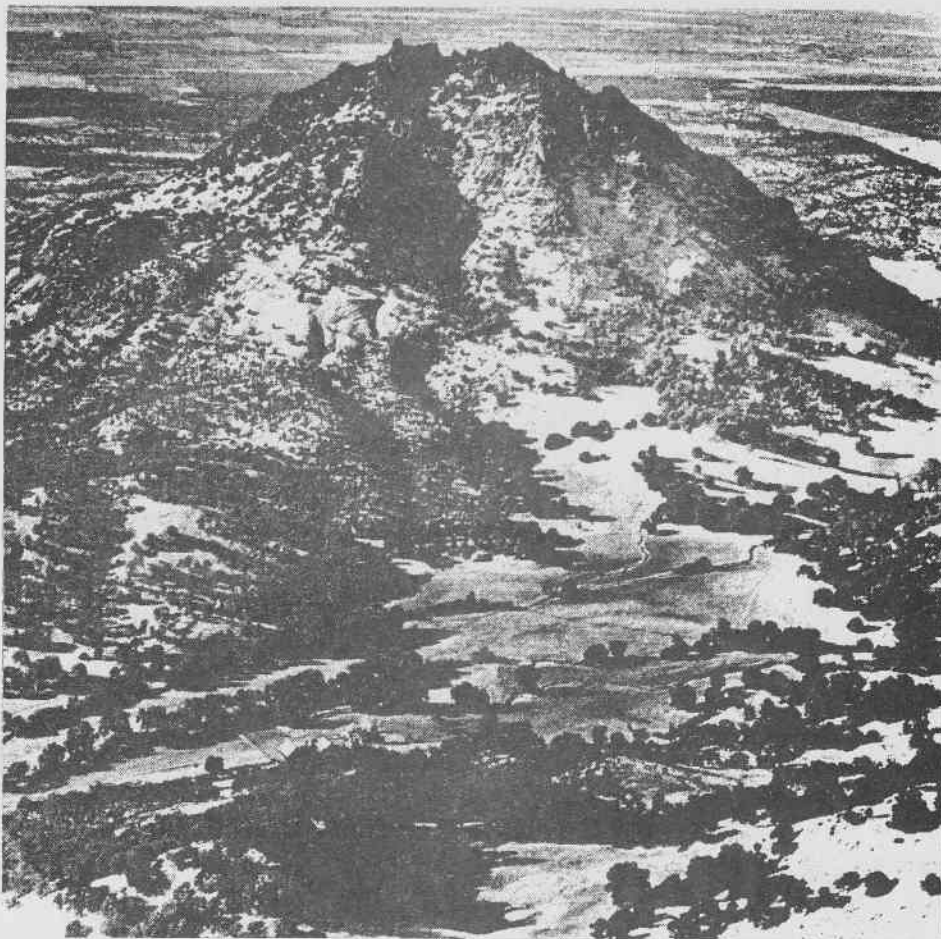


SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XIX No. 3

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95991

July, 1980



Aerial View of South Face of  
North Butte

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XIX, No. 3

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The NEWS BULLETIN is published quarterly by the Society at Yuba City, California 95991. The annual membership dues includes receiving the NEWS BULLETIN. JANUARY 1980 dues are payable now. Your remittance should be sent to Sutter County Historical Society, P. O. Box 1004, Yuba City, California 95991. To insure delivery of your NEWS BULLETIN, please notify the Treasurer of any change of address. Dues are \$7.50 per person, \$10.00 per family, \$5.00 if over 70 years.

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An index and file of all the past issues of the NEWS BULLETIN may be found in the Sutter County Library, the Marysville City-County Library, and at the Community Memorial Museum.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The annual dinner was a success. The food prepared by the East Nicolaus Boosters Club won praises from all.

Dr. McIntosh reminded us that the "past" is rapidly escaping us. Every effort must be made to preserve the everyday items and happenings. Recording the thoughts, collecting the artifacts and making them available for posterity should be our goal.

All in all a fine evening was enjoyed by those in attendance.

A place to store farm implements and the tools of husbandry is urgently needed. Too often, we have had to decline pieces of machinery, harness and items used by our forebearers in their agriculture pursuit. As well as a place to store, we need the expertise to rehabilitate these farm-oriented articles.

R. A. SCHNABEL  
President

APOLOGY

I deeply regret the omission of Mrs. Ruby Rainville's name from the list of W. W. W. Club members. It was not intentional. Ruby was a dear friend of mine and one of our most enjoyable and entertaining members.

I finished my April article by saying that it was my "Swan Song". After the above mentioned error, I feel it should be.

VERNA M. SEXTON

MUSEUM NOTES

Jean Gustin, Director/Curator

In September 1979, the Museum was the recipient of an Institute of Museum Services General Operating Support award of \$6,138. These competitive grants are given by this branch of H. E. W. on the basis of quality of exhibits and services. An immediate result of the award was a lift in the morale of the volunteer and paid staff, a sense of pride in the accomplishments of the Museum, and a dedication to future greater efforts.

Now ten months down the road, we are able to see positive and concrete results. The grant supplemented county support, fund raising events, gift shop revenues, and memberships. It enabled the Museum to retain the services of a talented, trained, second full-time staff member during the grant period. This staffing level, and use of volunteer staff, has made it possible: to process the large number of new items given to the Museum, to inventory all stored items for potential conservation problems, to put many formerly stored items on exhibit, to improve and renovate existing exhibits, to design and begin work on two new permanent exhibits, to book and make display plans for three Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibits, to maintain our research services to the public, and to complete our History of Sutter County Coloring Book. The award funds have also made possible the purchase of materials for use in the conservation of our artifacts and for the development and improvement of exhibits.

The Museum has applied for a second year I. M. S. award. Selection results will not be known until September. Further fund raising events are planned during the year -- more concentration on a Museum membership drive has increased revenue from this source -- the gift counter provides a steady small income, new items have been added for sale at the counter.

We are very proud of the Museum and its development over the past five years. We hope to be able to have the funds this next year and in future years to continue to develop and improve. We think that the job of preserving historical items and of using them to interpret our unique local history to the public is a very important one.

\* \* \* \* \*

We hope you were able to visit the Museum in April during the first Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit, "American Agriculture: A Continuing Revolution." Our thanks to Orchard Machinery Corporation and to Mr. and Mrs. Dick Brandt of Yuba City who

sponsored the exhibit and made this interesting and educational experience available to the community.

We hope you will take advantage of our timely second Smithsonian exhibit, "Five Critical Elections," on display July 12 through August 10. Sponsors for this exhibit are Dr. and Mrs. Michael Gabhart of East Nicolaus.

\* \* \* \* \*

MUSEUM CALENDAR - 1980

July 12 - August 10	Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit, <u>FIVE CRITICAL ELECTIONS.</u>
July 27	Sunday Concert
August 24	Sunday Concert
September 13 - Oct. 12	Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit, <u>PHOTOGRAPHING THE FRONTIER.</u>
September 28	Sunday Concert
October 16	Card Party and Luncheon
October 26	Sunday Concert
November 23	Sunday Concert
December 13	Second Annual Christmas Party, <u>TREES AND TRADITIONS.</u>

\* \* \* \* \*

LIST OF DONORS TO THE COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
TRUST FUND  
February 20, 1980 through May 13, 1980

Joyce and Fred Benzel	in memory of James M. McElroy
Adah R. Borchert	in memory of James M. McElroy
Lola Case, Leighton Case, Caryl Trailer	in memory of Ted D. Urbahns
Mr. and Mrs. William Dawson	in memory of Mattie May Tabley
Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Greene, Jr.	in memory of Francis Hall

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Holmes	in memory of Jack Burns
Tom and Ruth Miller	in memory of Albert Arostegui
Verna M. Sexton	in memory of James M. McElroy
Mrs. Alice A. Soderberg	in memory of James M. McElroy
Phydellia Wagner	in memory of Mary Thornton
James, Frances, and Blythe Gentry	in memory of Viola B. Sweeney
Georgia and Wilbur Green	in memory of Peery Gage
Jack and Helen Heenan	in memory of James McElroy
Bud and Eunice Menth	in memory of Bessie Lewis
Bud and Eunice Menth	in memory of Viola Sweeney
Verna M. Sexton	in memory of Margaret Murry
Verna M. Sexton	in memory of Minerva Tarpley
Jess and Ivadel Simmons	in memory of Henry Casey
John and Connie Cary	in memory of Mrs. Patricia Rich
Chipman and Renfrow Accountancy Corporation	in memory of Dominick Turano
Percy and Helen Davis	in memory of Dominick Turano
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Norma Petro Harter	in memory of Patricia Rich
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Holmes	in memory of Patricia Rich
Allen and Florence Kincade	in memory of Patricia Rich
Mr. and Mrs. Francis Laney and Family	in memory of Patricia Rich
Ruth Metcalf	in memory of Patricia Rich
Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Micheli	in memory of Patricia Rich
Rosemary Redhair	in memory of Mrs. W.P. Rich
Maude K. Roberts	in memory of Margaret S. Murry
Loyd H. Wilbur	in memory of James M. McElroy

Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Davis	in memory of Fay McPherrin
Mr. and Mrs. Clarence DeWitt and Family	in memory of Fay McPherrin
Ray and Lena Frye	in memory of Fay McPherrin
Mr. and Mrs. James E. Hall	in memory of Floyd Nesbitt
Mr. and Mrs. George C. Kylling	in memory of Fay McPherrin
Maude K. Roberts	in memory of Ethel Oertli
Verna M. Sexton	in memory of Floyd Nesbitt
Mr. and Mrs. John Sheehy	in memory of Virginia Faye McPherrin
Mr. and Mrs. Burwell W. Ullrey	in memory of Ethel Oertli
Mr. and Mrs. Eber F. Beilby	in memory of Joey Hall
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Holmes	in memory of Geraldine Hall
Joyce Kirkpatrick	in memory of Geraldine Hall
P. E. O. Sisterhood	outright gift
Caroline S. Ringler	in memory of Wayne Meinert
Mr. and Mrs. Jacque M. Sexton	in memory of Geraldine Hall
Verna M. Sexton	in memory of Geraline Faye Hall
Jack and Janet Sullivan	in memory of Patricia Rich
Ruth G. Anthony	in memory of Emily Wilbur
Joyce and Fred Benzel	in memory of Ada Bender
Joe and Ellie McCarron	in memory of Lea Cheim
Mr. and Mrs. Newell Burtis	in memory of Joey Hall
Mrs. Margaret Johnson	in memory of Ethel Oertli
Mr. and Mrs. Starr Poole	in memory of Emmet Lee McCune
Joe and Ellie McCarron	in memory of Mr. H. Reines
Bee and Dick Brandt	in memory of Kate Ramsaur

SUTTERANA

Sutter County Courts. -- On the Grand Jury recently empaneled in Sutter County is General John A. Sutter. Upon the calendar is one murder case and three for cattle stealing...

The removal of the County Seat to Yuba City seems to give very general satisfaction and will no doubt tend to advance the prospects of our vis a vis neighbor.

Quoted from the Marysville Express in the Sacramento Union of December 7, 1854.

NOTE: The satisfaction was not as general as this writer supposed. This election of 1854 was contested and declared fraudulent. But a second election in 1856 gave Yuba City an uncontested plurality.

Incendiarism -- The Marysville Herald informs us that on Sunday morning last the wood-yard of General Sutter was discovered to be on fire, having been burning as is supposed all night. The yard contained 216 cords of wood, intended for steamboats, the value of which was not less than \$2,500. The fire was evidently the work of the incendiary. The yard is situated on the bank of the river a short distance below the Hock Farm buildings adjacent to fences and in the upper edge of dense woods. Fortunately there was little wind.

From the Sacramento Union June 21, 1854.





Bernice Bist Gibson, 84, former Superintendent of Sutter County schools, died in Madrid, Spain, enroute to Obenamergan, Germany, to see the centuries old Passion Play.

Bernice sent us the following Article, just before leaving for this trip. Although it was not originally planned as such, we would like to publish this article as a memorial to her service in the Sutter County Historical Society and with the Bulletin. She along with others was instrumental in beginning both.

Bernice has enriched many lives and will be missed by all who knew her.

THE SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

YESTERYEAR AND NOW

by Bernice B. Gibson

Twenty-six years ago, in the spring of 1954, a few of us around the courthouse began to realize the history and progress of Sutter County was beginning to slip away from us and if something wasn't done to preserve the activities of our pioneers, all would soon pass away.

One late afternoon, in the spring of 1954, five of us, namely: Supervisor Harold Moore, District Attorney Noel Stevenson, Librarian Irmina Rudge, Newspaper Publisher Earl Brownlee, and Superintendent of Schools Bernice Gibson, met in the County Library and discussed the possibilities of forming a Sutter County Historical Society. We talked about by-laws, constitution, aims and our legal advisor said we must be incorporated in order to own or possess any property to which we might fall heir or obtain by gifts. You may be sure we were there until dark that spring evening discussing all the things which came up. We had our own legal advisor, one of our supervisors, our librarian to take care of the research and the Superintendent of Schools for record keeping and the education of the younger generations, and most important, our weekly Newspaper Publisher, Earl Brownlee to take care of publicity.

An organizational meeting was called on May 25, 1954 at 8:00 p.m. Leaflets were distributed throughout the county and Earl Brownlee took care of the publicity in the Sutter County

Independent Farmer. A goodly number of dedicated and interested people showed up for the organizational meeting. Noel Stevenson called the meeting to order and led the discussion. He stated our aims and purposes, the constitution and by-laws which we had prepared were read, discussed and approved. The acting chairman of the evening called for nominations of the following officers: President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary and eight Directors.

Election of officers resulted in the following slate:

President - Noel Stevenson

First Vice-President - Frank Lamb

Second Vice-President - Mrs. Ida Doty

Secretary - Mrs. Bernice Gibson

Treasurer - Harold Moore

Directors:

Mrs. Ethel Albertson

Mrs. L. D. Baun

Mrs. Ida Doty

Frank Lamb

Mrs. Chester Reische

Mrs. Leana Weber

Mrs. Andrew Witt

Mrs. Harold Rudge

The aims of the Society were adopted as originally proposed and I might add are now accomplished!

Aims:

1. To collect historical facts and records pertaining to Sutter County.

2. To utilize this material in preparing historical publications.

3. To establish a museum for the display and preservation of the material.

4. To foster good citizenship through the encouragement of interest in local history.

The Sutter County Historical Society was off to a good start with an Officers and Board of Directors meeting called for June 29, 1954. At that meeting plans were made for Charter members, with a Charter Membership Card designed by Earl Brownlee. The membership committee began its work under the leadership of Eleanor Reische. Mrs. Florence Arritt chose "The Sutter Buttes" as the emblem of our Society with the Cherokee word "Nowetta" as our motto. Nowetta in Cherokee means, "Welcome, you come again."

Big plans for the years '54 and '55 were in progress with a fall meeting called for October 12 at 8:00 p.m. in the supervisors chambers. The next meeting was held November 15, 1954, but before that event took place the first Sutter County Historical Society News Bulletin was published by the Superintendent of Schools, Bernice Gibson, and was continued from that office and the Sutter County Printer's Office for the next eight years. The same format has been used continuously, begun with second edition, April 1955.

Randolph Schnabel, the first program chairman was able to engage very interesting speakers for the first year and we were on our way.

President Noel Stevenson wrote in his president's message for the April Bulletin:

"The Sutter County Historical Society celebrates its first anniversary this month. Less than a year ago the historical society was merely an idea in the minds of a few persons who later became the incorporators and the first directors. From this small beginning we have progressed, to the status of a corporation, the publication of a bulletin, and a membership of 65 persons in 1955."

Regular meetings were held for the years 1955 and 1956 with Noel Stevenson continuing as president until April 1956. We note in the February issue of the Bulletin an election of officers was held. Honora Laney was elected president for the new year of the society beginning in April.

Under the very capable leadership of Mrs. Laney, the society grew and with the contributions of many local writers, including our first and second presidents, many historical stories were recorded for posterity.

We were fortunate that year (1956) in having our president, Mrs. Laney, attend the State Conference for the Council of Historical Societies of California. (name changed later) The Conference was held in San Jose June 21 and 22. Mrs. Laney gave us very detailed reports later in the Bulletin.

That same year the telephone company reproduced a photograph in color of the Sutter Buttes on the telephone book for Yuba and Sutter Counties (our emblem).

Randy still continued to be program chairman for Mrs.

Laney and we note that in January 1957 he was able to secure T. D. Urbahns for speaker. We remember T. D. Urbahns as a man of much knowledge. He lived a long and fruitful life and gave much of his knowledge and energy to Sutter County. He went to his reward in Carmel, 1979 at the age of 98 years.

Shortly after Mrs. Laney's election rumblings were heard around the county that we must get under way toward the establishment of a museum before our many museum pieces, which were coming to light, got away from us and disappeared. Mrs. Ida Doty, one of our very urgent members for a museum, began to talk about a small beginning. Some open space in the front of the new County Office Building seemed to need something. The space would accommodate two attractive glass cases. With Mrs. Doty, Mrs. Laney and Mrs. Rudge, our librarian, on the ground floor, things began to happen and thus began our present Sutter County Museum. An article appeared in the Historical Society Bulletin July 1957, which read:

"Two very attractive cases are in place on the first floor of the County Office Building. Changes in exhibits will be made from time to time. Thanks to Mrs. Doty and her committee."

The next spring, 1958, opened up a new era in museum history. Yuba City was preparing to celebrate its fiftieth birthday as an incorporated city. Our ever alert Ida Doty thought, this is the time to strike for help on a museum proper. Everyone was interested in a program of celebration for our home town and the Historical Society was not idle. A new shopping center was opening up on Bridge Street and since shopping centers were quite a new arrangement for Yuba City,

some stores stood vacant for a while. With the efforts of Mrs. Doty and Howard Harter and most of our active members, we appealed to the Board of Supervisors for financial aid. We were successful in securing one of the buildings in the shopping center for a museum. The County agreed to pay the rent for a museum. As soon as the contract was signed, moving day began. Howard Harter sent in a truck. Randy Schnabel was on hand with help and equipment. Sutter County people dug out barns and houses and brought in things of historical value. Mrs. Doty supervised and did the organizing and arranging of the artifacts and cases. We all took our turn in keeping the museum open to visitors. Everything was done with volunteer help, even repair work. The first event to take place at the museum was the Historical Society's celebration of Yuba City's 50th birthday. Under the capable leadership of Mrs. Nanne Brown a "Fashion Show of 50 Years Ago" was produced in the museum. A program for the week of September 20, 1958 to September 28 was advertised in our July 1958 Bulletin. In the same Bulletin the panel discussion given by six leading citizens of an earlier day is published "blow by blow".

Election year for new officers came aound in April 1959 and another of our loyal members W. A. Greene took his turn with the gavel. A change in the mailing list for the Bulletin was made beginning in January 1960. Due to the high cost of mailing to a long list of folks, the Society voted to mail the Bulletin to paid up members only. A paid membership of \$2.00

included the subscription to the News Bulletin.

During W. A. Greene's administration we became interested in making a motion picture of Sutter County History from old photographs and snapshots. A Mr. Gordon Waldear representing Bonanza Associates, Inc., was invited to speak at the regular meeting April 19, 1960. A progress report was given on the film in the October issue of the Bulletin 1960. The film was to be about 20 minutes long with a minimum of 200 still pictures. The cost of production would be \$200 to \$250 per minute of film. Reprints of the film would sell at \$125 each.

Mrs. Florence Arritt assumed the presidency of the Society in January 1961. Work continued on the film, but the price of production was a very high hurdle to overcome.

Many fund raising activities in the form of Book Fairs, Shows, and other money raising activities were held during the administration of Florence Arritt and Bernice Gibson, president during the years '63 and '64. Nanne Brown was a very enthusiastic promoter of the film. In the meantime, Mrs. Ida Doty was promoting the museum in Carriage Square and entertaining many groups of children in the Sutter County Museum. Mr. Edward Von Geldren designed the road signs leading folks to the Sutter County Museum in Carriage Square.

Markers for spots of historical interest in the county were also one of the concerns of the Society. I only know of one new marker which was placed during the lifetime of the Historical Society and that is the one which was placed at the first County Courthouse in Nicolaus. It marks the building



in which the first meeting was held for the organization of county government.

After ten years of a very successful museum in Carriage Square under the faithful leadership of Mrs. Ida Doty, an interest in a Sutter County owned museum was generated. Howard Harter became president of the Society in 1969 and through the generosity of Howard and Norma Harter, a six acre park was founded on Butte House Road to honor the memory of Sutter County pioneers and veterans. Trees were donated by pioneer families. A location in the park was designated for the purpose of building a museum.

The following lines are quoted from Jessica Bird's article in the October 1975 issue of the Bulletin:

"Howard Haine Harter and Norma Petro Harter of Yuba City, long prominent in civic affairs, on October 1, 1972 gave the acreage on Butte House Road to Sutter County for the Memorial Park. The next year they presented the County Board of Supervisors with securities valued at \$100,000 to establish a trust fund for financing a museum building in the park. At that time Gilbert L. Williamson of Yuba City donated \$12,500 and Wilford C. and Georgia Williams of Yuba City \$2,500 toward the purchase of additional property needed for the building site. A large number of memorial gifts in varying sums from individuals and organizations since have been added."

Thus the dream and ambition of the original charter members of the Sutter County Historical Society was realized. The Board of Supervisors appointed Mrs. Jean Gustin of Yuba City as the first salaried museum curator in Sutter County

history. The ground was broken for the Community Memorial Museum in September 1974. Since its completion and the move made from the Sutter County Museum, in Carraige Square, to the new location, growth and development has been continuous. The Historical Society, is still one of the main supports of the museum.

The history and development of the museum is a story within itself and I must get back to the story of the Sutter County Historical Society.

Some of the early presidents who carried the load of the Society, following those already mentioned were Randolph Schnabel, Mrs. C. W. Rankin, Mrs. Thomas E. Nason, Randolph Schnabel (2nd round).

There are four people to whom I want to pay special tribute before I close this paper. One is Mrs. Lola Case who was elected treasurer in 1963. She took care of the collection of dues and all special funds in her usual very efficient way until she moved to Pacific Grove in 1972. Her resignation and tribute is recorded in the October 1972 issue of the Bulletin.

I also want to give Randolph Schnabel a "big hand" for his performance as program director from 1954 to the present time. Many excellent programs have been presented over the years, but in my memory I think the greatest was the six "old-timers" on the panel, with Randy as the "master of ceremonies." It was recorded by the school department, later transcribed and published with a picture of the participants.

As to the Bulletin in which it was published, go to the library and look it up in the index cards of the Bulletin, which brings me to another person we must honor for his untiring work in writing and keeping an index of our publications in both libraries. How can we ever do homage to this ever faithful man and his work? Earl Ramey in his quiet way could always come up with an outstanding article for the Bulletin.

A fourth person was Lonnie Wheeler, Lithographer for Sutter County, served his County and the Historical Society well. The Society has been very fortunate to have his services.

In the beginning of the year 1978, expansion feelings were taking place at the museum. More space is needed and ground space to display agricultural artifacts. I hope the money will be forthcoming to meet the growth of our Community Memorial Museum.

It is a great pleasure for me to note the tours the Historical Society has taken and planned to outstanding places of interest. I remember the first one we had was an overnight tour of the gold country, Highway 49. Another was a trip to the Presidio in San Francisco and the home of Waddell F. Smith and the Pony Express in Marin County. I see by the latest Bulletin another bus trip is being planned for this summer. Last summer it was the Empire Mine and Nevada City.

Many other exhibits and musical concerts are being planned at the museum, which goes to show our early efforts were not in vain. I sincerely hope this next twenty-five years brings forth the same interest in Sutter County history and progress as the past twenty-five.



Yuba City Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration  
Left to Right: Irminna Rudge Palmer,  
Bernice Gibson, Carol Neyens, Ida Doty and  
Anita Laney

SUTTER BUTTES

by Irmina Palmer

Rising abruptly from the Sacramento Valley, these mountains are visible for miles in every direction. They are within the boundaries of Sutter County.

The United States Board of Geographic Names determined that the Buttes shall be known as the "SUTTER BUTTES". This name became official in 1949. (The date this information was received and this article written by BERNARD FONTANA.)

THE SUTTER BUTTES IS OFFICIAL NAME OF TINY MOUNTAIN

The United States Board on Geographic Names has removed one long-time source of arguments in the bi-county area.

It has designated "Sutter Buttes" as the correct name for the miniature mountain range lying west of Yuba City.

Variouly known as "The Buttes" the Marysville Buttes" (as shown by maps made by the U. S. Geological survey) or as the "Sutter Buttes" because of their location in Sutter County, the hills have been the source of many bitter wrangles.

Now, according to Bernard L. Fontana of Yuba City who is a student of the University of California at Berkeley, the official title has been assigned these hills.

Young Fontana, who worked with surveying crews in the Sutter Buttes, has kept in touch with the situation.

Writing to the Appeal-Democrat, he says: "The publication of an October 1949 bulletin by the United States Board on Geographic Names has brought to a conclusion an argument pre-citated in 1923. In that year the women of Sutter City decided that something should be done about the Buttes' misnomer, Marysville, which had been attached to the peaks by gentlemen of the U. S. Geological Survey. That argument has arisen many times during the past 24 years, but that it shall ever again be a subject for debate seems unlikely."

RANGE IMPERVIOUS

"Our Buttes, 'officially' nameless since their inception over 50 million years ago, now have a proper name -- much to the

relief of local people, I'm sure, than to the hills themselves.

The October bulletin of the U. S. Board of Geographic Names, under the heading of Decision List Nos. 4908, 4909, to substantiate this information. Copies of this bulletin may be had by writing Mrs. L. S. Moffett, Division of Geography U. S. Board of Geographic Names, Washington 25, D. C.

The Sutter Buttes completely isolated mountain range and source of natural gas which is used on this area for fuel, is thought by geologists to have been remnants of a much greater mountain which dates back to volcanic eras.

#### SUTTER CITY NEARBY

Sutter City lies near the foot of the hills, which rise steeply and almost unadorned by trees, with deep canyons cutting through the range.

All about the foot of the mountain are grainlands, orchards and cattle ranges. The Sutter Buttes are visible for many miles in any direction, rising abruptly from the center of the plains.

(BERNARD FONTANA who is now Ethnologist at the University of Arizona, gave this article on the official name to the Sutter County Library for their Sutter County History files. He also did a great deal of research on the Buttes and gave this information also to the library. It is filed in the Sutter County History pamphlet file under the title "THE SUTTER BUTTES" by Bernard Fontana.

\* \* \* \* \*

Marysville Evening Democrat, March 6, 1915

#### Enjoyable Affair

The dance given at Sutter City Friday evening by McLean and Lemenager proved an enjoyable affair, and was attended by a large number from the surrounding country. About twenty were present from Marysville and Yuba City, while Meridian was also well represented. Dancing continued until the wee sma' hours. A supper was served at midnight. The dances at Sutter are becoming quite popular.

THE SUTTER BUTTES

By Bernard Fontana

About one hundred years ago, the northern part of the great valley of California, or what is now the Sacramento Valley, was covered with a profusion of tall trees and wild animals. Oaks, cedars, and sycamores added their share of greenness to the valley floor, and it was not an uncommon sight to see herds of antelope and deer. But the wheel of time has wrought many changes, and today the picture is much different.

Perhaps the first white man to see the Buttes, which form such a prominent feature in the landscape of Sutter County, was Jedediah Smith, who visited this area in 1828. The next year, Michael La Frambeau, Hudson's Bay Company trapper, named the cluster of peaks, "Buttes". In his memoirs, John C. Fremont, who camped here in 1846 just before the Bear Flag Revolution, called them the "Buttes of Sacramento". There have been other names, such as "Los Tres Picos", "Three Buttes", "Butte Mountains", "Sutter's Buttes", and the "Sutter County Buttes". But the most appealing and romantic name of all is an Indian name, "The Mountain of the Breathing Spirit". This picturesque name is derived from a Sierra Indian tribal legend which vaguely alludes to "The great smoking mountain in the waters to the setting sun from here." Interpreting the legend, it means that parts of a historic sea were still present in the period when the ancestors of the Indians were living. The breath of the

"Mountain Spirit" was probably natural gas, a blazing breath when lighted by brush fires or lightning. Today the Buttes are generally referred to as the Sutter Buttes by local residents. The official name of this tiny range of peaks is, however, the Marysville Buttes, as they are called by the United States Geological Survey.

Just how the Buttes came into being, no one is sure. Distinguished California geologists cannot agree as to their origin. Some insist that the Buttes are a result of a slow volcanic process, while others stand by the claim that the peaks were caused by a fault in the earth. There is one thing all of the experts do agree on, and that is that these hills were once almost five thousand feet high, twice their present height.

Many of the most fascinating tales of the Buttes are stories connected with Indians. Since the Buttes were the site of the beginning of the Sacramento Valley tribes, they believed that when a tribe member died, his spirit went into these peaks, which the Indians called Spirit Mountain. There the spirit rested, washed its face at the spring, then set out from its top for "heavenly valley" following the Milky Way. He would be greeted there by the Creator who had a basket of choice food which was always full.... At the top of North Butte, the third highest of the peaks, is an interesting rock in which toe and hand holes once led up to a resting place which looks so much like an altar. Here the Indians watched for smoke messages in the northern mountains. If



the message told of a big flood coming down the river, before it reached this locality he could warn the Indians and they could move their belongings and families to safety. From this site on a clear day one can easily see both Shasta and Lassen.... There is an Indian legend about the origin of the Buttes, as well. The story goes that the Indian Creator had just finished molding the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Range, when, being very satisfied with his work, he dusted his hands off. That dust fell down to the Sacramento Valley to form the Buttes, 2132 feet high.

The gold rush of forty-nine brought with it a flood of settlers to this locale. The shady groves and the prismatic flowers that mantled the plain gave way before the axe and the plow of the husbandman; the breezes that once fanned the leaves into rustling magic swept in waving billows the newly planted golden grain. Men and women clustered in the Buttes, and it was not long before there were several little thriving communities established. Pennington became the leading town of the area, and places like West Butte, Sutter City, and Noyesburg flourished. Of course in some spots there were the usual number of saloons and gambling houses which reflected the mood of the gold rush.

Most of the first settlers in the Buttes were interested in agriculture. A few, however, were seeking mineral wealth. Prospectors have found nuggets worth up to five dollars in Butte's streams, but such finds were rare. Old timers assure us, though, that there is still considerable gold in

the Buttes. They maintain that the best time to look is just after a hard rainfall, when the water comes pouring down out of the many gulches. Nevertheless, I have yet to find gold in the Buttes. While a few sought gold in the hills, most of the settlers, as I have said, were interested in making a living by the hard toil of their backs and hands. Crops were grown and men were hired to help clear the rocks from the land. One of these industrious laborers was Dexter Cook. Dexter worked for many of the farmers, digging wells, building fences, and hauling stones. He was well liked by people, being hard working and honest. It was a familiar sight to see the man trundling his tools about in a cart, or using a willow switch to locate a water well. Cook would repair wagons, too, for the settlers needed their wagons for farm work or to make the long, rough, one day journey to Marysville and back. Or perhaps the wagon would be needed to get to the general store at West Butte, that well-supplied general store which received its goods from the railroad which passed through Meridian.

In 1864, when a gas seepage was discovered on the south side of the Buttes, it was to Dexter Cook that the problem of locating the shaft and planning its development evolved. Cook, Doty and a man named Cope, sank a shaft some thirty feet down. From this the company commenced to tunnel into the hill. After running some twenty feet the gas accumulated to such an amount that it took fire from the light and an explosion, like the result of a six pounder, was the result.

Two of the workmen were nearly killed, one being badly burned and the other being tossed completely out of the shaft. Cook was so frightened that he returned to clearing land and building fences, never to return to the gas well project. But even so, a very important page in Sutter County history had been written.

The Buttes have attracted many artists, geologists, climbers, and adventure seekers in their long history, but the only published poetry I have ever found mentioning the Buttes, was written by an Indian again. He was Chief Yellow Bird, or if you prefer to call him by his English name, George Hanson Esquire. This excerpt, which is from the poem "Yuba City Dedicate", was written about Yuba City when this town was losing its populace to Nye's Landing across the river. The verse reads"

"Those who seek for loveliness will meet  
The picture were they find thee;  
The Feather River at thy feet,  
The lofty Buttes behind thee."

Aside from this single mention of the Buttes in poetry, there have been several paintings published. One of the most recent appeared in an issue of Life Magazine. (about 1948)

Resources in the Buttes besides small deposits of gold include deposits of clay, stone, coal, and limestone. Although coal has never been found in sufficient amounts to make its development worthwhile, stone has been hauled away and sold at a good profit. There are still the remains of some of these old stone quarries on the south side of the Buttes today. These quarries furnished tons upon tons of volcanic rock for

use in building roads, until it was discovered that there was something peculiar in the structure of the rocks which made it inadvisable to use them in roads . It was said that the rocks were cutting tires.

Today, the Buttes have lost much of their appeal to the majority of the local residents, but today they are far more important economically than they have ever been. The sheep industry in the Buttes is one of the largest in the entire area, and sheep herders maintain huge flocks throughout the hills. The rolling, lower zones offer good grazing land and fine feeding grass for sheep. Almonds are another large industry, as are the raising of such crops as alfalfa, beans, wheat and hay. One of the largest breeding hatcheries in Northern California is located on the northwest side of the Buttes. There are some forty-five thousand chickens in this single hatchery.

The average Buttes resident of today is a sheep man or farmer. He is hard working, and he is friendly. Everywhere I have gone I have been welcome. The people ask only that you don't destroy their property as some have done. In cases, bullet holes have been fired into water tanks where the tanks are the only source of water supply for the cattle, and fences have been needlessly broken down. The Buttes farmer is none too friendly about this type of action, and no one can blame him. Perhaps it may interest some of you to know that in some areas of the Buttes residents still use gas lamps for lighting.

Springs serve as the source of water for the people, some

of which run all year round. Other springs run only in the ~~winter~~-time when there is ordinarily an abundant supply of water. At one time, there were actually lakes and pools in some of the upper regions of the Buttes, which were, I am assured, filled with trout. Waterfalls existed as well, which to a great extent, accounts for the rapid erosion in the Buttes. There is an artesian well even today near the West Butte. The day of the deer and the grizzly bear in the Buttes has passed, but wild life still abounds there. I have seen several foxes, and buzzards and raccoon are not an uncommon sight. Perhaps the most unwelcome of all the Buttes inhabitants is the rattlesnake which abounds in some of the rockier regions. The rattlers live on gophers and field mice and lizards. They love to come out on the rocks to sun themselves on warm days. Many Butte farmers are proud of their collection of rattlesnake rattles and they have harrowing tales to spin of close calls with these poisonous reptiles. I for one, manage to avoid them as a rule. One interesting little Butte dweller is the common bat. These bats live in the crevices of rocks in which they hibernate for long weeks during the winter months. The lower marsh lands at the base of the Buttes abound in ducks and geese, and there are several duck clubs situated on the Butte Sink. Higher in the Buttes, doves and quail offer a tempting challenge to the sportsman.

It is difficult to look at the Buttes and not appreciate their eerie, majestic beauty. Their awesome rocky cliffs tower far above the valley plain, and their soft lower hills

form a gentle silhouette against a darkening sky; indeed a beautiful foreground for our breathtaking sunsets. I love to sit on a little butte at sunset time and listen to the shrill call of wild geese and ducks. The distant trees slip away into shadowy forms as the sun sinks lower and lower in the west, and the spread of California at my feet disappears into the darkness. Above me are the higher Buttes, ever presenting a challenge to climb them and clamber about their massive faces. The people of this area have a true fairy-land of wonders in their own back yard; in our own back yard. It is here that these same hills have been standing for centuries, witnessing the ever steady changes man has wrought. The Buttes have seen a panorama of Sutter County history; and yet they are silent. But to me, they seem to say, "We the hills, are alone eternal." And some day, when men are no longer here and the dust blows down as empty plain, the Buttes will still be standing there silent and wonderful.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the magazine Arizona Highways May, 1979 an article "Runners of the West Tarahumara" by Bernard L. Fontana and John P. Schaefer.

NOTE: Bernard Fontana is a Yuba City boy who is now Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arizona. This article is based on an earlier book by these authors, "Tarahumara, Where Night is the Day of the Moon."

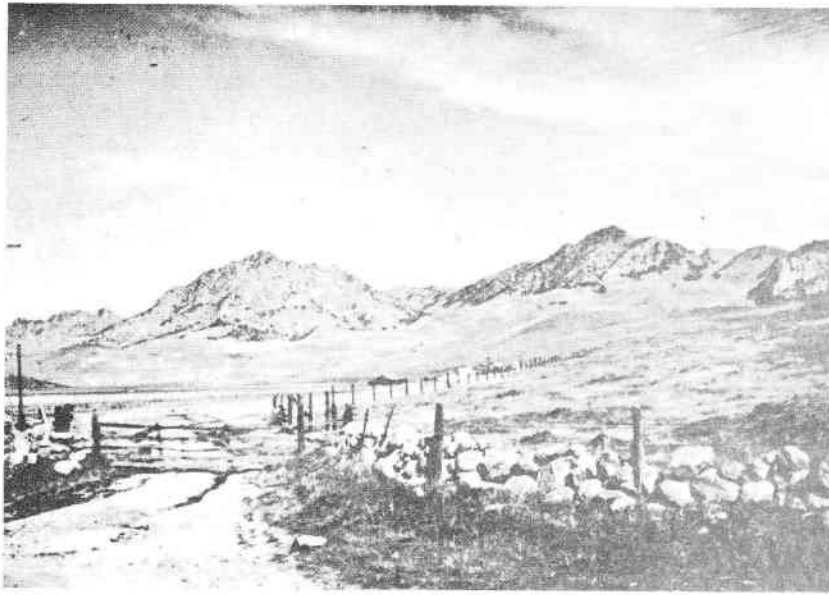
(The Tarahumaras are an ancient tribe of native Americans of Arizona and were famous as runners)

Marysville Appeal, July 6, 1861.

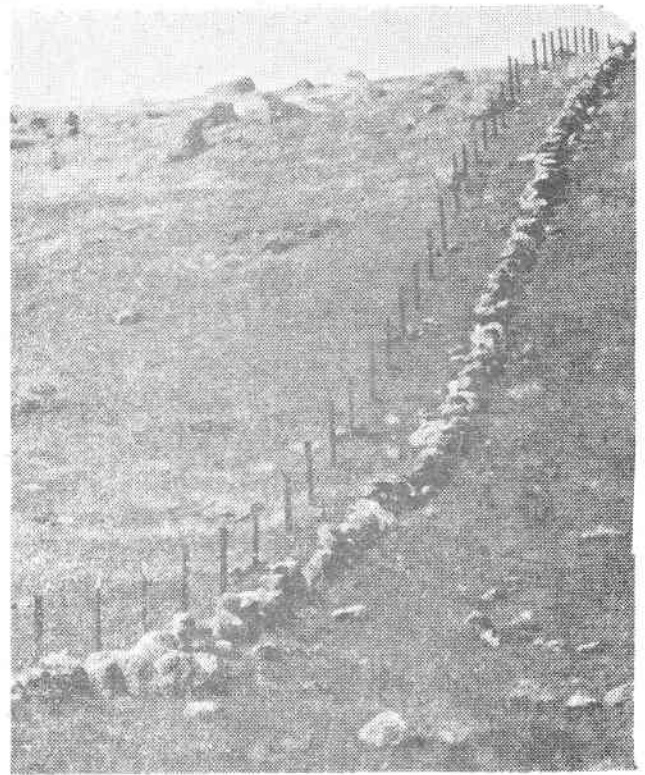
The Celebration at the Buttes.

One of the most unique celebrations of the Fourth was that which was enjoyed by about 500 people in Sutter County at the base of the Buttes. On the southern peak of these interesting and lovely mountains a flag staff had been raised the evening previous. This peak rises about 1500 feet above the plain, and for more than a third of its height is very steep. Up the hard ascent 22 men carried a pole 80 feet long cut into three sections, which were spliced on the summit and raised on the rocky cliff that looks so tenderly blue in the distance of Marysville. Then a flag was hoisted to the top of this pole at 10 o'clock on the morning of the Fourth, and the stripes and stars waved from the summit for the first time. There they can be seen fluttering now by Marysvillians -- ten miles off, best about sunset.

As the colors went up the 34 guns for the Union went off and the crowd gathered in the South pass below where a large pavilion of canvas and boughs had been erected hard by a spring, and where a patriotic prayer was spoken, songs sung, the Declaration read, a stirring oration delivered by that staunch patriot General George Rowe of Marysville, another speech delivered right vigorously by Mr. Bunyan who is said to have a genius for public oratory; and where, after other exercises and feasting, and at the close of the day, there was a right jolly dance which astonished the modest Buttes and made the comet spin about in erratic rivalry.

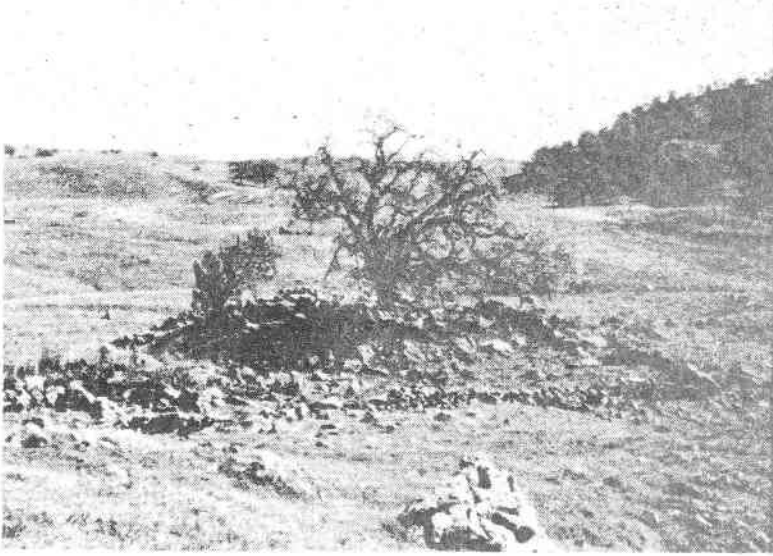


Sutter Buttes

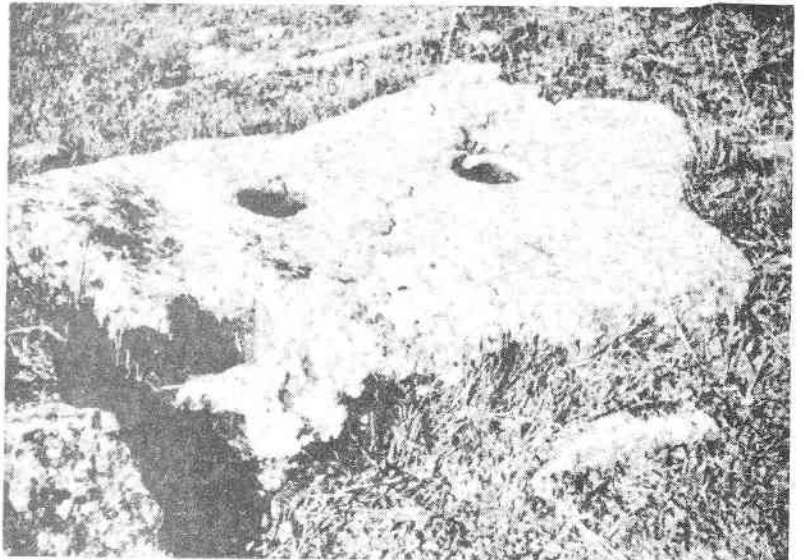


Rock wall or "fence" in the Buttes



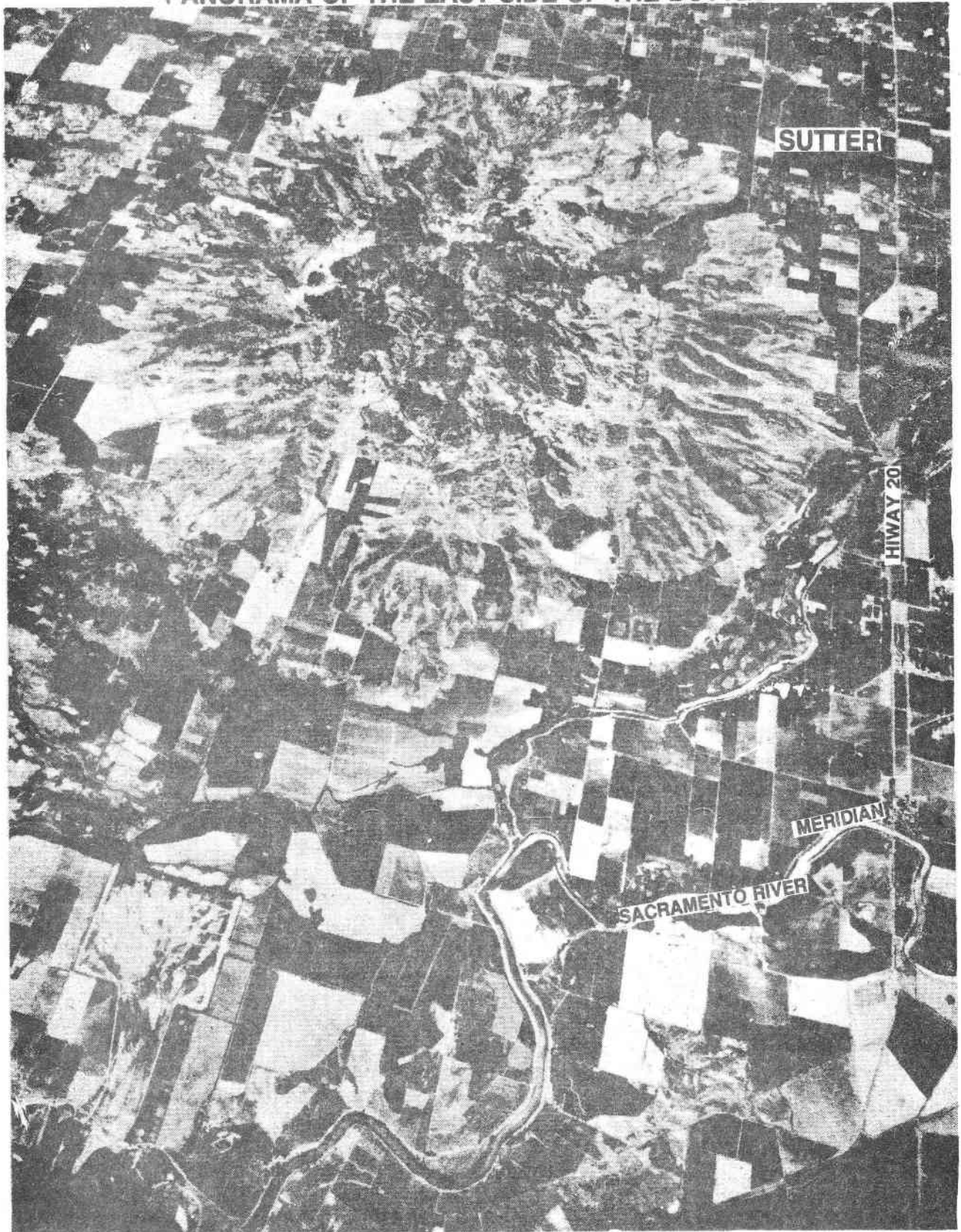


Rock Corral, referred to as  
"Fremont's Corral"



Indian Rocks—Mortar holes

**PANORAMA OF THE EAST SIDE OF THE BUTTES**



**AERIAL PHOTO TAKEN FROM A U-2**

Aerial Photo of Buttes Taken in 1975

ROADSIDE SHRINE BUILT BY FATHER WALRATH

Close to the highway that leads south past the little Station called Sycamore, just beyond Meridian, there stands a strange brick structure and adjacent to it, a cross. Many a traveler, even today, has wondered just what prompted its erection in this isolated spot and what purpose it served, for there is little that explains its existence. This structure has an interesting history and is in a way, a sort of a monument to the memory of a very great person, Father Walrath who built it.

Father Walrath, a German, was born in Rehin, Russia in 1840. At twenty-five he fled to avoid becoming a soldier. He finally arrived in New York and from there to Cincinnati, where he took a course in a Catholic Seminary. He journeyed to Eureka, California to study further.

He was a missionary to the Indians and their religion became a mixture of Catholic ritual and Indian pagantry.

Father Walrath came to Colusa in 1877 where he served faithfully for 35 years. He was a builder of churches and started them all over Glenn County.

In 1880 this tireless priest's parish had become so great that he induced the railroad company to lend him a hand car. This he operated personally, often using a sail to gain speed. It must have been a funny sight to have seen this priest, his robe fluttering in the wind, pumping a hand car.

About the time Colusa had its beginning, it was expected

that the little settlement at Grand Island near Sycamore would also develop into a large town. A tract of land on Dry Slough was donated for a church site and a large cross 27 feet high was erected there in 1863.

But Grand Island failed to grow into a town, yet the Catholics each year on September 14 made a pilgrimage to the spot.

When Father Walrath came to Colusa County, his creative urge compelled him to build this brick shrine, in which there is an altar where Mass may be celebrated. This is the shrine that is such a familiar landmark and also a memorial to a great builder of churches and men.

After 35 years of service in Colusa, Father Walrath was sent to Woodland, where a few years later he went to his well earned rest and he lies in the Catholic Cemetery there.

NOTE: This was taken from notebook owned by Mrs. William Eden.

Jean also has picture and newspaper article on this at Museum.

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Marysville Evening Democrat, May 25, 1915

Women As Drivers of Automobiles

It is being remarked in many places this Spring that a largely increased number of women are driving automobiles. In many cases one sees the woman of the house operating the

machine while the man is the passenger. Cautious persons have sometimes said that women could not be relied upon to keep their heads in sudden emergencies. Yet the quick intuition that women are traditionally supposed to possess should be a valuable gift in a mixup.

The woman driver is a natural outgrowth of an athletic age. The girl who plays lawn tennis and golf, and who bowls or swims, is not going to remain content with jouncing up and down in the backseat of an automobile. She may not know as much about tools as did her mother, who was more apt to handy jobs of repairs on any job of tinkering. According to tradition, women are supposed to be more polite than men. If they live up to their reputation, they will be popular on the road, where courtesy is far from being universal.

Marysville Appeal, March 12, 1864.

Terrific Gas Explosion -- We published sometime since that a company of miners were prospecting for a coal mine at the foot of the South Buttes. A shaft had been sunk 20 feet and a tunnel run about 20 feet more. On the morning of the 9th a gang of workmen consisting of William and George Doty, Dexter Cook and another man went to their work as usual. Previous to this, however, the presence of inflammable gas had been discovered in the tunnel, and the men had been in the habit of fanning it out. The tunnel had been discovered to be so foul it could be ignited at the seams in the rock of the drift. But the men being unacquainted with coal mining gave no more heed to the gas than was prompted from the smell. On the 9th the same measures were taken and Mr. Cook entered the drift and

struck a match, at which time the whole tunnel became a mass of flames. Mr. Cook was badly burnt.

Marysville Democrat, May 21, 1915

Automobile and a Mule to be Sold at Auction.

The chance of a lifetime -- that's just what it is; a chance to buy either a first class automobile or a mule, just as your fancy dictates. Now, this is not a joke; far be it from such. On Monday afternoon at 1 o'clock, Henry Van Tiger, the silvertongued auctioneer, will sell to the highest bidder new Overland autos, second hand Overland demonstrator cars, trucks, a six cylinder self-starting mule. Yes, a mule -- the kind that helps to raise the mortgage off the farm.

Any farmer who needs an automobile or a gas engine on wheels should come to town Monday. If you don't need an auto perhaps you do need a mule, and here is the opportunity to get a good sure-footed animal that requires no gasoline to make him speed up, as he is always in the high gear and his tires do not get punctured.

Anyway, come to town and let Van Tiger tell you all about it.

# The Grand Island Cross And The Story Of Its "Great Builder"

Close to the highway that leads south past Sycamore, there stands a strange brick structure and adjacent to it, a cross.

This structure is, in a way, a sort of monument to the memory of a very great person, Father Walrath, who built the structure known as the Grand Island Cross.

Father Walrath was a German, born in Rhein, Prussia, in 1840. At 25, he fled to London to avoid becoming a soldier because he wasn't the "killer-type."

## Became Priest

By strenuous endeavor he got to New York and from there to Cincinnati, where he entered a seminary. Later he came to Eureka for more study. He completed his course and became a priest at Rhonerville.

He was a priest in the mining town of Weaverville, where along with his other work he printed a newspaper. In 1877, he came to Colusa where he served for 35 years.

## Colusa Builder

Once in Colusa, he donned a carpenter's apron and helped to finish the rectory, in addition to organizing the church and carrying on the work.

He built churches in Arbuckle, Maxwell, Williams, Princeton, Stonyford, later remodeled Our Lady of Lourdes and built the Convent in Colusa.

## Uses Handcar

In the 1880's, in order that all of his parishioners would hear him on Sunday, he induced the railroad to lend him a handcar to take him over his wide parish.

He operated the car personally, often mounting a sail to gain speed, and his robe would flutter in the wind as he sped down the tracks.

About the time Colusa had it's beginning, it was expected that the little settlement at Grand Island near Sycamore would also develop into a large town.

## First Mass

A series of missions was held in Colusa and Grand Island in 1863 by a Jesuit missionary, Father Laufhuber.

A tract of land on Dry Slough was donated by Andrew Meyer for a church site. A large oak cross, 27 feet high and hand hewn with help from the Indians, was erected there, the spot, where

Mass was first said in Colusa county.

For years Catholics and Protestants alike would gather at the shrine on Sunday in the Spring. Mass would be said, basket dinners would be opened and then a ball game would follow.

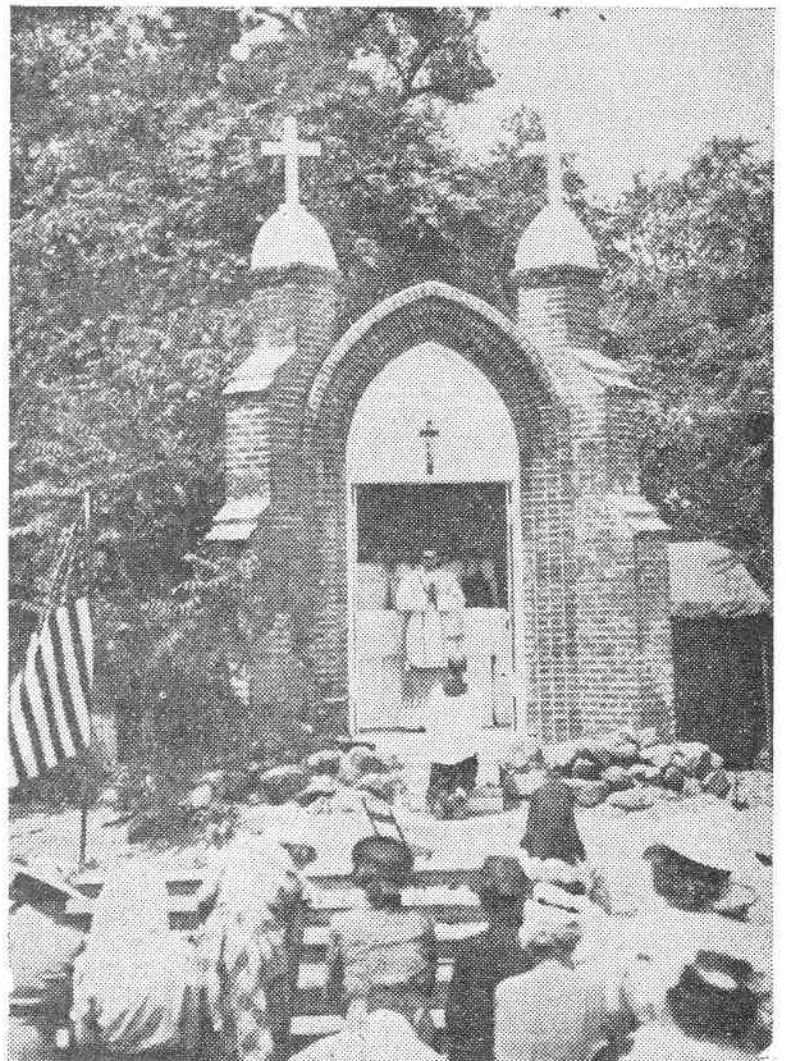
## Builds Shrine

Grand Island, however, failed to grow. When Father Walrath came to Colusa county his creative urge impelled him to build

this brick shrine where mass may be celebrated.

After Father Walrath was sent to Woodland, where he later died, the shrine gradually deteriorated. The Knights of Columbus restored the Grand Island Cross.

The Shrine the Great Builder constructed is famous the nation over. Thousands upon thousands of travelers have perhaps, upon passing the isolated spot, wondered just why the shrine was built there and what its purpose was.



FATHER JAMES VAUGHAN, nephew of the late Monsignor James Vaughan, celebrating Mass at Grand Island Cross Easter Sunday, 1947.

Father James Vaughan  
Celebrating Mass at Grand Island  
Cross Easter Sunday 1947