

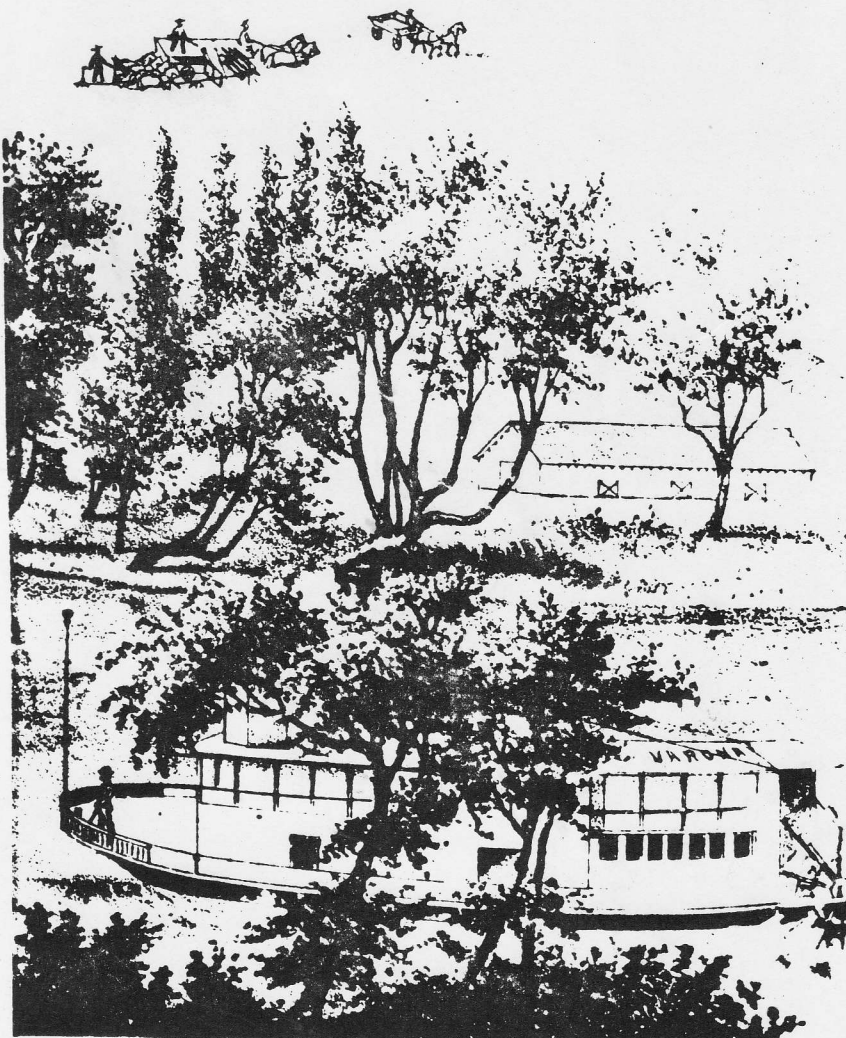
# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XX NO. 2

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95991

April 1981



PADDLE BOAT ON THE SACRAMENTO RIVER

April Historical Society dinner meeting  
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### CALIFORNIA IN '53'

A journal of a California Pioneer

Featuring in this issue:

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Do You Know  
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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XX, No. 2

April 1981

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## COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM NOTES

Jean Gustin, Director/Curator

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For items larger than 17" x 25" on either dimension and smaller than 36" on one dimension, an estimate will be made on an individual basis.

## MUSEUM CALENDAR

March 22	2:00 p.m.	Sunday Concert Series (note date change) Flutes
March 1 - 31		Special Exhibit, <u>Antique Chinese Costumes</u> Special Exhibit, <u>The Maidu Indians as Depicted in Sculpture and Painting</u> ; Artist, Tommie Moller of Loomis
April 26	2:00 p.m.	Sunday Concert Series Randy Benefield, Violinist
May 1 - June 1		Special Exhibit, <u>The California Wine Industry</u>
May 8		Museum Wine Tasting Party
May 31	2:00 p.m.	Sunday Concert Series Chamber Players and Double Concerto with Oboe and Violin



June 28	2:00 p.m.	Sunday Concert Series Violinist
July 26	2:00 p.m.	Sunday Concert Series Ben Thompson and Shirley Eckart

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in memory of William Robbins  
in memory of Annabel Carlin Walker

## GLEANINGS FROM CALIFORNIA IN '53'

California in '53', a compilation of informative and interesting historical journals, has come to the attention of the NEWS BULLETIN's editorial staff. These journals, written by Henry Clay Bailey, a California pioneer, were compiled by his descendants into booklet form. His great great granddaughter Ellen Fietz Hall kindly gave a copy to our museum curator and editorial staff member Jean Gustin.

An intelligent and perceptive observer, Henry Clay Bailey graphically portrayed social, economic, and political conditions that he experienced in California in the 1850's and 1860's. His journals that deal with Colusa, Sutter, and Yuba Counties will be published in several issues of the NEWS BULLETIN.

In this edition are the preface and introduction to the booklet and excerpts from Bailey's journals about frontier life as Mr. Bailey observed it. Since Mr. Bailey's prose is so descriptive and colorful, the editors have printed the journals just as Bailey wrote them even though they may contain a few minor and excusable errors.

## CALIFORNIA '53'

### PREFACE

In September, 1852, Henry Clay Bailey, together with his wife Harriet, her father, Mr. Bainbridge, and her sister, Ann, left Macoupin County, Illinois, their destination being Colusa County, California, where Henry's brother Milton had already acquired farming land. Almost six months elapsed before the journey was completed. It is of this journey and of life in the early days of California that Henry Clay tells in CALIFORNIA IN '53'.

At about the turn of the century he began putting on paper his memories of a long, active and colorful life. Unfortunately, almost all of this material, except that which is found in this book, was lost and never recovered. Some of his sketches were published in a Long Beach paper, clippings of which were kept by his daughter, "BeBe". These, together with his writings still in manuscript form were given to W.L. Bailey, a nephew. Some of this was published in the Tulare Advance Register.

About 1959 selected portions of this material were typed to form the original copy of this book.

## INTRODUCTION

The first Bailey ancestor to come to America was William Bailey, who arrived in Jamestown in 1607. Several generations later Samuel Bailey was in Maryland where his son, Louis Murphy Bailey, father of Henry Clay, was born in 1779. We do not know if it was Samuel or Louis or both, who crossed the mountains into Kentucky and settled on a farm in Shelby County, where Henry Clay was born in 1830 to Louis Murphy and his wife Nancy (Richardson) Bailey.

Nancy Richardson was born in 1803, either in Kentucky or Virginia. She was the daughter of Joshua Richardson, born in Virginia in 1762, and Mary Burnett whom he had married in 1798. The Burnetts had been in Virginia since 1640 when Robert Burnett had arrived there from England. The Burnett cousins of the Baileys were also restless and had gone to California earlier than the Baileys. One of them, Peter Burnett, was the first governor of California.

The Bainbridge ancestors of Harriet Amanda Bainbridge, whom Henry Clay had married in 1851, had settled in New Jersey before the Revolutionary War. Some were Tories and had fled to Canada during the War, but William Bainbridge, Harriet's great uncle was the naval hero, Commodore Bainbridge. Harriet's parents had come as far west as Kentucky by 1828 when she was born there, and not only her father and her sister went to California but also two of her brothers.

Henry Clay's brothers and sisters were not content to stay on the farm in Indiana. In addition to Milton, the first to leave home, there were four other brothers who settled in San Diego County; Theodore, Neuton, Charles, and James



and sister Adeline (Ada). They arrived there at various times before 1890 and except for James, stayed there the rest of their lives. James, after his wife died, became a doctor and went to Texas. Another brother settled in New Mexico.

Now you might like to know how Henry Clay and his family lived out their lives. The family remained in Colusa for about 14 years and then, deciding to go back home, sold their land and its farming appurtances, and with their seven childred went back to Macoupin County by way of San Francisco, Panama, and New York. They remained there only a few months then joined Neuton in Texas, but the combination of poor crops, "Texas Fever", and the Klu Klux Klan, caused them to return to California by way of the Southwest Plains. They may have been in Julian for a short time but then went south of the border to Jacumba where Grandpa ran a stage depot. After they had been there a few years they were warned by Mexican friends that it was becoming dangerous for Americans to stay in Mexico so they moved to Downey. There, the last of their twelve children, Henrietta Clay, was born. They moved on to Wilmington where the older children went to college, and then in 1866 moved to Long Beach, then a small unincorporated town, where there was not even a high school. This was their "home town" for many years, the younger members taking an active part in the affairs of the growing community, and Grandpa organizing the first Masonic Lodge there. Grandma died there in 1907 and Grandpa in 1916, but their children lived there for many years, some of them until their life was ended.

### SACRAMENTO TO COLUSA IN '53

From Sacramento to Colusa at the time (1853) on a stern wheel boat, took about sixteen hours. There was no sign of settlement except an occasional woodyard. A dense and luxuriant growth of timber and tule came to the very brink of the banks and the water's edge.

At Colusa, then the head of navigation, an entirely new phase of California life came to the front. Ox, mule and horse teams, and pack trains were abundant and altogether made a lively and somewhat exciting scene. All the northern mines were supplied from that point.

The rush of loading wagons, packing and unpacking the little Mexican mules, caring for the teams, the confusion of noisy men, joking, lounging, swearing in two or three different tongues, made quite an imposing scene to a genuine tenderfoot.

Here I slept in my first and last sleeping corral. In early days the sleeping corral was quite a factor to the traveling population. Although one had his blankets, he had to have a place to spread them, and the corral supplied the want when no other could be had.

A sleeping corral consisted of the whole upperstory of the small town and roadside hotels, with no partitions, but supplied with cots about two feet wide arranged in rows with alleys and streets somewhat after the plan of a cemetery.

There was a center isle or eight feet wide with cots arranged parallel three or four feet apart. Other cots were placed back of the first in line with them to the other walls, with about two feet space between them for dressing purposes.

Some of the corrals were large enough to set up from fifty to seventy-five cots. Each cot was supplied with a calico sheet and a pillow filled with straw or some substitute, sometimes carpenters' shavings.

From fifty cents to one dollar, one could have a luxurious night in one of these, with or without the blankets and no extra charge for the bed fellows, though one was likely to have the company of one kind with a probability of two more.

But the public took this all philosophically, as such was the rule rather than the exception, and all met with only old acquaintances, at least in the line of fleas and greybacks.

Imagine fifty men sleeping in one room, some snoring, some swearing at their bedfellows, some coming and going at almost all hours, and some idea may be formed of an early California lodging room. Only experience can give a correct idea. It is of the past and a few remain who ever tried it.

By some blessed providence or better part of our nature, only the desirable seems to survive when contemplating the past. The objectionable receded into oblivion with the passing of time. Even our enemies reveal virtues and nobler traits when viewed through many passing years.

The pack train of early years would be another interesting show now. The patience and intelligence of the little Spanish mules was interesting, to say the least. They always followed a belled mare.

When the time came to unpack, the bell was stopped and the mules formed a circle around the mare. The packs were set three or four feet apart in a circle. When all were unpacked the mare led off to feed.

When driven back to camp, each mule of its own volition stood with its head at its own pack. They seldom if ever made a mistake and the loads they carried, considering their size, seemed almost incredible.

## GRAND ISLAND

Grand Island on the west bank of Sacramento River, twelve miles south of Colusa, when wife and I first saw it, was the most enchanting landscape view we had ever seen.

The long absence from all cheerful scences, the long, monotonous confinement to the boat, no doubt added to the beauty and cheerfulness of our surroundings.

No wonder our hearts leaped with joy amid such surroundings after six months banishment from anything cheerful. We were now only three miles from our future home and a resting place from doubts, uncertainties and many other discomforts.

But we had never before nor have we since seen its equal. I use the plural for I don't know which of us was the more delighted. We were wild as children at a Christmas tree, I don't think Dickens could have done justice to its hearty grandeur and loveliness spread out before us on all sides as far as the eye could reach.

We had a three mile journey through one solid bed of the most beautiful flowers of many hues. They were of varying height so that when the wind blew it made great billows.

Some of the flowers were very fragrant, their fragrance prevading the whole atmosphere.

It was a most lovely, indescribable scene, so that now, as I write these lines, it comes into the mind's eye with undiminished vividness. "Time but the impression deeper makes, as streams their channels deeper wear."

The soil was very rich and so loose we made tracks an inch or more deep at every step. Nothing but wild game and Indians had ever roamed over it. The vegetable growth was rank and varied and all in full blossom. A wild chrysanthemum (brodae) from two to four feet tall prevailed. As far as the eye could reach one unbroken bed spread out.

The valley was undulating and the wind gave the surface a varigated view of the different shades as the sunlight reflected the colors from different angles. Wave after wave of enchanting beauty would sweep over the plain till lost in the distance, followed so closely by others of equal beauty that the whole scene looked like a fairyland.

It was a lovely, fine noon. The sun was shining as it only does shine in California and the air was soft and balmy. All life, animal and vegetable, seemed to combine to sing their maker's praise.

At a distance the whole valley seemed to be a solid growth of chrysanthemum. But as we advance we found numerous other varieties in patches of from a rod square to an acre in extent.

Great beds of the California poppy lay unsurpassed in delicate and beautiful tints from a light to a very deep orange. Thousands of smaller flowers of numberless varieties and colors were all mixed together, each striving to excel the others in beauty and loveliness.

All were annuals, and, as if to give an air of utility to the scene, great beds of five or six varieties of clover were interspersed, all in full bloom and some of them five feet tall.



It was amusing to see wife gather flowers. She kept it up for the most of the way home. Discarding oneload to gather another, with the oft repeated cry of, "Here's the prettiest one yet."

The whole valley was covered with scattered oaks from one to six feet in diameter with short bodies and long spreading limbs, some of the limbs reaching sixty feet from the roots.

The short tramp of three or four miles still lives in my memory, one of the happiest days of our lives. We were both young, in full health, full of hope and ambition, and determined to succeed. In a world entirely new to us, surrounded by new conditions; a world more beautiful than we had ever dreamed of or imagined; willing to meet any and every emergency that might arise in the future; we were determined to win out at any cost.

Bird life was out in full force. Their number was legion and the varieties numerous. Being the nesting season, all were extra busy and noisy.

Here we first met the magpie and fell in love with him on first sight, only to have our opinion reversed on further acquaintance. He is a bird excelled in beauty by few, if any, and in meanness and impudence by none. He is the most intelligent bird I have ever known and is never still unless dead, or possibly asleep. He was numerous and added largely to the beauties of the surroundings. He is by nature a dude, a fop and a scalawag.

From a fine variety of woodpeckers there was only one that was familiar to us. The old spotted-winged red-head was the same, the yellow-hammer was nearly the same. But there were several varieties we had never met.

The wood or log cock, the largest of the species, had a black instead of a red head, and there were three kinds of black woodpeckers and sapsuckers we had never seen.

Most all of the birds of the same varieties were a little different from the same in the east, some in color, some in size.

Throughout that walk from the river we reveled in and fastened our eyes on beautiful and enchanting surroundings. How many boquets were gathered and thrown aside will never be known, for it continued from the start to the finish.

About nine or ten o'clock we arrived at the house and were met by the whole outfit with every demonstration the conditions would allow.

About a barrel of ashes had been taken out of the fireplace; a new floor had been laid in the unfurnished room. A floor had been laid of oak puncheons six or eight inches wide and six feet long, dressed on one side with a chopping axe and fitted on the other to an under log, so that the surface was comparatively level and presented no cracks large enough for even a female foot to go through.

The table, also of split timber, had been scoured and dressed until not a splinter could be seen.

The yard had been cleaned off for a reasonable distance on both sides of the casa. It was a camp, or casa (Spanish for house). At that time the term house was seldom used.

I learned afterward that all hands had spent three days on the job. Some new furniture had also been constructed in the shape of puncheons or stools, about eight inches wide and twice as long as three legs to the stove.

The dish cupboard, a good-sized dry goods box, had also been remodeled, the dishes washed and put away, and a piece of flour sack hung in a prominent place, as if to proclaim the fact.

A great personage was coming; a real live woman, also a young and handsome one. All Israel was on tiptoe with expectation.

The report had gone out and all the region was in waiting to see her at her earliest opportunity.

When we had reached the cabin, as soon as the introducing, howdying, and glad to see you was over the new expected mistress of the Castle was assigned the seat of honor, an empty five-gallon syrup keg, washed and prepared for the occasion.

When the time came to get dinner a new issue arose. Was the new mistress company or should she at once assume her prospective duties? The deposed party took one side and the prospective the other. The contention was full of jokes, fun and good humor. In fact every one was ready to "bile" over with good humor and gladness like a bottle of uncorked soda.

By a kind of half you and half me and some help from the outside, dinner was prepared, and we ate our first dinner on Skullbone Ranch, Grand Island Township, Colusa County, California, within two hundred yards of where we ate our last, thirteen and a half years later.

After dinner the next thing to look after was sleeping. The frame of a bunk had been put up while I was gone, but no bed provided. Nothing daunted, we went to work. A bed tick was made, an Indian hired to climb an oak tree and gather sufficient moss to fill it, and we had a bed for a prince.

I doubt if in all our life we ever had a better night's rest or sweeter sleep than we had that night. The anxious years and disappointments and trials of the five months past, were at an end, and our long-looked-for desire realized. We were in California sure.

We now entered upon a new life, one to us as new and as different as it would have been in a foreign land, except that we had started on the race for a fortune and were prepared to meet and contend with whatever was in store for us. Neighbors we had none, except bachelors and Indians.

The Indians were numerous, from five to six hundred living within a few hundred yards of us in their primitive state. I say primitive, though some of the bucks had secured old, cast-off pants and overalls. But calico or any other kind of cloth had never entered the Mahala's (women's) domain. They wore the primitive wild hemp loin dress neither platted nor woven except into a waist band to hold the fiber. It hung about half-way to the knees.

#### OUR FIRST HOME IN CALIFORNIA

Our first home was, as I have stated, on Grand Island, Colusa County. How can I paint it in words, when so many recollections of half a century past come crowding into my memory, all demanding recognition? How many joyous, hopeful, happy days we spent when life's future spread out before us almost as bright and beautiful as the natural floral plains that spread out on all sides with beauty and luxuriance indescribable.

But as the frosts come and nature's beauty fades, so did our happy home. Ere one short year has passed, the grim monster death, invaded our home and

claimed two victims - my elder brother, the first white man to die in the county, and a brother of his old partner.

Our ranch was the first settled, and consequently the leading ranch in that vicinity. It was settled by my brother and his two partners in 1851. In 1852, my wife and I proposed to come to California, and a suitable house for the occasion was planned and constructed.

This house was 18 x 24 with an opening of six feet in one end for a chimney to be built on the outside. The walls were built of split oak rails set in the ground three feet apart and sided with boards split from the same timber.

All of the boards were very rough, the timber being hard to split. Some were half an inch thick at one end and nearly ten inches at the other. The result was a rough, and very airy, wall.

The house was roofed with the same material and never leaked except when it rained. With the exception of twelve feet partitioned off one end, in anticipation of an expected visitor, the ground was unfloored. If I had that floor just as I first saw it, it would be a winning card.

They had attempted to split puncheons after Kentucky style, and such puncheons were never seen before or since. It was the first and also the last attempt. One edge a feather edge, the other from two to four inches thick, seven to ten inches wide and six feet long.

Imagine the result - laid crooked on logs scalped with an ax, it being the only edged tool used in the whole construction.

The chairs and table were made of the same material and after the same order, with the exception of two or three reserved for company (syrup kegs). Others were made of split timbers with three legs.

Our beds were fashioned after the bunk style. In the corners a post was set to correspond with six feet on one wall and three on the other, with from two to three in a tier. Side boards were nailed from the post to the studding, cross slats, head and foot boards, and all was finished.

Such was our first home in California as near as I can recall and describe it. Although the house was the most primitive order and with no attempt at convenience, it was home to us. Until sorrow came, we have never had a happier home.

Outside in all directions were beauties we had never dreamed of. We were surrounded by so many new and strange animals, birds, flowers and last, though not least, Indians.

Wild animals were abundant, with Mr. Grizzle at the head. The whole world was alive with birds in endless numbers and variety. The peculiar whirr of the wooduck could be heard as she darted from her tree nest to feed or water. She nested in the tallest trees.

On all sides woodpeckers of four varieties were making the woods ring. There were other kinds too numerous to name. These, coupled with the luxuriant beautiful floral display, was a feast to ear and eye and joy to the heart.

But I suppose every paradise has a snake. All hands found a fair-sized snake in the way of Mosquitoes. But wife found hers in the Indian Mahalas (women). I suppose the advent of the blanca (white) Mahala spread far and fast, and whatever else a Mahala may lack, she is not lacking in curiosity.



They came in droves of from ten to twenty daily, standing around (if let alone) for an hour, gossiping, critisizing and making all kinds of remarks, some wanting to feel her.

Well it is all guess work as to what they had to say or how much they desired a more intimate acquaintance. No doubt she was the first white woman some of them, if not all, had ever seen.

I think the white Mahala was deficient in cordiality, if not hospitality. She always gave them all the bread she had, in hope of early departure. She never kissed her female visitors then as she does now. The world do move.

With their faces smeared with a black substance resembling tar, some in stripes and some solid; with low foreheads, and long thick coarse black hair, the front cut just above the eyes and back down on their shoulders; they were far from handsome or entertaining.

But they seemed to be highly entertained in looking at the blanca Mahala and would come in gangs and stand around the door, jabbering an hour at a time, no doubt criticizing her from all points. No harm was done, except an occasional scare when none of the men were at hand. On such occasions any cold bread or other left-over grub was given them in double quick, as a kind of peace offering. They soon caught on and because an annoyance at times, coming inside, repeating "queremos pan", meaning "we want bread."

Two of us used to work, while the lady sat on a log and looked on. Between our work and the house was a slough, one hundred feet wide, with about eight feet of water, which had to be crossed on a sycamore log. It took two of us to pilot the lady across, one before and one behind, and then she was scared all the time.

One day we left her to wash the dinner dishes and come to the log and crossed the slough. We had not been at work long before she come as fast as she could run, almost ready to faint. The mahalas had come and she left like the wind - ran across on the log as though it had been a path but she could never do it again.

There was so much crowded into our first year in California that only a small part can be recorded, and I am at a loss to know what to accept and what to reject. A great part of that year seems like a half-forgotten dream.

There are but few papers and almost no reading matter of any kind. No place to go on Sunday (our idle day) except the scrub race track. Visiting, there was none, for the simple reason there were none to give or receive visits.

For six months wife did not see a white woman. We spent the time walking around, gazing at the scenes already noted. We have sat on some elevated place and gazed on the beautiful panorama and never tired. The transparent sunshine, the soft sweet breezes, gave an almost charmed spell to the surroundings.

It bordered so near to fairy land that no great stretch of imagination was required to people it with the little elves and then to sit lazily and happily dream life away, - play cards, go hunting, play jokes occasionally. Any device to pass the lonesome time was well received.

There was one unceasing source of annoyance to both of us. Wife and I were always hungry, and cook as she would, there was never enough. We were hungry with out intermission for three months after we arrived. It was the experience of all immigrants. Eat all we could, were still hungry.

## SNAKES AND SKEETERS

Snakes and "Skeeters!!" I feel like jumping and scratching at the remembrance of them, though so many years have passed since I bade them good-bye.

Estimated by avoirdupois, they were pretty equally divided. We had some snakes of good size; some that would have required a host of skeeters to even up. But by numbers, the snakes though numbered by the thousands, were as nothing. The numbers of skeeters were as the sands of the sea shore, if not more numerous.

Of snakes, we only had the rattlers that were venomous, but they were abundant. We killed five one day within fifty yards of the house.

The abundance of rattlers had a tendency, in our imagination, of converting all the others into rattlers, especially the bull or gopher snake, sometimes six feet long.

Almost every variety of American snake swarmed, almost like the frogs in Egypt. They seemed to have but one enemy, the prairie hawk, a large and plentiful species, which ate snakes or chicken.

We had the common garter snake and half dozen varieties of the black racer, but all of different colors and sizes; three or four kinds of spotted snakes, and a few joint snakes, a very peculiar species. They could not be angry or show any act of resistance. All their efforts were expended in trying to hide their heads under their bodies when teased. They were very pretty with bright stripes full length, and tapered from head to tail.

On the last night of March during the big flood the water came up to about sixty feet of the house, covering half a mile of plains, and drove the snakes before it. The house wasn't full, but the yard and all around it was.

Near the house was an abandoned well about six feet deep, that I turned into a snake prison. Every morning till breakfast was ready, I put in my time running snakes into it. How many I had I have no idea. I enjoyed seeing them trying to dig out. They burrowed up and made holes in the sides for their heads till the whole side was thick with heads. About every two inch square represented a head. I think they finally got to the surface and escaped.

One night it was in its most populous state, I forgot the hole and walked straight into it, but didn't wait to be called out. While there was little real danger, snakes were a great annoyance to me; I was always on the watch. Yard full of snakes all the time, and often jumping from one I would jump on another.

Skeeters, huh, I imagine the locust of Egypt were tame compared with the Sacramento skeeter of '53. No place a locust ever went that a skeeter couldn't go him one better. Another thing in favor of Mr. Locust, I never saw one that could bite, and that seemed to be the skeeter's chief occupation. In season and out of season, day and night, rain or shine, come what would, nothing was able to detract him from his occupation of biting human flesh.

He followed it diligently and persistently at all times as though his very existence depended on that one occupation. I never knew him to do aught else, but sing and bite. And there was little music in his singing, unless

you were safely housed in a sketter net fort with port holes closed. He was the cheekiest and most persistent visitor I ever entertained. It was vain to shoo at him, swear at him or call him bad names, or to us any kind of abuse or threats.

He simply implied by his actions that he had come to be entertained and didn't propose to be disappointed, and it took a lot of fighting, shooing, and sometimes swearing, to disappoint him.

For a small bird, he is game and can beat the busy bee in persistence, energy and motion. Let him swoop down on the back of your hand and watch his motions hunting for the right place to insert his bill, and you see the very soul of persistent determination in his every motion. He fools away no time, but locates his claim as quickly as possible and proceeds to prospect it without recording.

If he strikes it rich, only with his life will he relinquish it. Like the Bengal tiger when he once tastes human blood, only death can stop his deviltry. But he drew the line at an iron pot filled with half-rotten chips on fire at the bottom and smoking like a tar kiln. It beat him bad. We had to set it under the cow's udder when milking, put on buckskin gloves to carry water or any

that confined the hands; couldn't write two words with the naked hand; had to put on extra wollen shirt to protect the back; have all the possible head and face protected and both hands to fight with.

They literally swarmed everywhere. The walls were covered as letters cover a newspaper. There was no relief for a moment, except inside a closed net.

Some days would be so hot we would have to take off the outer shirt to cool off, choosing to skeeters in preference to suffocation. A few minutes sufficed when they began to present their bills by the score. We soon concluded to settle them by a lump trade for a heavy woolen shirt and sweat it out on that line till winter.



## CALIFORNIA SUPERIOR

In writing California sketches, I have but two objects in mind - one pass my time in a pleasant occupation, the other to prove true the claim of California's superiority along most if not all lines of advancement, as well as her superior equipment by nature to produce the highest types of vegetables, grains and fruits the world had ever produced; to a higher and nobler civilization than had been, or ever will be again.

Old California did more to establish and develop the brotherhood of man than all the world had up to the date of her settlement. I doubt if there ever was a civilization where the man and his character stood so far ahead of money as in old California.

Nearly all had to start at the bottom. If one got ahead, none ever envied him. If the other failed he had his fellows' sympathy, and not infrequently something more substantial. These were men of deeds, not of words, and they loved fair play and a square deal well enough to fight for it to the last ditch.

With our home the center of a circle forty miles in diameter, in March, 1853, there were not to exceed four homes presided over by a mistress. Outside the town of Colusa there was not one with a floor, except the soil, nor was there a glass window. There were but four grain growing ranches.

Most of the settlements were on the Sacramento River. The settlers lived in all kinds of camps, mostly cabins built of small cottonwood logs, and were wood choppers and charcoal burners for the Sacramento and Frisco market.

The country was wild and beautiful beyond description. The people were the same, minus the beautiful.

The whole valley was a sea of most exquisite growth of beautiful flowers of very many varieties and all heights from four feet tall to the little creeper. It was surrounded on two sides by mountain ranges with perpetual snow in three directions, and make a panorama, once seen, never to be forgotten.

Such were our pleasant, and, along some lines, delightful surroundings, which were to give place in four years to a fairly well organized community with churches, public schools, permanently established roads and the other acquisitions which go to make up a thoroughly good and harmonious community.

How did California accomplish in less than five years what it took the settlers of the eastern frontier ten, fifteen and often twenty to accomplish?

I answer, the grit, push and determination of the Pacific, a new civilization that never halted at obstacles in any and all propositions deemed worthy of tackling, brushed them aside and went on their way to success, rejoicing. How it was done will be told later.

#### FRONTIER LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

There is no analogy between the first settlers of California and those of the frontiers east of the Rockies. Only in name, if California is entitled to the name of a frontier, is there the least similarity.

The incentives that promoted the great mass of actors in their movements were as different as the character of the participants.

The pioneers of the middle west were seeking homes, hoping for a permanent residence, and were prepared to suffer years of hardship and toil to gain

their ends. They took their household goods, wives and children with them, often including the little wheel for their flax. I have seen some of those wheels that came from the Carolinas. At least fifty percent of those middlewestern pioneers were illiterate, and many were past middle life.

Among the pioneers of '49 and the 50's, I doubt if the idea of a permanent home existed. An illiterate immigrant would have been a curiosity, though most all nationalities were represented in the great throng that crossed the plains and came by water.

All nationalities were represented by those far above the average in physique, enterprise and intelligence. All were young and in the vigor of manhood, and were equally advanced in the higher and nobler characteristics of the race. The sneak thief, the tramp, the bum and good-for-nothing dead-head had no place in California's early days. All had come with one prevailing purpose and hope, to get gold and get it quickly. In from one to three years all expected to get enough to return and satisfactorily establish themselves at their old homes.

Hence all were busy at something and such were the conditions that even a bum would have been forced into activity by his surroundings. None stood on ceremony or former conditions. All took the first thing that came in sight and kept at it until a better one turned up. There was no place, and no tolerance, for an idler, had one appeared. It was an open fight, free to all. The professional man and the college graduate turned stevedore, or to any other occupation that offered, and held on till a better job appeared.

In the strictest sense of the word, at that time California was cosmopolitan.

The mines were the objective point of all or nearly all. The most of the emigrants first stopped at valley towns, Sacramento or Marysville, and many were without money or supplies, broken down in health and generally discouraged; strangers in a strange land.

Then the frontier spirit came to the front. All early emigrants had found Jordan a hard road to travel. All had gone through nearly the same experiences and the remembrance had a softening influence on the most hardened cases. An old-style Californian would as soon refuse a fellow-worm a chew of tobacco as assistance to an emigrant. An emigrant wagon was always a kind of gathering place for all who had time to go and give a hearty welcome and inquire about needs and future plans. And there was no element of idle curiosity or gossip in it.

As time passes and straggling families began to come, the interest increased. The desire to assist or to make it comfortable in any and all ways seemed to intensify. Hearts, hands and houses were all open. To render a favour was an object sought after by all. And all parties were equally blessed.

Some are still living who have equally enjoyed, giving and receiving the whole-souled fellowship of old-style California. Not many years hence, as the sun sinks in the sea, it will shine on the grave of the last one. Peace to his ashes.

#### THE EXODUS

The exodus from the mountains to the valleys started in the fall of '53 as the two or three-year limit of getting their pile expired, and the miners had only a few hundred, or probably a thousand dollars. This was too little to go back with.

The prospect was often discouraging, and with many doubts they turned to the valleys that gave better assurance of permanent success. There one hundred bushels of barley could be raised to the acre and sold for one and a half dollars a bushel. Potatoes were five to ten cents per pound, eggs \$1.50 to two dollars per dozen, hens three dollars to four dollars each, butter \$1.75 a pound, and vegetable products about the same.

Another factor that added impetus to the movement - the probabilities of a permanent home - was gaining, as the beauties and possibilities of California began to dawn in the minds of the drifting population. The question came up in many minds, why not live here? It is a far better place than where I came from. The return of almost all who had gone home gave force to the idea.

There were two prime factors in the settlement of California that in a large measure were lacking east of the Rockies. First, the experience of two or three years in the mines and a fair amount of cash, and ample opportunities to get more when needed. Second, the few difficulties encountered.

The climate was such as to require little shelter for the man and none for his stock. The soil was so rich and mellow that the most primitive cultivation assured bountiful crops.

The soil was easier to work the first time it was plowed than it was in the east after ten years of cultivation. There was no grubbing, or waiting for the sod to rot, and the yield was marvelous. The soil often produced as much as one hundred bushels to the acre of barley and oats. I speak advisedly, for I have raised the crops and paid the threshing.

In noting the development of Colusa County, it is but a counterpart of all valley districts in the state where the necessary natural advantages were present - wood, water and soil.

The idea of making a home instead of going home took root and grew and flourished as things can only in California. All over the country squatter claims were located and crops planted, permanent homes planned and preparations worked out accordingly.

In the fall of '53, three more women were added to our immediate community, and quite a number to the county. In the fall of '54 a mania broke out among the married men to get their families to California. This proved a blooming success, with the result that by January 1st, 1855, at the same time as the first American wedding in the county, we could, in a circuit of thirty miles, muster enough ladies to dance two cotillions.

From now on our progress was rapid along these lines. The idea of permanency became a settled fact. All who had Indian wives divorced them before the others appeared on deck.

The elements thus thrown together from many places soon crystalized into a harmonious and contented community which was built up to suit themselves and was different from any known before.

All the early female settlers of California were overworked and had little time for the social relations. When they did visit it was a genuine, real visit, extending to the kitchen as well as the parlor. All helped alike about all household duties till all was done, an absolute democracy in practice, not theory.

Some are disposed to pity the frontier people with their troubles and hardships. In my opinion, all such is wasted. There are compensating factors of which older and more refined communities know nothing. The mutual confidence, sympathy and reliance, the absence of conventionalities common to all, the absolute certainty of all that sympathy or service can do for us in times of trouble or distress, are no small factors in life's uncertainties.

#### CABIN LIFE IN THE EARLY DAYS OF CALIFORNIA

Cabin life in the early days of California was a unique phase of civilization. In its general makeup along many lines it was, to say the least, peculiar. It was peculiar in its outside, and in its inside, both conforming to the fancy or idea of the builder. Their ideas conformed, in a large measure, to old home ideas.

The Southerners used logs when they could obtain them, as did most Americans, while foreigners conformed as nearly as possible to their home ideas. The same held good for the internal arrangements and along the lines of housekeeping. They did not vary much from the general housekeeping ethics; some orderly, some disorderly, the disorderly in the majority.

It was an entirely new experience to all, and the cabin being planned for **only** temporary occupancy, as little head and hand work as possible was done. Generally from two to four men batched together with various rules and modes of division of household duties. One general rule always talked about and sometimes adopted was, never to wash the dishes as long as they could tell what was eaten last. The bill of fare was of limited variety, but of abundant supply and what was lacking in preparation was made good in appetite.

The cabin, great or small, or may be only a tent, always stood open to all. I am not so familiar with mining as with ranch life, but there was a kind of romantic, picturesque indescribable charm about ranch life that gave it many redeeming features. The wholesouled hail fellow, well met, a fellowship that always prevailed would be soul-cheering today.

The home of one, without let or hindrance, was the home of all who had occasion or desire to avail themselves of the privilege. Each entered his neighbor's charity as sangfroid as he entered his own and felt no more restraint in one than the other.

As I look back from this date, it seems a strange life, with many irksome features, approaching very near the tread wheel idea. But any old timer who may read this will bear me out that such was not the case. A jollier, happier, better contented set of mortals I have never known. Young, healthy, full of life, vigorous and determined, self-confident, hopeful, with their goal in full view, with unflagging ardor, they pressed on day after day, too intent for gloom or discontent.

Determined to win and having full confidence in their own ability to do so, each day brought these men its reward. Only a busy life can be a happy life. To me and doubtless to some others, this is a pleasant picture, one we love to recall while we commune with the past. But it has another side, far from pleasant to think about.

As long as a man is free to come and go, and do as he pleases, there is no good reason for discontent, but bind him, torment him with pain, leave him alone and it is a brave sport that can fight off ennui.

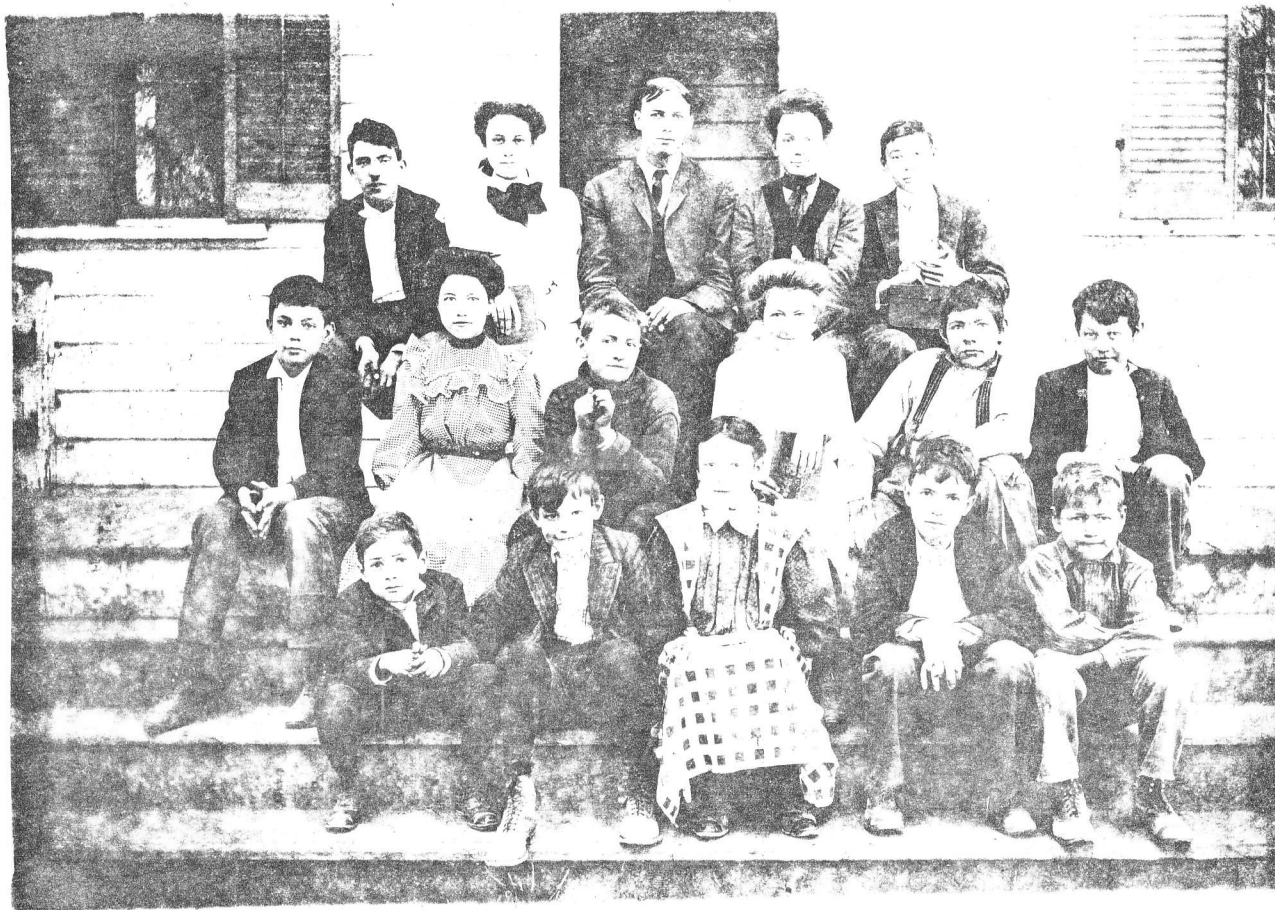


The early comer was a rollicking, happy fellow as long as he was healthy, but let sickness come and drive him to his cabin and his case was a hard one. Very few got really sick in those days, but when they did get confined to bed and unable to get out, few ever got well.

The fatality of those days was more the result of conditions than of disease. Alone all day, often without proper diet, nothing to entertain or direct or divert the mind from present surroundings, it was natural to think of home and pine for Mother's sympathy. Confined, an active, determined nature frets, and finally becomes despondent. Such a condition preys on the mind. Long lonesome hours weaken hope, till finally ennui sets in with its myriad hordes of phantoms, and the end comes.

The kindest and most loyal care and sympathy of his fellows can't meet the requirements. Many grant and noble spirits have entered the great Unknown along this line. A sad and pathetic scene a lonely burial, with only the necessary attendants to perform the physical requirements. No woman, no chaplain, no service, and often no tear, as the pride, hope and hero of some far-away home is consigned to a lonely, and, in some cases, soon to become an unknown grave.

My eyes grow dim as I recall some of these sad, pathetic scenes.



WANTED: A picture of the entire Salem school building. Above is a picture of the student body of Salem school on the front steps in the very late 1800's or early 1900.