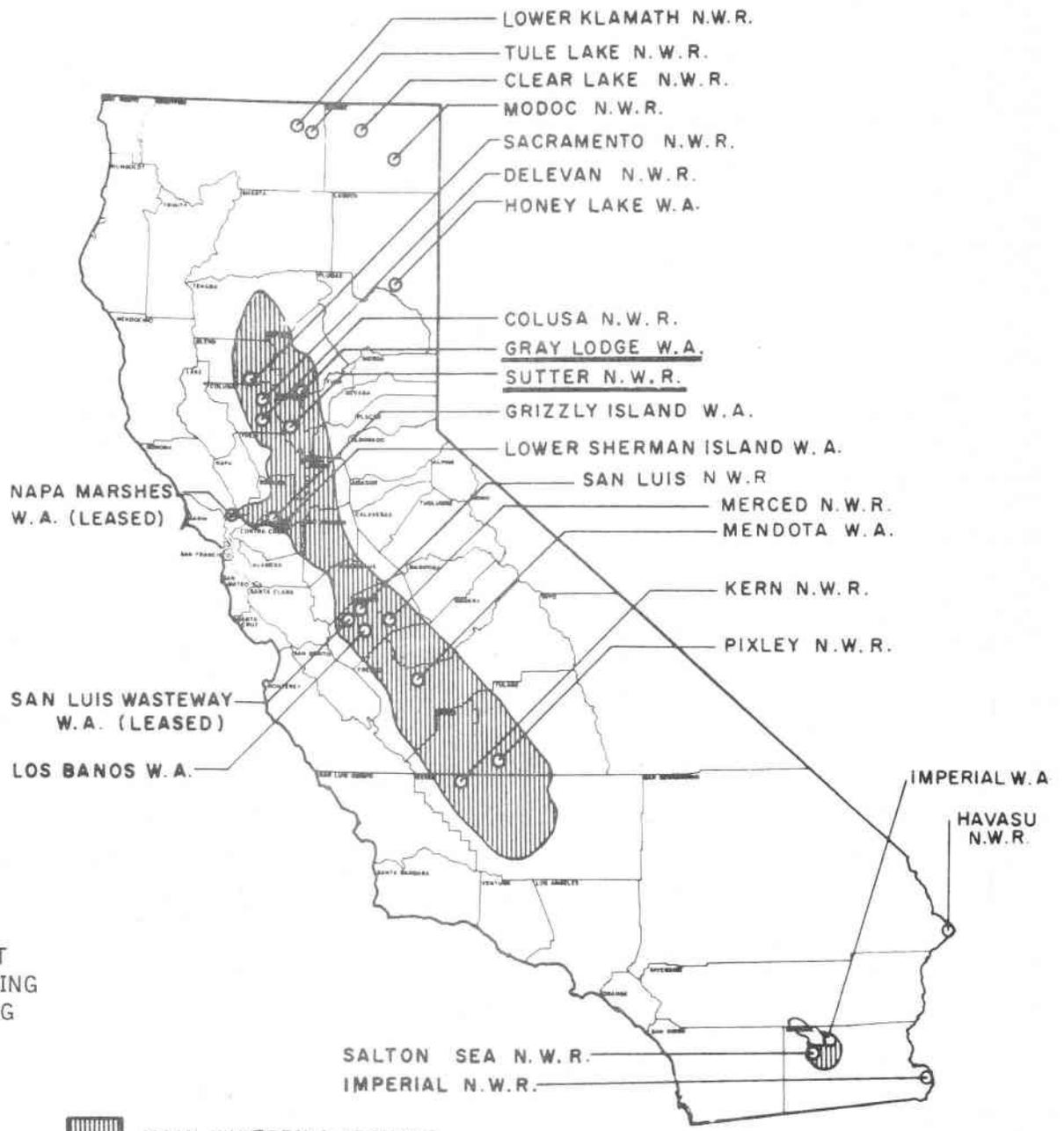
In the early 1900's ducks and geese were in abundance. The populace shot as many birds as they needed for their large storage crocks in the four months that the waterfowl was present. Refrigeration, being a relatively new addition, was unknown to the people of the rural areas. It was necessary for them to use salt and brines for preserving and keeping domestic and wild meat alike. The Triplett family in Colusa would fillet the breasts from the bone of hundreds of geese in preparation for preserving. The pieces of meat, about the size of one's hand, were placed in a heavy old style crock filled with a very strong solution of salt and water. This strong brine, which corned the meat, would preserve it even through the summer, enabling them to have goose breasts whenever they desired the delicious meat.

"Hunting for market" was done by numerous hunters. With the bag limits being larger and the ducks and geese more plentiful,

this made for a nice bit of extra cash. Before the ducks were taken to Marysville to be shipped and sold to the buyers from elite restaurants in San Francisco, they were gutted, sorted, according to the breed, placed in gunny sacks and hung to cool overnight. Only the ducks that brought the best market price were shot. The mallards and canvas backs were at the top of the list. Hunting for market slowly died out and by 1915, had just about come to a halt.

The main reason for market hunting to decline was that the bag limit became smaller and seasons shorter. In 1913, the bag limit was cut in half to 25 ducks per day and the season shortened by ten days, October 15 to February 1. The 25 duck bag limit lasted until 1930. The air was undoubtedly full of complaint in the winter of 1931, if the sky happened to be full of ducks.

There were numerous methods of duck hunting. The most familiar would be to set out decoys and sit in a hole dug in the ground, a blind, patiently waiting for ducks to appear within shooting range. Generally there was ample water flowing in the tule lands during the winter so that it was natural to use a boat. Duck boats were usually narrow with a shallow draft and very tipsy. Often they were propelled by the use of poles, with the water normally being only a few feet deep. This was before the many large levees were built to contain the overflow. Ground sluicing or "dragging" was accomplished by crawling up on huge flocks of feeding birds and firing many shots into the middle of the flock as they started to rise. "Shai^hinghaing" produced the same results with the only difference being, the use of a cow,



LOCATIONS OF IMPORTANT NESTING, STAGING AND WINTERING AREAS OF WATERFOWL COMING TO CALIFORNIA ARE PINPOINTED BY DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME ARTIST

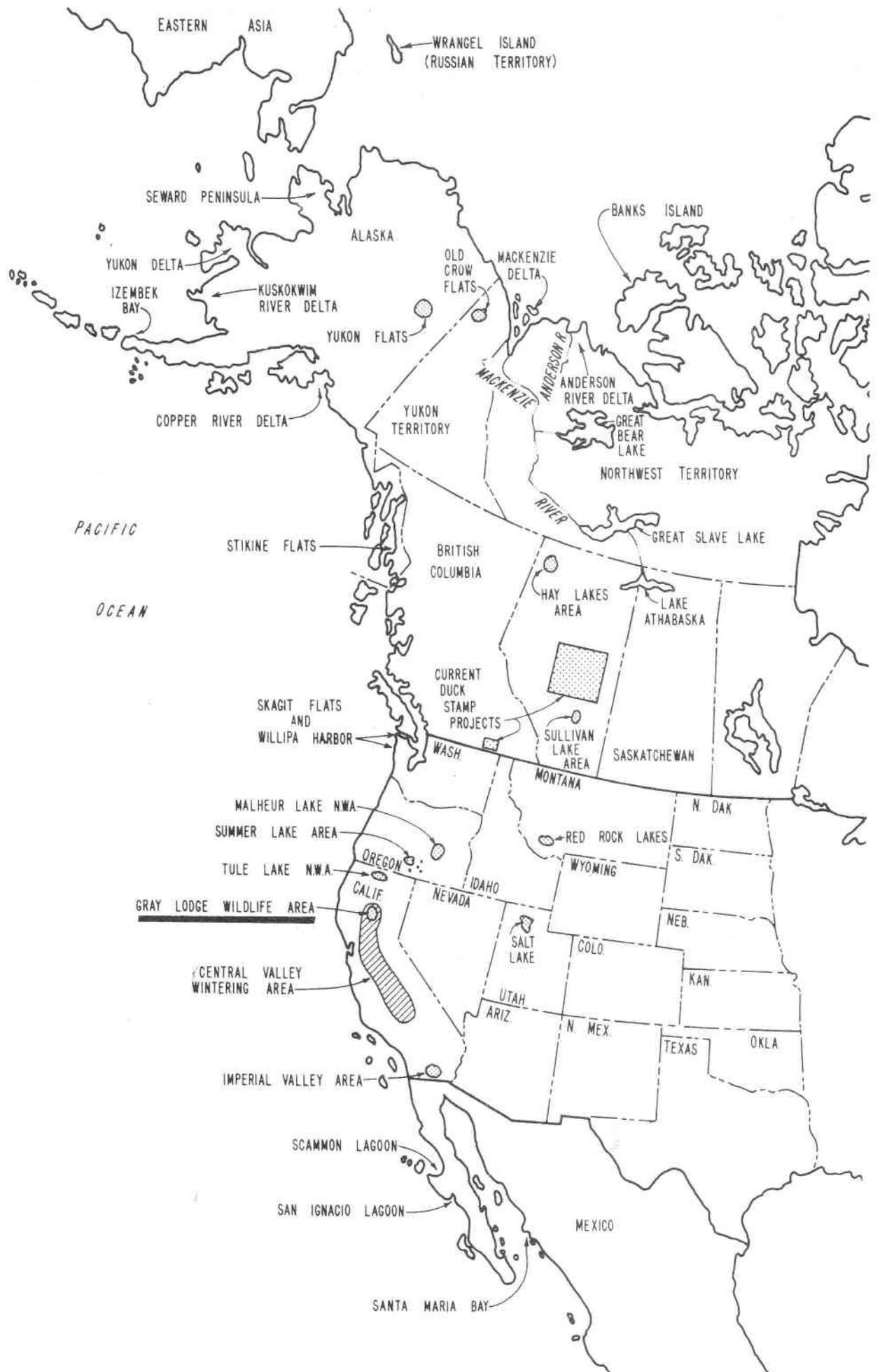
KEN GONZALES



MAIN WINTERING GROUNDS

N.W.R. = CALIFORNIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

W.A. = STATE WILDLIFE AREAS



Courtesy of California State Department of Fish and Game



SNOW GEESE " Coming In " To Gray Lodge Wildlife Area.

Photo by John B. Cowan



SNOW GEESE " At Rest " Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

Photo by John B. Cowan



wad shot &
powder packer

8 - 10 - 12 Gauge Equipment. Belonged to Warren Huntington. Loaned by Miriam Coon



Primer Settee

Primer Remover

Photo Courtesy John Leith Lewin



Live decoys in chicken wire pen waiting for a flock of geese in late 20's.

Picture by Harold Belknap



White decoys of canvas, straw and paint made by Triplett Family in early 30's.
Picture was taken by T. Triplett Courtesy of Harold Belknap



Dr. George Oviedo (left) and Dr. Anthony Gray with Speckled Belly Geese in late 1930. Courtesy of Harold Belknap

oxen or a horse as a front or hiding place. The animal would be led, with the hunter keeping the forepart of the beast between himself and the birds, around and around the birds with each circle bringing the hunter closer to shooting range of the unsuspecting birds.

Going out after the ducks could be just routine, but many times it became quite exciting and unpredictable. The best hunting area was the vast flooded overflow land, thick with tule clumps. At times the infamous tule fog made it extremely difficult to find ones way, home in particular. Perhaps a sudden storm could come up, terrific for getting the ducks down into shooting range, but not much good for anything else. One such day of duck hunting was written down in 1915, by Dorothy Dean Huntington:

A DAY'S WORK
by
Dorothy Dean

"It was ten o'clock in the morning when they struck out from shore, headed toward the southwest. The tiny duck boats shot forward over the water, out toward the gray-brown mass of tule in the distance.

A little to the west of Mackentire Lake they took up their positions, shoving their boats well in under cover of the tule. Then all was quiet for awhile, their dull gray coats merging with the color of the luxuriant growth of the swamp land. Time dragged slowly, at infrequent intervals shots were fired. No, it was not a good day for hunting.

"Hey, Will! there's nothing flying here. Let's try Number Seventy." This came from somewhere among the tule.

"Just as you say. There certainly isn't much doing here," Will shouted back and pushed his way out.

It was cloudy when they started but quiet, now a light wind had sprung up from the south. The men pushed

their way along through the tules as best they could until they reached an open space that had been cleared away for bean land. Little waves were running and with the wind the frail craft swept along at good speed.

One of the men was of medium height and slender, wiry build. He handled his pole with the ease and precision of one long accustomed to it. The other, tall and fair, stood in his boat, in a limp, afraid-to-move manner. His control was rather uncertain and his pole seemed to bother him. One could not but note the marked contrast and admire the first, for one must pay that tribute to all skill.

They noticed the ducks flying in and settling down back of the old Seventy Levee. It was the year Number Seventy was flooded and many people had to move out, taking their stock and goods over to the Buttes.

Their boats nosed against the embankment. They drove their poles into the ground, tied their boats to them, then each grabbed his gun and crawled to the top of the levee. The ducks were thick on the sheltered side of the embankment where they were out of the wind. They were feeding on a submerged grain field. Here was good shooting and the men made the best of their opportunity. Many of the ducks fell in the water where it was too deep to wade in after them, so they let them go and crawled along the windward side of the levee, coming to the edge frequently when they judged that they would get a good shot. They became so absorbed in the sport that time passed swiftly and they had not noticed that the wind was rising higher and higher. It was late when they started back for their boats.

The ducks that had fallen in the water were carried farther and farther from shore. They had drifted off on the waves toward an old barn that stood in the water, so Will Wadsworth and Ed Dean carried their boats over the levee and set out to gather up their game. They saw that the ducks were flocking into the barn after grain that was stored there, and as hunters always do, they loitered for sometime to get "just one more shot."

Will reached out to grab a duck that was wafted near the boat. A wave bore it swiftly forward; he leaned farther over. The boat tipped; he struggled to regain his balance, but too late. He plunged head first into the water. His feet rose to the surface, his head went down. The water gurgled into his rubber boots; then like a weighted celluloid doll his head bobbed up. He grasped the side of the boat and tried to pull himself

in but the boat turned bottom side up, spilling the contents. His gun went too. There he was in water up to his neck on a stormy evening in January. He turned the boat over, caught the ducks before they drifted away, then felt around with his feet for the gun. Having lost confidence in his ability to climb into the boat there, he dragged it, the broncho of the water, over to the barn where it was shallow before he attempted to get in it again.

Ed came back first. It was growing dark and had begun to rain and the wind was raging. Will was beating his way back slowly against wind and waves.

"We had better be hiking out of here. It's gettin pretty late."

"Whew! but that was a tough pull. It got dark quick tonight. Say, we made easy money today."

"You bet, but it's four miles home and the water's pretty rough."

Ed did not notice that Will's voice shook with the chill of the blast through his wet clothes. He had been some distance from his partner when the mishap occurred and he was unaware of the accident for it was dusk then, nor did Will see fit to tell him of it.

"All right, I'm ready now."

They started off together; Ed with that same swing of his pole, his head up, his body tense, as though he gloried in defying the elements. On and on they went in an easterly direction. They kept their boats headed with difficulty, and with difficulty they stood upright and kept their balance in the rocking, plunging, tule runners. The waves flapped roughly, angrily, against them, lifting and tossing them as though they were toys. Often they had to stop and bail out the water to keep them from sinking under the heavy load, and each time they stopped to bail, they lost some of the headway that they had gained. Will began to lag but Ed had settled down to business. Both had become silent.

Will saw Ed steadily widening the distance between them. He thought of the distance yet to be covered. They had probably gone but a mile, there were yet three more to go. He was breathing heavily. The fine particles of wind driven rain pricked his face like needles. He pushed on his pole with mechanical energy. A little more and yet a little more; at what a petty pace he seemed to creep along. Now he was pushing through tangled masses of tule, now being forced to bend them aside

with his hands. It was growing darker and colder. His hands were tingling with the cold and felt puffed and light. They seemed not to belong to him, but impersonal and far away. A great weakness crept over him. He could not stand, dead weights were pulling him down. He could not fight it off; his will power failed him. He lay down and quit like a dog. The boat was half full of water, but he did not even try to bail it out. He was partially aroused by Ed's commanding voice.

"Here, this won't do. You've got to get up and use that pole. You can't get home this way," and he shook him roughly.

"Let her drift with the wind," he murmured drowsily as though it did not concern him in the least.

Failing to arouse him after repeated efforts, Ed tied Will's boat to his own. With the extra load he made little headway. The trailing craft taking angles rammed its sharp bow into the leader, sending it forward and sidewise with a jerk. The boatman lurched backward, and down toward that black, sucking depth, down through infinite space, but luckily he sat down, although suddenly, in the back of the boat. The wind whipped the boats around. He rose dizzily, rather bewildered, and looked about to get his bearings. A light shone out warmly in the distance against the heavy blackness. That must be in the Captain Thomas Dean's boathouse, he thought, so he directed his course toward it.

He had poled, bailed and struggled to keep the two boats righted for what seemed an eternity. Now he felt the grass brush the bottom and he struck water too shallow to be able to bring the boats across. It was a high ridge, but deep water lay between it and the camp. Had it been light, he could have avoided it but as it was, he could hardly see his hand before his face, and he was becoming exhausted, so he stepped out, tied his boat to the pole, transferred the ducks and his gun to the other boat, pulled off his boots and dragging Will's boat and its cargo directed his course straight toward the light. Now he lost sight of it; now beat his way through thick tule; now forced a passage through a dense, tough patch of flags.

He moved along cautiously. The water had come up about his waist as he left the ridge behind. Suddenly he stepped into space. He went down and a wave rolled over his head. He clung desperately to the lead rope.

He did not know how to swim and the current swept him down stream. In that brief moment his whole life, every act and every thought, it seemed to him, flashed vividly across his conscience. Then his feet touched bottom. His eyes smarted and every breath he drew was painful.

He found the beacon again and struggled on as in a dream for he had lost all conception of time and distance. His only thought was to keep going, going until he reached the camp. He clung to this one thought as a drowning person clings to any support available. Not once, but several times, he went in over his head, but the average depth of the water was about his chest.

Finally he staggered over the ridge to the boat-house among the willows. His feet were leaden. He pulled himself up the steep steps, draining the last particle of his reserve strength, but he was safe now. He opened the door. There sat the old Captain weaving a fish net. He looked up with surprise when he saw the white-faced young fellow enter, for it was eleven o'clock.

"Come help me," he said, "Will's out here. He's all in."

The Captain hurried out with a lantern. Ed followed. Together they brought in the unconscious man. Ed sat down while the old man cared for Will. "I call that a day's work," he murmured, and leaned back in his chair too tired to think further."

Generally Ed Dean would go this three or four miles from his ranch to hunt, since he had leased his own land out to about a half dozen hunters. Back at his home his wife would see to it that room and board were available for the paying hunters. It was not uncommon for the ranchers to lease their swamp or tule-land for hunting privileges in the very early 1900's. Not only were there these small private hunting situations but also the larger and more official clubs.

In the summer of 1905, Dr. J. H. Barr, H. D. King, J. W. Steward and E. A. Forbes, members of the Executive Committee of the proposed Marysville Tule Gun Club, went to the Hoke ranch,

in the tules, to select sites for the buildings of a club house and other buildings. A very satisfactory site was chosen on a knoll above high water. "The party went in an automobile but the machine got the croup on the way back and the committeemen were obliged to hire a horse and surrey to get home." The committee wanted plans for the buildings and a contract was to be awarded. With duck shooting to commence in October, it was necessary to get to work at once.

Bids for the club house, tank house, stable and bridge were received from Burnight and McCready, \$4,877, W. Allen and Son \$4,949 and W. H. Hendricks \$6,000. It goes without saying the contract was awarded to Burnight and McCready, who commenced work on the morning of August 17, 1905.

Many prior attempts had been made to organize such a club, but all plans fell through. The club house was the first of its kind to be erected in this section of the state. No expense was spared on this splendid home for the club. It was one of the finest buildings of its kind on the Pacific Coast.

The buildings consisted of a social hall, dining room, gun room, toilet room and kitchen on the lower floor. Bedrooms for the members were on the upper floor. A large open fireplace aided the hunters. There was fishing as well as hunting privileges on the grounds. Ladies were expected to arrange fishing parties during the summer. Every arrangement was made for their comfort. It was also expected that picnics would be held on the grounds, which did take place on more than one occasion.

The building was elegantly and appropriately furnished. This

club house and hunting and fishing grounds were among the finest in the country. Many prominent residents of this city and many outsiders had joined the club. To quote a prophecy said at that time "...The Tule Gun Club will become one of the most popular in the West."

On the legal side, articles of incorporation of the "Marysville Tule Hunting Club" were prepared and forwarded to the Secretary of State for filing. After the return of the certificate, the directors met and elected a president and secretary. The following board of directors was elected; John C. Collins, John W. Stewart, Wallace Dinsmore, Dr. J. H. Barr, Dr. David Powell, H. D. King, and Colonel Forbes.

The land leased consisted of several distinct parcels of land in the tule belt. The club house was on one parcel comprising of several thousand acres leased from W. F. Hoke, better known as the old Eager place. It adjoined the Markley tract of several thousand acres which is also leased by the club.

Since the organization of the club, interest in its advancement and development grew rapidly. The directors and members of the club desired all lovers of gun and rod to become members. It was destined to fill a long-felt want among the hunters and fishermen of this locality. By October, 1905 almost the entire membership provided was complete.

There was some worry that first year of getting a storm in time to make the shooting worth while. They talked of postponing the opening date.

The Tule Gun Club had more to worry about that first season

than the weather. S. J. Haugh claimed to hold a valid lease to the club's preserves (14,000 acres). In 1904 S. J. Haugh and Zan Frye obtained a lease from J. W. Browning with the agreement that a final payment was to be made on a certain date. Mr. Haugh left the matter up to Mr. Frye. Through some misunderstanding the payment wasn't made. Mr. Browning immediately leased the grounds to the Tule Gun Club.

Mr. Haugh later made the final payment but it was returned to him. Haugh placed a keeper on the grounds, asserted claims to the premises, trespassed and made himself obnoxious. To prevent his further action the Tule Gun Club and Mr. Browning decided to sue him and have the court determine his status.

Apparently the court decided in favor of the Tule Gun Club and Mr. Browning, for the Tule Gun Club continued to exist. In fact they entertained members of the California Game and Fish Protection Association in late November of 1905. They were invited to the club grounds for a duck shoot. Afterwards a game stew was provided for them.

In December of 1905, the following article appeared in the Daily Appeal, obviously written by someone other than a member or supporter of the Tule Gun Club:

The latest (fad) to strike the fancy of the club members are boats from which they can slaughter the ducks and geese without having to lie down hours in the cold, wet mud. Since this craze has struck the Tule Hunting Club camp a number have purchased boats. Not to be outdone is Major A. F. Jones of Oroville. He said there was to be no walking for him. He proceeded at once to order a boat constructed to his own ideas. The 'man-of-war' has not yet arrived, but even now members are seen giving the Major a wide berth. Only meager descriptions of this wonderful

combination have reached Marysville, for the Major does not propose to have any of his patents adopted by his fellow members.

It is propelled by gasoline and draws eight inches of water. Through an ingenious device of the Major's the usual "chug chug" of the engine is replaced with a duck call which is guaranteed to warn the feathered friends long before the Major is in sight. There is also a cutter close to the rudder in case he should run into tules and get them tangled about his propeller while traveling at the rate of 1/100 of a knot an hour.

It is equipped with an armor plate and air compressors so that it cannot possibly turn over, for it is understood that the Major has had experience in that line.

The vessel will carry machine guns in case of coming upon trespassers on the club grounds.

The section that gave the Major the greatest worry and caused him to lay awake at nights was how to hold his eatable provisions. It is said that in the bow he can tuck away provisions for a forty day cruise.

These are only a few of the wonderful features of this boat that has the Major's friends awaiting with bated breath.

The Tule Gun Club was one of many duck clubs that were formed at this time. Here are a few more: Wild Goose Club near West Butte, fondly known as Stilt City, Sprig Club located on Martha Jane Wadsworth's ground about twelve miles southwest of Yuba City, the exclusive West Butte Country Club on the old Noyes Ranch, with a membership fee of \$3,000 in 1915 and the popular Sutter Gun Club, which we will take a look at now.

At a meeting held at Assessor C. E. McQuald's office in September, 1905, seven new members were admitted to the Sutter Gun Club, making twenty-one members in all. It was decided to limit the membership to twenty-five. They expected that by the next Saturday's meeting. A club house on the grounds at West Butte was to be ready for the opening of the season, which

was the fifteenth of October.

At the beginning of October, sixteen members went to their preserves on the Hawn place at West Butte. In one day they built a commodious club house. It was 24 feet by 24 feet with sheds for horses on the side. Bunks were built around the sides of the room and necessary furnishing were added later to make the place comfortable.

One time some members, in a merry mood, decided that the drive to the gun club was slightly boring. There was only one road and a horse could find the way by himself. To liven things up a bit they thought it would be quite interesting to "hold up" the Sacramento Northern Train. The only problem was that the conductor happened to know the whole lot of them. How embarrassing for these prominent citizens!

To the serious side of the events that happened in connection with the Sutter Gun Club, the following story was written by Herman Fieth in 1915. It tells about an incident involving some members of the Sutter Gun Club:

THE WARDEN'S MISTAKE

by

Herman Fieth, 1915

"J. Jones, game warden and a member of the Sutter County Gun Club, and his deputy were anxiously peering out of their boat, through the crisscross tules. They were nervously watching over the dead bodies of hundreds of wild ducks which lay motionless in the moonlight, on the water, in the little pothole surrounded by walls of tules.

"I began watching this place," said Jones to his deputy, "four nights ago, but see what that destroyer has done in my absence. I have an idea that Old Chink is doing this, and I will be harder with him if I catch him, than I was a week ago, when I kicked him out of this place. I wouldn't have had this happen for a

week's sleep... That almond eyed Mongolian was making fifteen dollars a day digging tule potatoes and why should I let such a creature get the best of me when I could sell this ground for that purpose for five hundred dollars. But see here, Snyder, money isn't what this club was organized for."

"Sport, is what you want to tell me," interrupted the deputy.

"That's it," replied Jones, "we organized this club with every member having that one thing firmly fixed in his mind, and it was understood that we must obey and enforce the law. The members of this club will have a fit' if I don't stop this awful slaughter."

"Do they know we are out here tonight?" asked the deputy.

"No, I don't think a single one of them knows it. And if we are fortunate tonight, won't it be a surprise to them all? I didn't think this morning when I was at the club house that I would come out tonight on account of some other business, but as luck would have it, I was free earlier in the day than I supposed. Not going to the club house and then out saved us five miles."

"Just look at the ducks coming in here, the air is alive with them," interrupted the deputy.

"Yes, there are thousands of them that come to this favorable spot. When we scared them, they went out a few bunches at a time, and they didn't appeal to the eye so much as if they had all gone at once. I am glad they went out as they did, otherwise, they might have aroused suspicion toward the one that has so lately been destroying so many of them."

"I feel certain," spoke the deputy, "we will bring this destruction to an end tonight, for we have everything in our favor. See the wind is even blowing from the east, which would silence the report of a gun from the club house, giving the vandal every possible chance to accomplish his purpose."

"Yes, said the game warden, "the moon and the stars are out. I can see quite clearly. If one wished, he could shoot very accurately tonight. Therefore, it is more than likely the rascal will be here soon."

"Do you not think," asked the deputy, "it would be well for us to be careful should he come, for you know

he will have a shot gun and might use it as freely on us as he does on the innocent ducks?"

"Yes," said the warden in a low voice, "that is possible, but we will give him no chance to use his gun. The law is all on our side and he will want to keep pretty straight."

By this time the deputy, who had watched the dazzling ducks flitter to and fro till he had become dazed, could imagine he saw the destroyer shooting them by the dozens. In fact, he had become so dazed that he had to close his eyes for a while.

Both were silent for a few minutes. All that could be heard was the sound of a hundred wings in the air and the constant splash of the ducks lighting in the water; mingled with this there could be heard the swaying and sighing of the dry tules.

"Oh!" said the game warden. "This is just the kind of a place that a sport likes to get into. He can have all kinds of fun killing his limit before returning home. The hunters told me this morning they had just got in from a good shoot. This is the finest pot-hole we have in all our ground, and we must stop this law-breaker from shooting at night, for he not only is destroying the game, but is chasing the ducks off our ground."

"Mr. Jones," replied his companion, "your statement reminds me of something that isn't quite clear in my mind. May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly," answered Jones, "if my knowledge will benefit you."

"Well," began the deputy, rubbing his eyes with his slender hands, "to be plain with you, I can't see how you ever came to arrest our mutual friend, Mr. Jackson."

"Ah!" whispered the warden, "That is a very unpleasant recollection, but as we are here alone, and feeling quite confident of being out of hearing distance from others- I will let you into my secret. See, it was just this way, I unluckily was accompanied by that cranky warden, McCausland, when I ran onto Mr. Jackson with the limit for himself and another for his friend who was going to the city the next day. Jackson had so many ducks in his possession that it looked suspicious so what could I do but count them as I was warden over this section. McCausland is a new official and if I had not arrested Jackson it might have cost me many dollars to get out of the scrape."

"Didn't you help Jackson pay the fine?" interrupted the deputy.

"Yes," replied Jones, "I paid the fine myself and explained the matter to Jackson, yet he doesn't seem to act just right about it."

"I suppose," quizzed the deputy, "he feels as if you tried to destroy his reputation."

"Let us say no more about this matter," exclaimed Jones, "let us only hope he sees the mistake and thinks no more of it."

At this moment a bang sounded and the moon and the stars were obscured by the massive swarm of ducks that rose from the water. The two men stared nervously into the darkness towards an opening through the tules, from whence the sound came. When the light was no longer obscured, they saw an oddly dressed man poling his boat towards a bunch of low tule just across a narrow strip of water from them. The newcomer didn't seem to be a bit uneasy, and shoved his boat well into the tules. After doing this he got his gun ready to shoot and emptied several boxes of shells into a tin pail so they would be handy. He seemed to be confident of having some lively shooting. All this time neither the warden nor the deputy had exchanged a word. The deputy was so nervous he shook like a jelly fish but the warden was as steady as a clock. The deputy nervously whispered, "when is he ours?"

"Don't be in too much of a hurry" replied the warden, "we must see him shoot some ducks, and have a cause for arresting him."

"You are right," gasped the deputy, "we must have a reason for arresting him, but we won't have to worry long, for the Old Chink will be busy in a short while."

Just then several loud cracks sounded from the scoundrel's gun and three birds fell heavily on the water. From miles away thousands of ducks began to flock to the one particular pothole. And again and again the air was jolted by the heavy report of a gun. The warden was well satisfied the destroyer had done enough before his eyes, and had whispered to the deputy to get ready for he was going to yell "Halt, hands up!"

"To be on the safe side," whispered the warden to his deputy, "take a good bead on the old heathen and if he makes any suspicious moves, you know your business."

Just as Jones gave the fatal words "Halt, hands up!" a duck flitted by close to the water's surface and the destroyer, still at his work, banged away at the duck. The shot passed close by the concealed men, and before Jones had time to think, a rifle cracked by his side. One shot was enough. The man fell backwards in his boat, groaning in deep agony. Jones and Snyder rushed to the dying man's boat. Jones' heart leaping with glee for he felt he had the mystery in his hands. But no sooner did the two men look upon the death pale face, than they, too, turned deathly pale, and Jones fell on his knees crying, "Ah! my dear Jackson, why did you come tonight to end your life and bring sorrow in our home?" And the warden's moans were so loud one would have thought that the warden himself was dying instead of his friend."

In the early days sport shooting, over decoys was very limited and enjoyed by few. However, like Marshall's discovery of gold, it could not be kept from reaching the ears of outsiders and in the 1920's the great influx of city and outside hunters started. Duck decoys and large scale sport shooting began.

Jack Triplett, hardly out of boyhood, had been caring for a neighbor's group of live geese which he used as decoys to attract the birds. After several hunts with this friend, Mr. Hal Josephs, who is said to be one of the first of a very few in California to have used live-geese decoys, Jack soon caught the "goose fever", which can only be acquired by seeing the proud but cautious birds hook into decoys. He made up his mind that he too would have a spread of live decoys to shoot over someday; and someday he did. Not long after he married he began collecting an odd and assorted group of geese, acquired by expertly tipping their wings with shot so that they were but slightly wounded and would recover quickly. By the middle of

the 1920's he had accumulated some 130 birds. They were kept in the backyard of their home and fed like the kings that they were. Some were gigantic and grizzly with stout muscular necks and bull-like heads while others seemed pitifully small and frail which was because of the difference in age and specie. They all, however, tamed in a short period of time and became very content and friendly.

When a hunting day arrived, Jack would back his flat-bed truck on which he had a large wire cage mounted, up to the goose pen. A ramp would be lowered to the ground and the geese would strut up the narrow plank, one by one, following their leader, which was a large black breasted "speckle bellie" goose. Upon arrival at the hunting location this procedure would be reversed, turning the goose into a large, hastily prepared pen, constructed of small gauge chicken-wire supported by several short iron rods shoved into the soft ground. As the decoys could not fly, a pen of only two feet in height and open at the top was used. The tall, heavy rice stubble made the pen nearly invisible to flying birds, and very rarely bothered their actions. Needless to say, with their constant squawking and live action, these decoys were the ultimate in calling and luring their friends from the blue.

Transporting the decoys over wet soggy ground many times made it impossible for Jack to hunt exactly where he wished. Although the birds could be herded across country easily, they would tire within a short distance and become balky as stubborn mules. Many times during the late 20's they set up and shot off of what now has become main thoroughfares of transportation.

On one occasion when old man winter had made traveling conditions impossible, he shot off the Norman Road which was even then well traveled. The decoys were herded across a slough which bordered the road and penning directly on the other side. The shooters, numbering some four drenched eager individuals, used the slough as a blind. The presence of a series of high tension wires stretched between power poles were overhead, which would seem like an impossible situation to decoy birds into in this more modern day. However, it was lightly regarded at that time. The circling birds at many times would have to rise to get over the buzzing power lines. They were low enough to shoot, but being a firm believer in firing only when flying birds are in perfect position, he would hold off until the geese would circle behind and come under the wires to hook directly over the decoys. A good shoot could even be had under these adverse conditions.

However, good things seldom last forever. Although this type of shooting contributed to the drop in the goose population around the early 30's few believe it was a major factor. However several rather bad hatching years and a great influx of ducks and goose hunters, created the problem of a large kill, with very few replacements coming from the North. This prompted the federal government to ban the shooting over live decoys.

Upon this action by the government to forbid shooting over live decoys, an immediate shift in the methods of hunting waterfowl was necessary. Those who were bitten by the "goose bug"

began purchasing and storing large amounts of canvas, old mattresses, rice straw, and paint, in a desperate effort to make a suitable stuffed decoy. Ambitious hunters spent much of that year working in their basements and garages. New sewing machines, replacing the older foot-pedal types, were received with much eagerness and joy by many a hunter's wife, only for her to later discover that papa was to nearly wear it out sewing the tough, heavy canvas. Patterns of the decoys that were to play such a large part in their hunting lives, had to be tried and retried and sewn and re-sewn in order to attain the correct size and shape of an actual goose.

What eventually became the finished product for the Triplett family, though rather crude, totaled some sixty decoys made of canvas and stuffed with rice straw. They were all of the head-down feeding variety and painted flat white with jet black V's near their tails. These decoys produced nearly, and in many instances, better results than did the live decoys. Although mobility was the single attribute they had above live decoys it was an insurmountable one. With this small spread of light decoys, it was possible to move daily, if necessary, without involving too much work. Whereas mud and extreme bulk very often hindered the old-timers from moving the live birds when they should have, only six to eight strong backs and a driving desire to shoot birds were now needed. They were then able to continuously shoot only where the geese were feeding. A feeding location would be found one evening and they would be set-up awaiting the bird's morning return.

Blinds were but a slight worry. In the many rice fields, natural, small tule blinds were numerous, due to the swampy terrain. If they were to shoot in an open barley field, there was usually a fence line with enough tumbleweeds blown against it to afford cover or a shallow, empty ditch to be found. On occasions when the previously mentioned blind accommodations could not be found, several holes would be dug in order to hide the shooters. These made exceptional hiding places, as the decoys could be set between, and around the holes, placing the shooter in the middle of his decoys, hiding him completely from low flying birds on windy or fog-bound days.

It is the most natural thing in the world for a flock of geese to work into squawking, jabbering birds that are lit on the ground; whereas complete silence causes them to be suspicious and wary from their very first glance. Therefore, men quickly learned to attract geese with mechanical calls. A few were fortunate enough to have a natural voice for goose calling, which was, and is still, a great aid in bringing the geese within killing range.

At that particular period daily happenings were witnessed which many more modern sportsman might find a trifle hard to believe. Nearly every good hunting day lesser snow geese, in numbers ranging into the hundreds were allowed to light in the decoys with countless birds still pouring down. This strange phenomena of hunters not shooting at geese when they are on the ends of their gun-barrels was due to the fact that the hunter

at that time was allowed to kill four geese daily whether they were black or white. There was a natural desire to bag limits of the large, choice dark birds, as they were a far better dinner-time treat than the slim snow geese. The cagy blacks which consisted of honkers and speckle bellies were in a vast minority when counted against the loud-mouthed stupid whites. Therefore, they played a waiting game, searching the skies for dark birds, sometimes for as long as an hour while the undesirables lit, and hovered over as they called.

It was at this time that the Fish and Game Commission, very wisely, decided on an aggregate limit of geese which even now remains basically the same. Their decision was based on the goose population and the ratio between the whites and their darker bretheran. Within a very short time after the aggregate limit began, a small spread of sixty decoys became obsolete. The white geese became so wary, after they were initiated to gun-fire, that they would work only to very large concentrations of theirkin. Hunters raised havoc with the whites for a time after the game commission's action as they were forced to shoot them in order to bag a limit of birds. Little by little, however, the daily bag diminished until it became quite apparent the "stupid white" had gained an education and were "on" to the setup.

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THE AUTHORS

The authors of this article are natives of this area and now reside near Gridley where Richard (Dick) Epperson is a rice-farm manager. Margit Schnabel Epperson teaches school in the Manzanita School near Gridley. Both are descendents of several pioneer families including the Eppersons, Redmans, Deans, Schnabels and Skinners.

The young people had their education in local and nearby schols and colleges. They have one small daughter, Kara and all three have a great interest in the outdoor activities of our area.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the beginning of 1978 in our hand, the Executive Board of your Historical Society is working on plans to update the printed History of Sutter County. Our quarterly publication for the past twenty years has done an excellent job of covering a great many areas. However, while living in a world as rapidly changing as today's, many areas are naturally missed.

Recently I attended a Conference of Historical Societies in San Diego, and particularly studied the subject of oral history. This area operates quite simply, and our success in this field will be determined by the number of persons interested in listening to another's stories on a specific subject. I am sure you can see what a wide range of happenings this can cover. If you are interested in hearing more about the proceeds of oral history, please attend the January meeting and ask me or any of the others who have also studied this procedure for compiling historical information.

Indra Nason