

# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XXV No. I

Yuba City, California

January 1986



Down Memory Lane

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The time has come for the Society membership and the Museum members to stand up and be counted.

Attendance at our quarterly meetings leads me to believe that there is little if any interest in either of the organizations. It is most embarrassing to engage a speaker and have a mere handful in attendance.

We are looking for answers. Should we eliminate our quarterly meetings, having only the one annual dinner meeting? Is our Society no longer needed? After all we're over thirty years old! Seems like we've served our usefulness. We got our Museum. Can it carry on without our presence?

There are many activities in which our organization can participate. Activities of interest- visits to places of historical worth, trips, seminars and conferences. A visit to our State Capital, the Indian Museum of Sutter's Fort, The Bidwell Mansion, all have exhibits that are ever-changing and are all within easy driving. Why can't we caravan to one of these spots, have a lunch and enjoy the sights? The Crocker Art Gallery is a must to be included in our visiting tours.

Our trip, Willits to Eureka on the California-Western R.R. is still being planned. Exact details will be forth coming as soon as the railroad forwards us their Spring schedule.

A nature study trip in our Buttes is awaiting Spring and its flowers.

Please let our Directors know what is wanted. They are listed in the front of the Bulletin.

*Randolph B. Schuchert*



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**\*\* PLANS \*\* WE HAVE PLANS \*\***

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A NATURE STUDY TOUR IN THE BUTTES HAS BEEN PLANNED FOR THE WEEK-END OF MARCH 8th & 9th. EACH NATURALIST CAN HANDLE A GROUP OF TWENTY PEOPLE SO TELL YOUR FRIENDS. THIS IS NOT CONFINED TO SOCIETY MEMBERS. THERE WILL BE A SMALL FEE AND EVERYONE SHOULD PLAN ON TAKING A SACK LUNCH. FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM.

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A BUS TOUR OF HISTORIC PLACES AROUND THE BUTTES IS PLANNED FOR APRIL 19th. THIS WILL BE A SCENIC TOUR LEAVING THE MUSEUM AND COVERING 75 MILES BEFORE RETURNING. THE ROUTE WAS WORKED OUT BY CASSIUS EPPERSON, A NATIVE OF THE AREA, AND MENTIONS PLACES OF WHICH YOU MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD. THERE WILL ALSO BE A FEE FOR THIS AS WE HAVE TO HIRE A BUS. TELL YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS ABOUT THIS ONE TOO.

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A TRAIN TRIP ON THE CALIFORNIA WESTERN RAILROAD FROM WILLITS TO EUREKA IS IN THE TENTATIVE STAGE FOR LATE SPRING, BUT WE FIRST NEED THEIR SPRING SCHEDULE. KEE THIS ONE IN MIND AND LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION AT A LATER DATE.



DONORS TO BUILDING FUND

BART & DONNA EDWARDS	IN MEMORY OF BILL RANKIN
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DICK & BEE BRANDT	IN MEMORY OF C.W. RANKIN
MR & MRS R.A. BRYANT	IN LOVING MEMORY OF "SIX" A GALLANT HORSE APPRECIATED TOO LATE, BUT NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN
MADGE & KEN JOHNSON	IN MEMORY OF C.W. "BILL" RANKIN
JUDY & IRWIN REUCK	IN MEMORY OF BILL RANKIN
CAROLINE S. RINGLER	IN MEMORY OF SARAH PARSONS DEAN
RAONA HALL	OUTRIGHT GIFT
WALT & JANE ULLREY	IN MEMORY OF KATHERINE BEST

WALT & JANE ULLREY

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CAROLINE S. RINGLER

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IN MEMORY OF OLLIE GRIGORY

IN MEMORY OF HERB SCHEIBER

IN MEMORY OF HERB SCHEIBER

IN MEMORY OF GLADYS ESTEP

IN MEMORY OF DORIS COOK STEVENSON

IN MEMORY OF KATHERINE CARPENTER BEST

IN MEMORY OF GLADYS ESTEP

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IN MEMORY OF DORIS STEVENSON

IN MEMORY OF MARGARET D. ROBINSON

IN MEMORY OF SARA PARSONS DEAN

IN MEMORY OF MARGARET D. ROBINSON

IN MEMORY OF DORIS COOK STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS FUND ARE NEEDED SO WE CAN MAKE A START. WE NEED TO  
SHOW WE ARE IN EARNEST ABOUT PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN OUR  
COUNTY BUT DO NEED A BUILDING IN WHICH TO DO IT. THE SITE IS ALREADY IN THE  
MASTER PLAN FOR THE PARK AND IS AT THE MUSEUM FOR ALL TO SEE. NOW ALL WE NEED  
IS MONEY AND LOTS OF IT.

LIST OF DONORS TO THE COMMUNITTEE MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
TRUST FUND AND BUILDING FUND

Mr. and Mrs. George M. Dunn	In memory of Gladys Estep
George and Ellade Kylling	In memory of Herbert Sheiber
Leila Winship	In memory of Gladys Estep
Kenneth and Shyrlie Winship Brown	In memory of Gladys Frye Estep

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM NOTES

Mary Allman, Director/Curator

It is always difficult to say "good-bye" to good friends and associates, especially those of you who have made my time in Sutter County so special. I have accepted the position of Director of the Siouxland Heritage Museums in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where I am looking forward to some exciting challenges awaiting me there. I will take with me many fond memories of the last several years in Sutter County, and I thank the members of the Sutter County Historical Society and the Community Memorial Museum for helping me to work toward a stronger museum for Sutter County.

The Community Memorial Museum Commission has elected new officers for 1986. Marnee Crowhurst will serve as President, Lauren Anderson as Vice-President, and Barbara Norvell as Secretary. The Commission can be assured of another year of strong and capable leadership.

The Mini-Arts concert series will feature a string quartet, with performer Sharon Shiflett on January 26. On February 23, Brent and Becky Mitchell will be performing. Watch for more details in the newspaper and on the radio.



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TRUST FUND AND BUILDING FUND

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Leroy and Muriel Davis	In memory of Gladys Estep
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Louis and Betty Tarke	In memory of Gladys Estep
Mrs. Mary G. Poole	In memory of Gladys Estep
Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Allen	In memory of Gladys Estep
Ray and Lena Frye	In memory of Herbert Sheiber
Roy and Estelle Welch	In memory of Doris Stevenson
Grace Morrissey	In memory of Gladys Estep
Addie Meier and Esther Fortna	In memory of Gladys Estep
Peach Tree Duplicate Bridge Club	In memory of Gladys Estep
Mrs. Gordon Page	In memory of Gladys Estep
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur W. Simons	In memory of Gladys Estep
James and Judy Barr	In memory of Gladys Estep
Geraldine Carlile	In memory of Gladys Estep

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF YUBA CITY

Ruth Smith Grant

Jan. 1958

My first real memory of Yuba City was in January 1892, when my father Thomas L. Smith was elected to the office of sheriff of Sutter County.

This necessitated our change of residence from our ranch near Harkeys Corners, which was situated near Township and Oswald Roads, to that of the county seat in Yuba City.

My family consisted of my father, mother and an older brother.

A new world had really opened up to me. Heretofore my playmates had been few, mostly my pet animals.

The two things that impressed me most, as a four year old, were the children that gathered around the old court house to play, for here were found the only cement sidewalks in town. Of course, I soon joined them; and secondly, the oranges that hung from the trees in almost every yard of which I am sure I had my share.

Our home, the Edward Van Arsdale place on C Street stood on the ground where the new county offices are located. In the winter time all this ground was covered with seepage water and what fun we had sailing our bread pan boats around, drawn by strings. Of course this necessitated making a hole in the side of the pan for which we were strongly reprimanded. But it was worth the chance.

It was hard to leave our pets at the ranch so we brought some of them with us, a goat that we drove to a small cart, a coon that would turn the water on and then run down the hose and place his paw on the nozzle until the pressure was too strong, then he would release his paw and receive a very unwelcome bath. Oh yes, our two dogs, Beecher, a Scotch Terrier and Jimmy a Hound, took up new residence too.

Directly across C Street from our house to the south stood the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church which we attended.

Beecher liked to sneak unawares to church. One Sunday an Evangelist was holding forth and Beecher got out in the aisle. As the preacher would wax eloquence, the little dog would go him one better, much to the chagrin of my mother. I can still see Mr. Charley Duncan, the father of our late Dr. John Duncan, gathering up Beecher and carrying him outside. The only other church in town at that time was the Methodist Episcopal church on Yolo Street.

The Yuba City Grammer School was located west of the old court house on the corner of C Street and McRae Way. Here I spent the first four years of my school days. My first and second grade teacher was Miss Nell Brophy whose parents lived in Yuba City. She later married Mr. Glenn Harter, a member of the Senior Harter family. We did not have the books and the comforts that children have today. Our desks and benches were very crude, they were handmade.

Most of the stores in Yuba City were on the west side of Second Street between Fairman and Bridge. Some of those that I recall were Uncle Cale Wilcoxon's Grocery Store located where Johnny's Quick Lunch stands, (1985-Miller Paint), a barber shop, butchershop, post office, Barr's Candy Store and Mr. John Duncan's Grocery Store near where Bremers Store is today. We liked to buy candy from Uncle John since he gave us more for our 5¢ than anyone else. The Windsor Hotel run by the family of our Judge Hugh Moncur was a very popular place on Second Street. Where the present hotel stands a flour mill did a flourishing business. Mr. Dosby's Drug Store, with the tall glass bottles filled with colored water always caught our attention. On the east side of Second Street we found the blacksmith shops, tin shop and the brewery. The only bank was located on Bridge Street between Johnny's Quick lunch and its present location. It was known as the Farmer's Union Bank. If one wanted to buy a spool of thread they had to go to Maryville since there was not a dry goods store in Yuba City. The only sidewalks were on Second Street and they were wooden ones and very high to avoid the mud and slush. The streets were knee-deep with mud in winter and dust in summer. I remember my brother William T. Smith riding horseback down Second Street in the mud to get the groceries.

The only lights in town were in front of the court house and at Wilcoxon's Corner. These were gas lights that were lighted each evening and turned off in the morning by the lamp lighter.

Chinese women from Marysville came often to pick up the beetles that gathered around the lights and fell to the ground; Chinese food has never been attractive to me because I always recall the Beetle gathering.

I think riding across the covered bridge that spanned the Feather gave me more thrills than any other one thing in my early experiences. The bridge was located south of the present structure. The Yuba City approach was on the ground where the Veterans Memorial of World War I was located.

Mr. Fletcher Bickley who was the bridge tender on our side always kept his eyes peeled upon the traffic that came and went across. The most important thing was to obey the sign "Walk Your Horses" and he saw to it that you did just that. Keeping to



the right was of great importance as the bridge was divided in the middle. It was hazardous to walk across on your own power. One time my brother and some friends were walking and a herd of cattle came crowding in at the other end and they were compelled to climb the beams to escape injury. It was sort of dark and smelly in the bridge and the beat of the horses hoofs sounded loud and spooky. The only lights came in from the open windows and they were few and small. Of course, at night it was pitch dark, no lights inside or out.

The public transportation between Yuba City and Marysville was by means of a small street car drawn by two small mules. Several trips were made each day. On festive occasions a second car was brought into use. Mr. David E. Knight the owner of the car system had several pairs of mules, so after each trip the animals were changed so they might have a rest.

Mr. Tom Peirano, Mrs. Estelle Crowhurst's father, was the driver of the mules. How well I remember the blacksnake with which he gently tapped the little fellows to start them out. Then there was the hand brake he turned off at will. If a large crowd was aboard, the men always helped to push the car up the grade to the covered bridge.

The route included Second Street south to B Street, then west on B to Plumas where it turned going north to Bridge, down this street and back to the covered bridge, and to Marysville via the Fifth Street Grade.

One of our pastimes was placing objects upon the tracks just to see them flatten out where the car passed over them. Occasionally R. Peirano would have to apply the brakes, get out and remove the obstacles, not forgetting to kindly admonish us for such pranks.

It is hard to realize that west, south and north of Plumas Street was one expanse of grain fields with now and then a few fig and olive trees. At the south of Second Street the Giblin Brothers had a flourishing cherry orchard. The land on the sides of the slough was a dense thicket with a few patches of wild berries growing here and there.

Much more could be told about my early experiences in Yuba City, but such was the environment in which I spent my early childhood. When I look back on these happy days, the many playmates I had, and the life-long friends that were made, there comes to my thoughts happy memories indelibly stamped upon my mind.

## THE HAWAIIAN COLONY OF VERNON

Bernice B. Gibson

October 1956

Gold is not always found in the hills of the Sierra Nevadas. Many gold nuggets of information may be found in our own dooryard if we but look.

Early in the summer of 1956 it was my pleasure to receive a letter from an historian living in the beautiful islands of Hawaii. He told me more in one letter about our neighbors in Vernon, than I had learned in a lifetime. I was urged to call upon a descendant of one of the original Hawaiian settlers and glean some information about South Sutter.

A lovely early fall morning Mrs. Irmina Rudge and I started out on our mission. It was one of those balmy mornings when one is glad to be alive and glad to be alive in Sutter county.

We crossed the "low" bridge at Nicolaus and wended our way down the levee to Verona. It was the first time either of us had been down that way since the flood. We were interested in finding the residence of Mrs. Mabel Willson Armstrong, a descendant of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Willson. We stopped at the store in Verona to inquire how we might reach Mrs. Armstrong. We were shown the roof of her home which extended a bit above the crest of the levee. Mrs. Rudge and I were most graciously received by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong who were seated on the back steps of their home conversing with a neighbor.

Mrs. Mabel Willson Armstrong has lived on practically the same spot all her life. She was born in the "old house" which stood on the river bank. When she was quite young, a new house replaced the former residence. The "new house" built in 1900 stood in practically the same spot as it is at present, except, the construction of the levee shifted it toward the river about three feet.

Mabel is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Willson. Her father was one of the early Hawaiians who came to Vernon, however, he did not come with Captain John Sutter. It seems many of the Hawaiians of Vernon did not come with Sutter, nevertheless, Sutter's colony formed the nucleus for the settlement.

Jon Willson left home at the early age of fourteen years and joined the crew of a whaling vessel as a Captain's boy. The captain of the vessel was very fond of the boy and adopted him, (perhaps not according to law) but gave the boy his own name of Willson. He was taught many things as a sailor in those days.

Among the skills he learned was needle work such as embroidery, crocheting and knitting. He remembered these skills and was able to do them in later life. The ship upon which Mabel's father worked, plied its way from Hawaii to Alaska and then down the coast to San Francisco to take advantage of the markets. Young Willson left the whaling vessel in San Francisco sometime between the years of 1880 and 1884. He made his way up the Sacramento River by boat to Vernon, the colony of Hawaiians. Before he was married he made his home with Mohonka and family, one of the earlier settlers of Vernon. Mohonka owned a livery stable and a saloon. Willson worked for Mohonka whenever he was not employed doing farm work or fishing. Smallpox was a deadly disease of that time which occasionally broke out in the early settlements, thereby causing much grief. Mohonka had a daughter who was a victim of the deadly disease, Smallpox, while she was quite a young girl. She was buried in the little cemetery on the "point" across the river from Mabel Armstrong's home. There are sixteen graves in the little cemetery, however, no burials have been made there since 1918. When the little Mohonka girl died they were not permitted to bury her in the more popular burying ground across the river in Yolo County. Smallpox was so much feared that even the bodies of the victims were not allowed to be placed where the germs might spread.

Jon Willson met his wife while working in the hop fields near Wheatland. She was a descendant of Indian-Irish parentage. The young Mr. and Mrs. Willson spent several years of their early married lives, living in Collinsville, located below Sacramento in the river delta region. They fished for a livelihood which was the occupation followed by most of the Hawaiian people. They didn't stay in that section very long but came back and established their home in Vernon, following the fishing industry for a living. Nine children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Willson. They all attended school in the former one room Vernon School. Three sisters are the only survivors of the family. Mrs. Della Lauriano now lives in Oakland, Mrs. May Salisbury lives in San Francisco and Mrs. Mable Armstrong still lives in the old home at Verona. Mr. LeRoy Burns, a son of the Burns family of Vernon was one of the teachers in the old Vernon school. Several of the Willson children attended school while he was teaching. He now resides in Roseville. The late Miss Josephine Carrol was another of those early teachers whom Mrs. Willson remembers very well. Miss Carrol passed away about two years ago in Sacramento. Mabel graduated from the high eighth grade about 1913 at the time the elementary schools were changing from nine grades to eight grades. She did not continue her schooling but spent the rest of her early life caring for her mother, who passed away in 1934. Mabel did not marry until after her mother's death. She was thirty-eight years old when she married Mr. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong came to Verona in 1929 and engaged in the grocery business for several years. Later he went to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and commuted to Sacramento for eighteen years. He is now retired and drawing a well earned retirement.



Life in Vernon in early days may have been difficult according to our standards but the people of those days enjoyed life and all was not work. They had their pleasures as well as their struggles.

Most of the Hawaiian people made their living fishing on the river. Different seasons produced different kinds of fish. Stripped bass, black bass, catfish and salmon were the principle kinds of fish sold. The catch was delivered by boat, alive, to the fish markets in Sacramento. Some of the markets were Davis and Johnson, Pancos and the Chinese markets all located on the river front. The fish were taken to market in a type of crate fastened to the side of the boat like a barge. The boat left Vernon early in the morning of one day, usually Saturday, and came back the next day arriving in Vernon about four o'clock in the afternoon. The boat also carried other produce to market such as cream and cheese from the four cheese factories located in Vernon. Passengers also rode on the boat. The trading boat would leave Sacramento about ten o'clock Sunday morning on its return voyage. The trip upstream was slow and tedious but a welcome awaited it in Vernon about four in the afternoon. People came from all around the country dressed in their best and driving their most spirited horses hitched to fancy wheeled buggies and surreys. The boat would dock loaded with merchandise from the big city. It was a time for the older folk to visit and the younger men to court the lovely young girls of the country around.

In closing I would like to mention a few of the Hawaiian families who lived around Vernon in early days. The Murrays was a Hawaiian family who lived just above Vernon and did some farming as well as fishing. George Corner lived there but little is known about him.

When Mabel was a child, an old Hawaiian missionary used to visit the homes and read the Bible to the families. He is well remembered because he wore a long white beard.

Parianai is an old Vernonite who is still living in Mendocino county.

Cook lived in Sacramento most of the time. He has a daughter living in Broderick, west of Sacramento at the present time.

Marie Jarrett corresponds with Mabel at present. Marie Jarrett's father was in Vernon in early days but the family never lived there.

Adams, another Hawaiian, lived on the "Point" across the river from Vernon. He didn't stay there long but moved to Sacramento.

Mabel Willson Armstrong tells amost complete and interesting story of the early history of South Sutter. We are very grateful to her for giving us an insight into the history of a very very prominent community of Sutter county during the gold rush period.

(Speech given by Lou Newfield at a Rotarian Luncheon, 1963. Newfield was former owner editor of the Sutter Independent.)

YUBA CITY AS I KNEW IT  
by Lou Newfield

Since Mrs. Newfield and I left here in 1935 our residence has never been more than 125 miles away, but there have been altogether too few times when we have picked ourselves up and driven to Yuba City for a look-see at our former home. This is something to be deplored for we have roots here. Though we have seldom visited here, we feel closer to the friends we made here than to some of our current metropolitan area neighbors. Our children were born and spent their early years here and even today we frequently refer to Yuba City as "back home".

So, when Harold Moore issued me an invitation in September to come and chat with you folks on the occasion of Your annual dinner meeting, my inertia seemed to be overcome and I gladly accepted the assignment.

In presenting me this evening, I. L. Putnam referred to me as his friend of the twenties and of the sixties. Normally I would have been happy to be so classified, and I may have misunderstood him just before the introduction, but it seemed that when he leaned toward me while you were happily chatting, he asked me whether we should proceed with my speech or would it be better to let you enjoy yourselves a while longer. Well, I'd be in favor of your having your good time extended, but I've come all the way from San Leandro to get these remarks out of my system, so please be charitable and put up with me.

Standing here this evening, I can go back in memory forty-two years when a fellow at the foot of Bridge street could look directly north to the hobo "jungles" shut off by only a wire fence. To the west he'd observe at the slough a cabbage patch and a laundry. At the top of the "hill" was a much weathered wooden school building, and beyond it was Garth Ottney's fading almond orchard. Immediately to the south and the place where I was to carry on a newspaper and printing business - stood the abandoned brewery building. Abandoned for brewing purposes, anyway.

And you wish to know, I suppose, how, with such an apparently unsavory composite viewpoint one could engender a feeling positive enough to warrant what - at that time of my life - would be a substantial financial outlay.

Well, there was another little item that compensated for the things that seemed so unpromising. The late Victor M. Cassidy from whom I was buying the newspaper, showed me his

books, including a bank book that demonstrated substantial regular deposits. So, I figured that despite the brewery-laundry-jungles picture, if he could succeed, so could I. I was just optimistic.

I look back upon Yuba City in the early twenties with a sincere nostalgia. The people were very friendly. We attended bridge dinner after bridge dinner from October until June, and we became charter members of the Monday Evening Dancing Club that met on Thursday evenings... Parenthetically, I understand that in later years it has become the Monday Evening Dancing Club that meets on Friday evening... And, truthfully, some of our best friends we acquired during our stay here.

But, as a city, Yuba City had grown like Topsy, so it seemed. From 1878 until 1908 the population had grown from 600 to 1200. In 1921, when I arrived here, it hovered around 3,000; and while I was a member of the Marysville Rotary Club - there was none in Yuba City then - I listened to Hugh Smythe predict that Yuba City would equal Marysville in population within the next five years. He should have been in a good position to know since he was a Marysville merchant who resided in Sutter County.

But, it didn't happen. Despite the fact that the Newfields had two children born here in 1922 and 1925, respectively, Yuba City's population had reached a bare 3,600 by 1930. Looking backward now, it bothers me to think that neither Mrs. Newfields and my demonstration of how to get a population explosion going, nor my highly profound editorial pronouncements in the Sutter Independent were able to start a trend. And, my research efforts indicate that you had to initiate a census recount in 1940 to get past 5,000. Of course, it took the war years to start the real growth, until now, I am informed, you approximate 14,000 souls.

We had one bank in 1921, operated by the Boyd family. Today you have three. We had two or three churches in 1921. Religionists of faiths not represented in Yuba City went across the Feather River, or further, to worship. Today, I am told, there are 21 churches in Yuba City. There was no high school and but one grammar school. Today your fifth grammar school is being built. The town had no radio station and today you have three. The only things I can think of that we had more of in 1921 than in 1963 were newspapers. There was the Sutter County Farmer owned by my very good friend, the late Lou Woodworth - and there was The Sutter Independent.

Today you have The Independent-Herald - just changed, I am informed, from a weekly to a semi-weekly paper. I had the pleasure of viewing that very modern and well equipped plant



recently and I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of this community on having such a newspaper serving them. I say this without detracting from the papers of the twenties, for every period owes much to the periods that have preceded.

I've made brief mention of the churches and radio stations. Recently, while researching the files of The Independent, I chanced to be reminded of one of my most embarrassing moments in Yuba City. Not only was there no local radio broadcasting station; very few people owned radio receiving sets at that time. An official of the Pacific Gas & Electric Company and one of the best known and best loved of Yuba City residents, Merl Bremer had become interested in radio and had succeeded in constructing a home-made set for the enjoyment of himself, his family and friends. I was fortunate to be one of the latter and Merl subsequently made a set for me.

Shortly thereafter there was formed a Yuba-Sutter Radio Club and we hit upon the then very exciting and novel plan of having Rev. Eustace Anderson, pastor of the Yuba City Methodist Episcopal Church, South, deliver his sermon from a ham radio sending station in Gridley, to his congregation within the local church on Second Street. Merl chose to go to Gridley to supervise the broadcast. The pastor had invited his church members to attend and bring their friends. I further publicized the event in my newspaper - and that's where I should have left well enough alone. Instead, Merl appointed me to handle the reception of the broadcast at the church; and maybe some of you old timers can remember all the gadgets and condensers and doodads that were attached to the outside of those early receivers. Perhaps you can imagine what happened. Merl 's end of the deal went off all right, I guess. But all I could get were a series of squeaks and a mess of static. After about 10 minutes of fiddling with the set I heard a disturbance behind me and turned around to hear Doctor Peery say: "C'mon, let's get outa here." He evidently was respected because almost everyone took his leave. If I hadn't been in a house of worship those who remained would have been treated to some plain and fancy cussing, during which Merl Bremer and Marconi in particular and radio sets in general would have felt my wrath.

I've mentioned, however, that people were friendly in Yuba City. To their credit, I must add that no one rang up the following week to order his Independent subscription stopped, and it is a matter of record that Rev. Anderson was permitted to retain his pastorate, though being admonished, no doubt, to do his preaching face to face.

I believe that Yuba City in 1921 was the only county seat in California without a high school. But within a year, both newspapers got behind a movement initiated by Mrs. Minnie M. Gray, with the result that the Yuba City Union High School District became a reality.

Cree T. Work was brought here to get things started and become the first principal, and the only mistake he made that I know of was inviting me to be the first businessman of the community to address the student body.

It was my first experience addressing teen-agers and I can say that they haven't changed much over the ensuing years. For, before I was more than a couple of paragraphs into my talk, a big farm boy sitting at his desk immediately in front of me, lowered his head into his folded arms and went to sleep. Mr. Work, however, was insistent upon the school operating on fundamental democratic principles, and wakened the lad so, doubtlessly, he could suffer equally with his fellow students. From my viewpoint, however, he might just as well have left him sleeping for he sat there and glared at me for the balance of the harrowing experience.

Our first residence here- after a week at the Hotel Sutter was in one of Mrs. Campbell's rented houses near the laundry on Bridge Street. But we soon built a new home on B Street near Cooper Avenue and saw the permanent high school go up opposite us. Dr. Tom Nelson, whom I still occasionally run into when making my Rotary attendance in Berkeley, came down from Yreka to succeed Cree Work as Principal. I referred to it as the "permanent" high school I now see those "permanent" buildings have been torn down and new, modern structures have replaced the old. Which bears out the adage that there's nothing so constant as change.

You've been told that in recent years I have become an artist. In that capacity I have turned out canvasses that I thought were alright at the time, and yet today, when I see them on the livingroom walls of their present owners, I'd like to recall them and replace them with something more worthy.

The same thing used to happen in the newspaper business. For example, one of the very important safeguards against plant diseases had been set up prior to my arrival here by the then horticultural commissioner, Harry Stabler. He was adamant in seeing to it that the rules were observed. I had been editor of the Sutter Independent for only ten days, when, on March 10, 1921, there appeared this heading on page 1:

Stabler Stabs  
No-Good Nuisance;  
Nematodes Nabbed

Now, strictly as a "city guy" new to the country, I hadn't much of an idea of what nematodes were. But desirous of demonstrating, I suppose, that my subscribers had gained not only a new editor, but one gifted with rare talents, I went on with

I never saw a nematode; I never hope to see one;  
But I tell you I'd rather see a nematode than be one.  
The nematode's a wily worm. About our vines he'd clutter.  
Doc Stabler stabs them right and left to keep them out of  
Sutter!"

---and then followed a somewhat less exotic news story about how Mr. Stabler had condemned some 10,000 grapevines from Fresno county... Well, it's too late to do anything about it now. I can't recall it. It's been printed and circulated and, no doubt, read. It's also been microfilmed and filed in the Sutter County Library. All I can do is try to forget it.

As members of the Yuba City Commercial Association you may be interested in efforts to establish an effective booster organization here in 1922. I had previously published a paper in Turlock. Now, it's common knowledge that here in the Sacramento Valley we have been endowed with many natural advantages. Not so in the San Joaquin Valley. Man had many obstacles to overcome. A parched land needed irrigation projects. Sand storms were common in the Spring. After a windy day a sand dune, one would pass on the north side of the street in the forenoon would be found on the south side five hours later. So, to overcome these and other problems practically every town and county in the San Joaquin Valley had its board of trade or chamber of commerce in which the citizens cooperated for progress.

Imagine my surprise, then, on coming here, to learn that while there was a Sutter Chamber of Commerce, its sole support was from the county board of supervisors who annually appropriated \$400 to cover its operating expenses. The money was turned over to Ed Hughes, cashier in the local bank, together with some four-page folders. These Ed would send out whenever an inquiry came to his desk about the city or county. The \$400 not only provided the printed folders. It also supplied the stamps - the 2 cent variety that Postmaster Harry Meyers carried in those days, and Ed would lick the stamps and at quitting time the story of Sutter County would be sent on its way along with the outgoing bank mail. I was told that just about constituted all of the chamber's routine activity.

In due course, this brash editor felt that a positive promotional and development job could benefit the county. Ed Hughes and some others agreed. But, in the friendliest manner they whispered good counsel in my ear. Did I know, for example, that Clyde Harter of the Harter Packing Company was president of the chamber? And did I want to step on his toes and get myself slapped down and my purpose thwarted before it got started on its way? Well, you can just bet that I didn't. So I arranged for a talk with Mr. Harter who immediately gave the idea a green light.

Under date of June 1, 1922 an editorial appeared in The Independent reporting a rumor to the effect that certain members of the Yuba County Chamber of Commerce across the river in Marysville were heading up a movement to have the Yuba County chamber represent both Yuba and Sutter Counties. Ye editor suggested that if it was so, before they went too far with the idea they'd better consult the officers of the Sutter chamber. We admitted that perhaps the Sutter operation hadn't been too active but maybe we'd better see if it couldn't be strengthened.

Thus was the seed planted. I don't know what kind of fertilizer was used but in the issue of June 22- three weeks later- a news story told of a booster club being suggested with Gene Littleton, Fred Bonsack, Lou Woodworth, Frank Bremer and Thurlow "Red" Dowell named a committee to work on plans.

A mass meeting was called for July 23. And by September, Bremer, Littleton and yours truly were appointed to prepare a tentative constitution for reorganizing the Sutter County Chamber of Commerce. Though he preferred to let younger men shoulder the major effort, may I add that one of the warmest supporters of the reorganization plan was Clyde Harter.

The only bit of chicanery in the foregoing was the printing of that rumor. Frankly, I don't know whose idea it was. Maybe it was a spark from Ed Hughes' fertile brain. Or it could have been suggested by Gene Littleton who also worked with Ed in the bank. The only credit I'll take was for publication of the editorial. As things turned out it proved not only harmless, rather was it helpful, for by the end of the year reorganization was completed, Adrian McMullen, formerly a San Francisco newspaperman who handled publicity here in connection with the financing to the Hotel Marysville, was employed as a paid secretary, and an annual budget was set up amounting to \$15,000. It proved, also, that at that particular time, at any rate, the people here preferred to stand on their own feet and not have to hang onto the apron strings of their neighbors across the river. Of course, had we not been pretty sure of that attitude, the rumor strategy would have been valueless.

I've had occasion recently to peruse the minutes of meetings of your Yuba City Commercial Association, going back to the year 1935 when C.B. George was your president. Adrian McMullen who, by the way, purchased the Independent from me in 1927, served as vice president: and Leon Dassonville, then manager of the Producers Bank of Sutter County, acted as secretary-treasurer.

There had been discussions of the need for establishing a businessmen's group in Yuba City prior to 1935, but my recollection does not support it's having been organized prior to my departure for the Bay Area on New Years Day of that year.

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Those minutes give evidence of many worthwhile accomplishments by your organization and I have no doubt that your plans for furthering Yuba City's progress and development will amply justify the continued support of the business and professional people who comprise your membership.

There has been an awful lot of the first personal pronoun in this talk and I would readily apologize for it were it not for the fact that the nature of the presentation I was asked to give called for my own experiences while a Yuba City resident. However, I can bring this to a close with some subject matter that won't call for the "I" and "me" routine, but could call for you to raise some eyebrows and remark, perhaps, that "them was the happy days!"

The files of the Sutter Independent in 1921 reveal that your grocer, Nick Weber, offered three pounds of peanut butter for 65 cents and you could carry home fifty pounds of brown onions for only 50 cents.

Also, prices effective May 7, 1921, allowed one to acquire a Chevrolet touring car for \$798.82; a sedan for \$1,450.34; a coupe for \$1,408.34; and a light delivery truck for \$804.52.

In the want-ad column appeared the follow notice:  
"PERSONAL - Charlie W. - if you are in Sutter County and read this, return to your home and all will be forgiven. H.D.W., Sacramento."

May I suggest, in passing, that if Charlie W. didn't read the notice - and happens to be in this audience, it may not be too late to take a run down to the capital and see what's what.

Finally, for the ladies present, you'll be intrigued to learn that a heading in The Independent in 1922 proclaimed:

"SKIRTS TO LENGTHEN"  
and was followed with this item:

"Short skirts are on their last legs.

"Calves are to be hidden in the daytime - and the decolletage of evening dress is to be much less marked.

"Dresses are promised with one shoulder bare and one covered. Backs are still to be bare, but not much. The shape of the decolletage may be square, round, oval, oblong or boat-shaped."

Hm-mm-m.

I sometimes wonder now whether my subscribers fully appreciated the earth-shaking information I gave them for a paltry two dollars a year!

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## CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY DOINGS

Last June the California Historical Society, parent organization to our own, piped aboard a new Executive Director, Dr. Joseph Giovinco — young (42), dynamic, specialist in Immigration History, and lately of the Sonoma County Museum staff.

He promptly announced that his first year would be especially dedicated to (1) bettering services now rendered to local Historical Societies, and (2) improving public education, K through 12.

In approaching the first of these goals, Dr. Giovinco conducted last fall a round dozen regional meetings to help determine the actual needs of the local groups, and just how CHS might help them. Representatives from our fourteen-county area organizations gathered at the call of Chairman Ted Meriam on October 5th, 1985. Attendees enjoyed a beautiful autumn afternoon on the delightful campus of Chico State University.

The Executive Director delineated for us the primary goals of the California Historical Society, and outlined the possibility of arranging practical workshop training in museum establishment, operation and maintenance, in artifact accession, display, care and repair, in archivist's services for special projects, and in help and training for people in the currently growing field of oral history recording. With a broad brush, he painted in the problems now facing local groups ..... there are a little under 4,000 such groups nationally, of which over half (53%) were started SINCE 1960 (and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of these during Bicentennial Year 1976). It naturally follows that most local Historical Societies are YOUTHFUL, POOR (only 40% have any kind of paid staff), and IN SMALL COMMUNITIES (under 15,000 population). But that's where the action is today, so that's where effort needs to be directed.

Dr. Giovinco handed out Needs Assessment Surveys, asking each attendee to indicate his impressions of how his own local group stood in the variously listed categories of organizational needs. When everybody had sorted things out in his own mind and on the questionnaires, he turned the meeting over to Ted Meriam's Panel ... Ramona Flynn of the Butte County H.S., Prof. W. H. Hutchinson of Chico State, Judge Richard B. Eaton of Redding, and Bernice Meamber of Yreka.

There was general agreement that most history-minded groups either already had or were planning to start a historical museum. Such institutions, if public, seem to suffer from bureaucracy and red tape. If privately backed, they usually lack both money and energy. The biggest problem encountered everywhere: How do you get young people interested?

The Trustees of the California Historical Society devoutly believe not only that the future should belong to the young, but also that the past should be their rightful heritage. This year's California Lottery is supposed to pay for a vastly improved K through 12 educational system in our state. So how do we improve it? Well -- bringing back history into the curriculum would be one way. History is the glue that binds together the concepts, facts, and results from the whole gamut of disciplines into one big picture which we can view with some understanding. Perhaps our current political and diplomatic problems may have resulted, as James Restin claims, from misjudgments of history and philosophy by our elected leaders.