

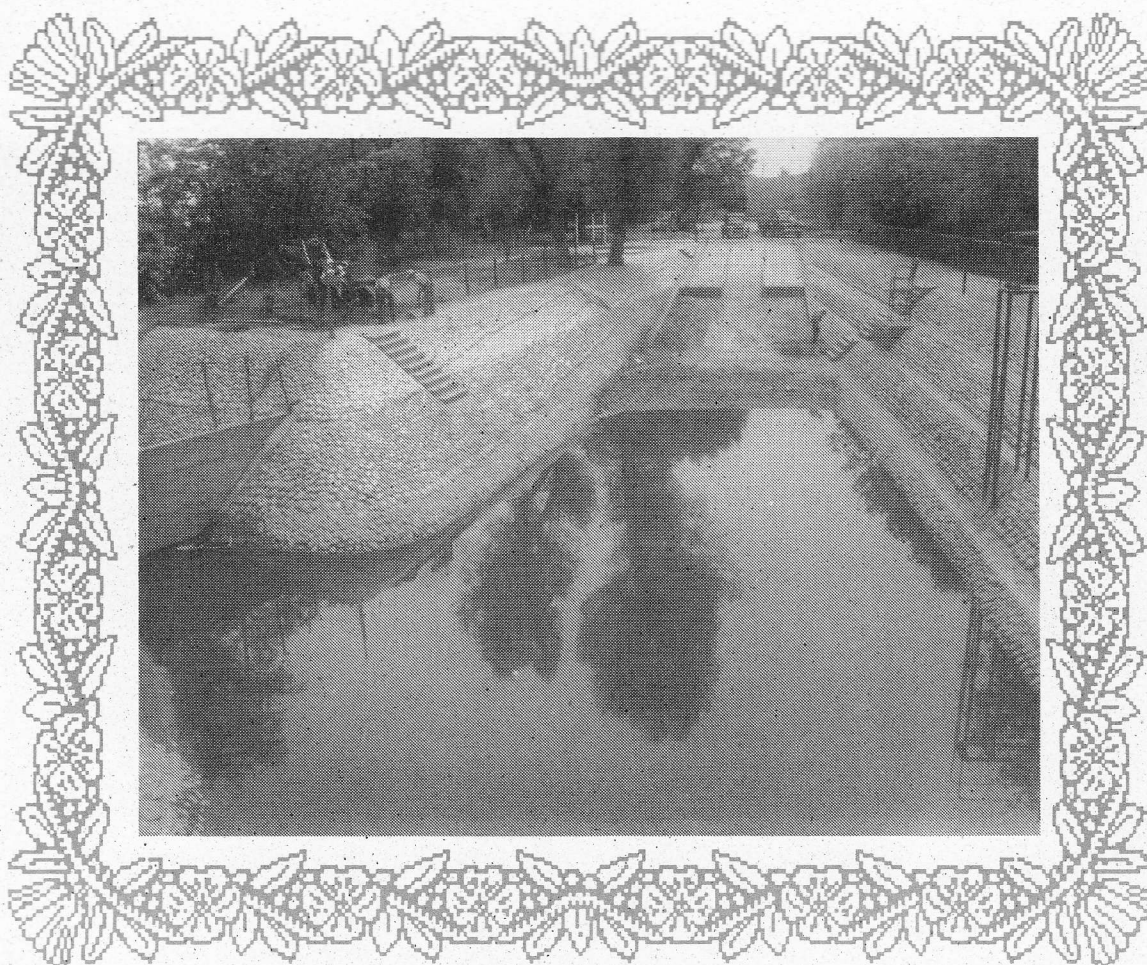
Sutter County Historical Society

News Bulletin

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Yuba City, California

April 1992



Photograph: Yuba City Swimming Pool, located under the Tenth Street Bridge. Originally built by the Works Progress Administrations, c. 1940, as a boat ramp. Lowered river levels caused it to be dammed up and converted to a public swimming pool. (CMM 91.8.1)

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The News Bulletin is published quarterly by the Society in Yuba City, California. The annual membership dues includes receiving the News Bulletin and the Museum's Muse News. At the April 1987 April Dinner Meeting it was voted to change the By-laws to combine the memberships of the Society and the Museum.

The 1992 dues are due as of January 1, 1992.

Student (under 18) Senior Citizen/Library	\$10.00
Individual	\$15.00
Organizations/Clubs	\$25.00
Family	\$30.00
Business/Sponsor	\$100.00
Corporate/Benefactor	\$1,000.00

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is the busy time of the year for the Historical Society. One of the Buttes hikes was held on March 21st. The second hike (4/4/92) and the Buttes bus trip (4/11/92) are in the near future. The hike dates were reserved early. There are still openings on the bus tour at this time.

The Annual Dinner will be held at the Sutter Youth Building on Tuesday, April 21st. Jeff Jones will be presenting a talk and slide show concerning the restoration of Sutter's Fort in Sacramento. Some of the pictures date back to the 1800s.

A special part of the evening will be the presentation of the four winners of the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest. The contest was co-sponsored by the Historical Society and Museum Commission. It was open to 3rd and 4th graders in Sutter County. This year's topic was the creation of Indian legends. The top four essays, as chosen by the essay judging committee, will appear in the July Bulletin.

Looking forward to seeing you at the dinner.

Brock A. Bowen

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April is always a strange mixture of happy and sad for the Museum staff and volunteers. Sad because we have to say good-bye to our winter exhibit, in this case "From This Day Forward : Several Generations of Sutter County Weddings", scheduled to close on April 5, happy because so many new and wonderful things are planned for the spring and summer.

The first of several anticipated events is the second year of "Wear and Remembrance", a vintage apparel show. Held in cooperation with the Mary Aaron Museum, "Wear and Remembrance" promises to be even better than last year. Mark your calendars for the weekend of April 11 and 12, and come down to the Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds to see for yourself.

A special joy for the Museum staff and volunteers every Easter vacation is the children's program. It is a challenge to come up with a theme that deals with local history and lends itself to a program that will be enjoyed by children. This year we think we have a winner. With the help of the local branch of California Women in Agriculture, the children's Easter vacation program will focus on the rich and varied agricultural heritage of Sutter County. On Wednesday, April 22 at 1:00, several farmers are very kindly taking time from their busy schedules

to come and talk about what they do and how things have changed since their grandparents ran the farm. Story hour will feature The Almond Orchard, a book beautifully written and illustrated by Laura Jane Coats, chronicling the life of an almond orchard north of the Buttes. The Future Farmers of America, from Wheatland High School, will be here to lead the children in related activities, and give each child an oak seedling to take home and plant. Refreshments will be provided by the generosity of the Museum volunteers and Commissioners. Admission is free.

An exciting new exhibit opens the first part of May marking the first solo exhibition of work by artist Denise Davis. Denise is a painter, but she is also a Native American who pays homage to her heritage by learning the tradition of basket weaving from a master Maidu weaver. The result of this wonderful blend of contemporary painting and traditional basketry is an intriguing, thought provoking exhibit. Programming for the exhibit will include weaving demonstrations and workshops.

As you can see there is something for everyone at the Museum this spring and summer. Please join us.

Jackie Lowe

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING FUND AND TRUST FUND

In memory of Donna Y. Allen
Jack & Helen Heenan

In memory of Joseph Alvarez
Mary & Ray Crane and
Jim and Janet Spilman
M/M R. W. Van Alstyne

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California Canning Peach Assn.
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In praise of Jackie and Julie
Norman and Loadel Piner

BEYOND OFFICIAL IMAGES : THE NEW DEAL AT HOME
ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

November 12, 1991

Moderator : Randy Schnabel

Participants : Robert Coats, Kenneth Dempsey. Jack Heenan, Don LeFave, Perry Mosburg.

"Official Images : New Deal Photography", a Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition, was at the Community Memorial Museum from October 29 through December 8, 1991. To better understand the New Deal at the local level, "Beyond Official Images : The New Deal at Home", a round table discussion, was held on November 12, 1991. Round table participants were : moderator, Randolph Schnabel, long time Sutter County resident, former high school history teacher and administrator, farmer; Robert Coats, life long Sutter County resident, farmer and lawyer; Kenneth Dempsey, life long Yuba County resident, farmer and businessman; Jack Heenan, life long resident of Sutter County and farmer; Perry Mosburg, life long Yuba City resident, former City Council member and businessman; Don LeFave, currently an instructor of history at Yuba Community College.

Special thanks to the five men who participated in "Beyond Official Images", to the audience who attended and contributed their memories of the Depression and the New Deal, and to the California Council for the Humanities for sponsoring "Beyond Official Images".

LEFAVE : The depression of the '30s is the longest depression in our history and one that in a way was the deepest, it was virtually everywhere. Sometimes the story is put out that things weren't quite so bad in California as in some other parts of the country. Statistically that's true, but as I am sure the people who

were here in the '30s will point out -- how bad is bad? It's bad enough. So one can look at national things, but it's a little different individually.

I thought one thing that might be appropriate is to distinguish the Dust Bowl and the Depression. They are interrelated, they occur at

approximately the same point in time, but the causes are different. The dust bowl with the sand storms that afflicted so much of the country didn't cause the Depression. The Depression has its roots much earlier. Many areas of the economy were depressed before the stock market collapse in 1929. Agriculture since 1921 was in a state of depression. On average during the '20s about 600,000 people per year left farms and moved to towns and cities, declaring bankruptcy. While productivity went up, wages during the '20s, were low. People couldn't consume what was being produced so, by 1927, factories were beginning to shut down, laying people off, and trying to dispose of excess inventory. For a period that we think of as a period of prosperity, unemployment was very high. Over 2 million people were unemployed in 1929, before the market collapsed.

The Dust Bowl has its roots earlier, really back in the 19th century. One could go back, I suppose, to the Homestead Act of the mid-century where efforts were made to apply an eastern standard to the high plains with 160-acre farms. Much of the topsoil in the high plains was very thin. The soil was right side up to begin with and so farming practices were adopted in the high plains that really weren't suited for it. Then there were a couple of periods of very high rain fall, unusually high, in the late 19th century, 1880s, 1890s and again in the 1920s.

That tended to hide what was really happening. Thousands of acres were affected by erosion and other problems, so that, by the 1930s, 1934, when the drought came, about 100 million acres suffered from severe drought. Tens of millions of tons of topsoil simply blew away, and it produced a great migration of people. I think John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath was the first book in print to refer to the people migrating as "Okies." The term was a generic one in a way because it applied to people from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska. In vast, vast areas people were forced off the land because of the drought and storms -- 350,000 people. So the Dust Bowl didn't cause the Depression; I like to refer to this as another layer of misery to add to the already catastrophic conditions.

When Franklin Roosevelt was elected president in 1932 and took office in '33, the Depression had been going along for some time. Roosevelt attempted a number of measures to try to provide for some immediate relief and recovery for people who were unemployed for various reasons. These took a variety of forms. Trying to focus in on the efforts that are represented in the photographs here, most of the photographs are from those agencies that attempted some kind of direct federal relief to the people such as the Civilian Conservation Corp, the "CCs", as they were

popularly called. Actually it was a pretty small agency, but it was quite a morale booster. It was a favorite of Roosevelt's, a favorite of a lot of people; it lasted throughout the decade. Young men, most of them, 18 to 25, employed, working in re-forestation of national parks, worked on roads and things of that nature. They received \$30.00 a month. By mid decade there were about 2 to 2 and a half million young men in CC camps who were allowed to work in that capacity for about a year.

There are a number of photographs from the NYA, the National Youth Authority. That was much smaller. It was an effort to provide some assistance, usually work related, to keep students in high schools, to keep students who were already in college in school and, a little bit later, to some who were not in high school or college. It was probably the smallest such effort; perhaps 2 million people were involved.

The main work relief effort of the decade was the WPA, the Works Projects Administration, which did a lot of things all across the country. At its peak it directly employed about 8 and a half million people. If one counts their dependents, it benefited about 25 million people. It is best known for its construction projects, some locally like Ellis Lake or the high school and other projects. It built, literally, hundreds of thousands of

new roads, airports, storm sewers, and bridges. It did a number of other things. There was an artists' programs, a writers' program. It employed a few photographers, as you can see from the exhibit. It was a direct effort to employ people.

Among the other agencies represented in the photo display is the Foreign Service Administration (FSA). It is probably, in the history of photography, the most famous group - Dorothea Lang, Ross Stein, Walker Evans, people who later became big names in modern photography. That's a very small group, a small agency, the number of people involved in the historical records division. It was later absorbed by the War Records Office which was taken into the War Department. Most of the time they employed about a half dozen photographers. They are well known today and well remembered because so many of them became famous and so successful in subsequent years. They are significant in terms of the history of photography and the numbers of people involved.

Those were some of the agencies. I'm not going to try to take time to talk about some of the bigger efforts, the National Recovery Act and that sort. I think, probably, I should stop for now and let the rest of the panel contribute something.

SCHNABEL : You mentioned the NRA, the blue eagle, the signs that were everywhere.

LEFAVE : The National Industrial Recovery Act. That was one of the early ones. The National Industrial Recovery attempted to stabilize prices in industry. There was another piece of legislation, the Public Works Administration. The concept was that the two together would stabilize prices, try to ensure the minimum wage, and shorten the work week, to spread the work. Plus expenditures from Public Works would help alleviate the Industrial.

SCHNABEL : I think that all this "alphabet soup" they had, ends with the last letters of the alphabet - WWII. World War II stopped the Depression. Anybody have anything they want to ask about the different agencies that were handed down? How many of them are in effect at the present time? Just the one : triple "C".

HEENAN: Social Security Act.

LEFAVE : The Federal Deposit Insurance.

DEMPSEY : When did the WPA come on?

LEFAVE : In 1935.

DEMPSEY : That was the most successful program.

LEFAVE : It did a great deal. Directly employed, numbers vary, but it lasted until the war began.

SCHNABEL : One thing about all of these programs, they absorbed the labor market and if you were a farmer trying to

pick a crop of peaches or cherries or something like that and your laborers were out working on a project some place at a stipend that was considerably more than a farmer could pay, it created problems.

HEENAN : You mentioned the Dust Bowl. I can't quite remember why, but in 1947, '48, after I got out of the service, there were a lot of people here from the Midwest or some place. If you went along Live Oak Highway, they camped along side the road on both sides. I think at one time there were about 100 people out there living in camps. It was after the war. Do you remember that?

COATS : Well, yes, but shortly after that time they built the Farm Labor Center which was really nothing but tin shacks according to our present standards. But at that time it was certainly better than sleeping in the street. I think those people didn't just come in 1947, but I think they were already here in 1947.

MOSBURG : A big group of them stayed down by the airport, what they called the old fig orchard. They pitched their tents. There were big wild figs growing down there. There were hundreds of people; they had no facilities or anything else for them but that was before the war.

DEMPSEY : One of the WPA projects was Ellis Lake in Marysville. They put up light stands at that time too, but

they never even finished them. In 1971 the Rotary Club sponsored a program to raise money to put the lights around the lake. Around 80 people donated \$200 apiece and raised about \$16,000, \$17,000 for the lights. They dedicated light standards in memory of people who were deceased or in the names of local families. When Ellis Lake was built, it was a lot of work. I was just in school at the time, but the lake gave people a lot of work.

AUDIENCE : I never understood where all the money, for all the different organizations like the WPA and the CCC came from. Is that what kicked in the welfare system? Was that the start of the idea of people accepting that the government would pay you money to either work or not work? In that case people were working. But originally how did the government come up with all this money to build most of the facilities they built?

COATS : They got a lot of bang for the buck. The WPA only spent \$11 billion the whole time it was operating, so they got a lot for the money. We did have the beginning of deficit financing, where they borrowed money to operate, but we really didn't have substantial deficit financing until the war. The deficit financing in '35 was maybe \$3 billion, something like that. In 1945 the deficit financing was \$45 billion and then we just never got out of the habit. From then on, primar-

ily, we've been living like we've been at war for the last 40 years.

AUDIENCE : I hear you refer to the WPA, but never hear a word about SERA.

COATS : I'm not familiar with SERA.

AUDIENCE : Well I worked for the Bank of American back in 1935 and we cleared as many SERA checks as we did WPA checks. We would open our San Diego main office for one purpose only at 8:30 in the morning on certain days of the month. Those were the pay days for SERA and WPA and the lines were clear across the lobby for both. SERA stood for State Emergency Relief Act. There were as many people, I think, at least in the San Diego area on state relief as there were on WPA.

AUDIENCE : What was that, was that a job, did they work for something?

AUDIENCE : No, but it is still part of this Depression era, how the people got by.

COATS : The main difference between the Depression era and the New Deal and what happened along before was that the federal government became involved. The federal government, in order to avoid mass migrations to the states that had the best welfare systems, tried to establish a uniform welfare system and to find incentives or some way to get the states to cooperate. But the principle result, the principle legacy of the

Depression, is that the federal government has used its power to help people who couldn't help themselves thereby vastly increasing the power of the federal government, almost changing our form of government over from a federal to national system. We have much more control from the federal government than we ever did before. Since the Civil War, the New Deal was probably the most unifying thing that happened.

AUDIENCE : You mean state control and now all of a sudden the federal government stepped in and did things the state had traditionally done before?

COATS : Yes, they did it legally, after a fashion. It didn't start legally according to the Supreme Court, but when the Supreme Court started in 1933 the nine people on the Supreme Court were all over 65, and 6 of them were 71 and two of them were over 80, so when Roosevelt talked about "nine old men", he knew what he was talking about. After the attempt to pack the Supreme Court, Roosevelt said that he had lost the battle, but won the war because they lost all the cases before in the Supreme Court until about 1935 when they upheld the Social Security Act. From then on most of the cases went in favor of the government. Shortly after they upheld the Social Security Act, Congress decided they shouldn't pack the Supreme Court and, a little after, the judges started dying.

AUDIENCE : Are you a lawyer by any chance?

COATS : Yes!

AUDIENCE : You sounded like you must be one.

SCHNABEL : It's not by any chance!

LEFAVE : Part of that too is that before the federal government became directly involved, there had been an effort to provide loans to municipalities, counties, and so on and they had lost their capacity to operate. They were on the edge of bankruptcy. I guess what I'm saying, is that it's not so much an aggrandizement on the part of the federal government as it is being pulled by something, by the collapse, almost.

SCHNABEL : That one particular act was the Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation, right? FRC, started back in Hoover's day. I think that was the last one of the things that was put out and not used anymore.

LEFAVE : I think it was in existence until 1952.

COATS : Hoover was a compassionate man, but he really didn't believe in a strong national government.

SCHNABEL : Our local agencies here, like the city of Yuba City. How did you put up with, say, the homeless at that time? Did we have a thing called homeless?

MOSBURG : That was a different thing. Down on the levee, they had the homeless there, and when Yuba City began to expand, we had to burn them out to move them and that was the start, I think, of our homeless. Before then our homeless were bums and tramps. [Ed. Note : Mr. Mosburg was a member of the Yuba City Council from 1942 to 1952.]

SCHNABEL : Now there were people who were in need of clothing and stuff like that.

MOSBURG : Maybe, but we had the county hospital that took care of the sick. There weren't that many people really that we couldn't take care of them pretty well.

SCHNABEL : The agency, like the Red Cross, people like that --

MOSBURG : Yes, the whole town worked as a body and was very happy to help everyone.

SCHNABEL : Well now, how many people are we talking about were living here at that time?

MOSBURG : I think there were well over 2200, when I was on the city council. I think we had on the city payroll about 300.

HEENAN : Live Oak had 600 people.

SCHNABEL : I think about 2700 were in Yuba City. Now you've got to put a couple of zeros behind those. There is nothing wrong with the problem, just the people!

COATS : I thought of the answer to an earlier question: the income tax, one of the principles of the Roosevelt administration was to share the wealth. They tried giving the money through the WPA and that didn't work. And this was the beginning of a graduated income tax where you charged the more wealthy people more income tax than the poor people.

AUDIENCE : Income tax started in 1921?

COATS : It may have started then, but during the 1930s it changed. The money came also from the deficit financing, where they borrowed. Say if the budget is \$5 million or something like that you borrow a couple of million.

AUDIENCE : Its odd because the crash, with marginal buying and all that sort of caused the financial crash in the first place, and it's like the government then discovered it too. Well it caused the crash but we can do it too. We're bigger we can get away with it.

COATS : I'm not sure I follow you.

AUDIENCE : Well, I'm thinking buying, having something you really don't pay cash for -- I know that's not buying on margin or deficit financing, but in a way its sort of the same thing.

COATS : I understand what you're saying but I don't think it's the same thing.

The idea, and it was certainly a good idea, except the government couldn't restrain itself, is that they tried to prime the pump. Fortunately, or unfortunately, they were looking at waging a major war and by the time they got out of a major war, well, then deficit financing had become a way of life and it's never stopped. It just gets worse each year.

LEFAVE : The deficits in the '30s were not particularly large. This is off the top of my head, for the entire New Deal the total deficit was approximately \$24 billion. For the war years, about half the same period of time, its about \$360 billion. So the expenditures for WPA were comparatively quite small. They were controversial, but war expenditures weren't.

SCHNABEL : How did these projects, like the WPA at Ellis Lake, that we can see, how did the CCC have impact on our community here? Did any one ever come into contact with it?

AUDIENCE : My brother worked on the CCC up in Challenge. They built a road that is still very much in use up there. In fact when we were up there in '46 it was known as the "CCC Road". He was there in 1933, one of the first groups.

HEENAN : They built bridges and post offices.

AUDIENCE : They did a lot of brush clearing.

AUDIENCE : They built post

offices all over the country. The Marysville post office started that way.

MOSBURG : Our old swimming pool down here started that way. Started as a boat ramp and finished as a swimming pool.

SCHNABEL : I ran into a group of CCC boys from Butte County. They came down to Chico High School where I was doing some student teaching at the time. They needed a mechanical drawing teacher, and that was me. We had no desks, no nothing, except a ruler and Mrs. Kelly says, "Well, there's a room, go to work," so we went to the shop and we built our desks, with slant tops and everything on them, and we begged and borrowed t-squares and triangles and a few pencils and stuff like that. They did a bang up job, those kids, because they had need for that. Then Mrs. Kelly said, "Now, this is done, you're going over here, you're going to teach typing". These people who know me know that I know nothing about typing, but you know, the one kid that got through that class became the manager for the Western Union in Chico because he could type. He didn't really have much moxie either, but he got the job there. Those are things that did well.

We were talking about the Red Cross. The Red Cross at the time we're talking about, or a little before that, was in one house in Yuba City, just outside Yuba City, [on Live Oak Highway] at my Grand-

father Skinner's place on the back porch. If anybody had clothing or anything they brought it there. Grandma distributed it to the needy people, and they had to be needy, according to her standards. But it blossomed from then on because of the population.

AUDIENCE: What happened to agriculture in this county if the work force was being sucked away by WPA? What happened to the farmers?

COATS : Probably the frost of 1929 was a lot harder than the stock market crash in Sutter County. It was much worse than the stock market crash, not too many people were hurt -- well, some people were hurt in the stock market crash, but a lot of people were hurt by the frost.

SCHNABEL : Practically everybody. There was no need to put a ladder or a box or anything in 187 acres of orchard for a whole year. It was just burned. Plums, cherries and prunes.

COATS : And especially crops like we grow in Sutter County, for the most part, were not helped by national programs. There never has been a subsidy on tree crops. There were controls, but the controls were not paid for. The price of peaches went down, I guess the lowest was in '37, to \$7.50 if you could find somebody to buy them.

SCHNABEL : \$7.50 and they didn't want all your peaches.

AUDIENCE : So did a lot of farmers go under in the '30s here?

COATS : Yes, a lot. If you look in the Thompson and West book [History of Sutter County, 1879] and look for names that you recognize around here now, you won't find very many.

SCHNABEL : And then there were people who "came in bulk" who worked for the Bank of America, CalAg and took over a large percentage of the farms and some of them, especially the farms that were growing tree crops, were hard hit. In addition to the frost, the lack of financing, we had hail one year, too, to add insult to injury. I was with my dad and we were at the George Boyd Bank down on Second Street and Bridge, and this fellow came in and threw this sticker on the desk, didn't say "Hi", "yes" nor "Boo" -- "Take them blankety-blank things". The hail had come, and he had a cloth top on his touring car and it was perforated. The hail had gone right through down south of town. Since that time, the people who owned that land, shortly afterwards were financed by Richland Chase, and they always took out hail insurance.

MOSBURG : The old building I was in on Plumas Street, that hail came right through the ceiling. It was a pretty old building.

COATS : In 1937 I bought a ranch, I was 17 years old and borrowed the money. I bought

a 15 acre ranch for \$135.00 an acre. Right at the end of Bridge Street, Bridge Street and Walton Avenue. Actually my father had owned it, and then they foreclosed on him, and I borrowed some money from a good friend of mine and bought the ranch and that's all I paid for it. I gave it back to my father, and we sold it during the war.

DEMPSEY : What year did the Federal Land Bank begin?

HEENAN : 1915.

SCHNABEL : Right around World War I.

DEMPSEY : That was supposed to help the farmers too, wasn't it?

SCHNABEL : Yes, with long term loans.

HEENAN : The Land Bank started in 1917, and the Production Credit Association was in 1933. You talk about the freeze in 1929 and all that. Later in the middle '30s, we had prunes and peaches and the wage, the normal rate was 15 cents an hour. If you were lucky you got a little higher job, you got 20 cents, but peaches then were only \$40 a ton. Took quite a while to get that up. Last year peaches went for \$220.00 to \$225.00 a ton.

SCHNABEL : When the peaches were in the \$7, \$8 range and up to the \$40 time, prunes never did have the spirit to come up that high.

HEENAN : They got down to a half cent a pound.

SCHNABEL : Well, I can remember Dad sold his years crops and every penny he put into it, he had to put an extra 1/4 of a cent with it. For every pound of prunes he processed, they sold for a cent and a quarter and the top price, a cent and a half per pound.

HEENAN : When you said he put it in the bank that reminds me of, do some of you remember the Decker Jewett Bank in Marysville? When it failed it hurt me particularly because I had \$14 saved. I think I got paid off about ten cents on the dollar. My folks had a prune check that they put in I don't remember the date that the Decker Jewett failed.

SCHNABEL : '34 I think.

HEENAN : Anyhow, it was right after the prune harvest and the money for that crop went into the bank on Friday, and of course the bank didn't open up on Monday -- I remember that.

SCHNABEL : That brings up another thing : closure of all the banks was an edict by the federal government. Gave everybody an opportunity to catch their breath and wonder what was happening. Dad sent me a check for \$35. I was at college at the time. And I got a call from him. He said, "Have you cashed that check yet?" I said, "Yeah, its been cashed." I had it in my

pocket, and he said "Keep a hold of it, 'cause that's all the money we have in this world". The banks were closed; you couldn't get any money!

HEENAN : Didn't the government have a moratorium on the banks?

SCHNABEL : Yes.

HEENAN : Those that opened, everybody felt safe because the government said, "Well, that's OK". Those that weren't good, didn't open.

SCHNABEL : At the Decker Jewett Bank, one of the relatives got paid off, like you did, with a check that cost two or three cents to send, and the check was for two cents.

HEENAN : If you talk to a lot of people, the last three or four years, particularly in agriculture, there has been kind of a depression, with more foreclosures in the last two or three years than there have been for years.

You hear people compare the Depression. I don't think it was anything like it was in the big cities. I don't know if anybody really went hungry around here. Didn't have a lot of money but --

COATS : Weren't there children in school that had to fed? In the schools wasn't there the beginning of a volunteer school lunch program?

SCHNABEL : Yes, that was the PTA.

COATS : So there were people who didn't get enough to eat, I guess.

SCHNABEL : They had a free lunch. Of course lunch only cost a nickel then. But they had a free lunch. It was mashed potatoes with hamburger gravy over it, in Yuba City Elementary School.

HEENAN : I don't remember seeing soup kitchens or bread lines. I don't remember it. That doesn't mean it wasn't here. I was quite a bit younger.

SCHNABEL : Like Perry said, the "bindlestiffs" , or tramps, or whatever you want to call them, were about the only people who were asking for handouts and most of them were willing to chop wood or something.

DEMPSEY : Those bums were always willing to work.

MOSBURG : Most people in those days were born to work. Most of these farmers raised what they ate. They grew it right there. They had cows, chickens and different stuff so they wouldn't have too much trouble. In the Dust Bowl, I guess, they had to migrate; they lost everything. Different farmers bought up their land and their little, old homes and, heck, before that they had just one walking plow they'd tend their crops with. Heck, I remember that stuff as a kid. Everybody worked. They didn't work by clock, either; it was daylight to dark.

SCHNABEL : Bill Green was telling me one time, he was school man down in the southern part of the county, a ten hour day was the usual thing and when you said that twenty cents, he got a raise to twenty cents. I remember the fella that was working Dad's place. We furnished a house, then a cow, and I think he was paid thirty five cents when he went to drive a tractor, but the rest of the time when he wasn't driving a tractor was less than that.

DEMPSEY : I used to work for Russ Robinson in the summer time, while I was in high school, for thirty five cents an hour. It was seven days a week, twelve hours a day and we got paid once a season, not once a month. Yeah, you had to wait until the peaches were sold. I went for three or four months one time without getting paid.

HEENAN : What was the interest rate in '33?

COATS : I don't remember, must have been around three percent.

AUDIENCE : People who had jobs, that worked for the government, say if you had a city or county job, were those jobs affected? Were the salaries lowered at all? Did they lose their jobs during the Depression?

COATS : They were lower but not lowered. They were already low to begin with.

SCHNABEL : Yes, they had never gotten up.

AUDIENCE : They didn't get raises, but they didn't lose their jobs, so if you worked for the government your job was pretty well secure?

SCHNABEL : That's right.

COATS : A lot of school teachers were highly respected. They had no problem with employment whatsoever. My father was a Superior Court judge [Arthur Coats] and while Superior Court judges didn't get paid anywhere near what they get paid now, they got paid more than anybody else, so, relatively speaking, we were pretty well off -- at least we thought we were.

SCHNABEL : About that same time, in '34 I started teaching school for \$100 a month, which was \$1200 a year, I got paid for a full year. My wife started at the same time and she only got 10 months pay -- at the same rate.

You're talking about buying property. Rice ground today sells for around \$2000. I paid \$27.50 an acre in '36. And I had to borrow the money to do it.

AUDIENCE : You know you were talking about the county hospitals. My grandfather [Frank H. Graves] was the supervisor for District 1 and in order for anyone to go to a county hospital they had to come to their supervisor's house and he gave an order for them to go to the hospital. I can remember that when I was a little girl. He also gave

them a warrant to go to this certain place in Yuba City to get sacks of flour and sacks of potatoes. There wasn't really any sort of central welfare place. It was through your supervisor, so you know how few people we had in the county at that time.

AUDIENCE : Well, wasn't it during the Depression that the bank on Bridge Street let the women that worked there go so they could put the men to work?

AUDIENCE : That was rather common in those days.

AUDIENCE : Female teachers couldn't work if they were married, so a lot of them were married secretly.

AUDIENCE : By the same token, several of the school teachers at Yuba City High School, when I went to high school I am sure that their wages were not all that high but still they managed to take trips to foreign countries during the summer time and they didn't live high or anything. But they were still able to do this.

SCHNABEL : I know of a guy that did that too. He went to Mexico for one summer, teaching at Princeton, and he had to borrow \$167 from the bank to do it.

AUDIENCE : Well, I don't think these ladies borrowed money, but they must have been frugal during the school year.

LEFAVE : You have to remember that in some parts of the

country municipalities were very broke. The biggest city crisis was in Chicago. I think all city employees, including policemen, went six months without being paid and some places, like Minnesota, they were paid in a kind of script which presumably was to be accepted at face value but frequently wasn't. Individual stores wouldn't consent to face value, but gave a discount, so I think, California is something of an exception.

HEENAN : That's not much different from today's municipalities. How many counties in the state are declaring bankruptcy for their school districts? They are all either bankrupt or are awful close to it.

SCHNABEL : The city of Richmond.

AUDIENCE : Do you realize there are going to be 121 school districts in the state of California filing for bankruptcy this year?

SCHNABEL : You shouldn't come up with figures like that!

A little town up in Washington issued script. They were in the lumber business, so they had a little shingle that was worth a nickel. When the banks closed they had to go to something.

HEENAN : Something that is different today from the '30s, still have depressions, they just don't last as long.

LEFAVE : In recent years they haven't been as general. Just

about every part of the country was affected by the Depression. It was national.

SCHNABEL : It was international too.

Anybody else got anything they'd like to add to the confusion?

AUDIENCE : Were you all, let's see now, you [Bob Coats] were a budding lawyer, were the rest of you farmers?

COATS : I was a farmer till I was 50. I'm still a farmer, but I farmed exclusively until then.

MOSBURG : I was a junk man. I wrecked automobiles in downtown Yuba City on Plumas Street. Where Filco and Feather River Office Machines is and North Valley Paint store and Shadd's. I turned the cars upside down, tore them to pieces, burned the wood out and sold them for junk.

COATS : Jack and I were children until the war started. We are pretty much the same age, about 20 in 1940.

MOSBURG : I was at my place until 1950 when I closed up and built Shadd's store. I moved there with sporting goods, for hunting and fishing. My home is just south of that, been there 50 years.

DEMPSEY : That was the time that the Federal Farm Administration came into being. I know because I had a

chance to take over 100 acres up by Grass Valley I was able to borrow \$17,000 dollars and I was able to buy that property with it plus 1000 head of sheep. I was up there for 8 years before I finally sold. Then Camp Beale came in and they ran us all off, that was my farming experience. It was fun while it lasted, but it was hard to make a decent living out of it. There were a lot of sheep around here in those days, a lot of Basque people here -- the Uriz, the US Hotel. There were thousands of sheep over in Sutter County.

MOSBURG : I never did get into farming.

SCHNABEL : Smart.

MOSBURG : Always worked for my self, self-employed.

SCHNABEL : Farming's a good life, if you can stand it.

Are there any other questions?

AUDIENCE : Of all these programs, what programs are still in vogue?

SCHNABEL : Triple "C" is the only one I know of.

HEENAN : Social Security is still around.

COATS : National Labor Relations Board.

LEFAVE : Federal Deposit Insurance.

DEMPSEY : I'd sure like to see the triple "C" back though

with all of our bridges and roads all over the nation in disrepair they could probably get work for thousands and thousands of people, but it would probably be difficult to get them to do it.

COATS : Of all the ideas of state cooperation with the condition of the federal government giving them money, like the highways with the 55 mile per hour speed limit, that sort of thing, that principle, the ideas are still there even if the programs are gone.

SCHNABEL : You know, some of those things about having watchdogs checking in your back door all the time and like that, it depends upon the watchdog how much those things are really enforced. For instance, you can have rats damage eat your wheat up, 10% percent a year to keep it in storage, a lot of big rats around there.

LEFAVE : I think one of the things that happened in the '30s is that the federal government accepted some general responsibility for the condition of the country and I think that today we sort of take for granted that when things aren't going well the president calls a news conference. In 1910 the president would not have thought that way at all.

So that is now part of what we expect and the federal government assumes it.

AUDIENCE You know, it's very interesting, I look along the

table and I think, these were all kids back then. It is interesting to have you all here and talking about the things when you were all just in high school.

COATS : When we were high schools kids, people considered themselves very fortunate to find a job in the summertime, and we've always worked. Anything for a job all summer or even for a month. Even fifteen, twenty years ago, if the prune harvest was late, the schools wouldn't open for a couple of weeks but the children are not really part of the work force anymore.

SCHNABEL : They're not allowed to.

COATS : My kid says its OK as long as you're part of a family farm.

AUDIENCE : Mechanical harvesting has taken a lot of their jobs.

SCHNABEL : They can't operate a tractor; they can't run a machine.

MOSBURG : Down at the sports shop, I would want to get some beginners out there, at fair wages, but by the time I paid the insurance there was no profit for me.

SCHNABEL : You sound like that's the name of the game -- getting profit!

MOSBURG : If you don't make it for yourself, no one's going to take care of you.



WANDERING WHERE WANDA WENT?

By Constance A. Cary

Our Society is saying good-bye to a good friend and strong supporter this month. Wanda I. (Schull) Rankin, our Treasurer for many years, is leaving. She is heading north to Washington state to be with her oldest daughter and her family.

Wanda was born in Goldendale, Washington. During April of 1926, at the age of six, her family moved to Yuba City to 805 Orange Street. She attended Bridge Street School and graduated from Yuba City High School in 1938.

The year 1938 was a busy year for Wanda. She married

Bill Rankin, a Marysville native, and went to work for Dr. Treadway, a local dentist. She worked until 1941 when her first daughter, Judith, was born. Bill's work took them to Stockton and then to the shipyards in Oakland. In 1943, they returned to their Orange Street home. Their second daughter, Virginia, was born. Bill went into the Navy and returned at the end of World War II.

In 1956, Wanda went back to work full time for Robert C. Hall, DDS. She worked for Dr. Hall for twenty years. During this time, her daughters married and each had a son and a daughter.

Wanda now has several great-grandchildren.

When asked how she became involved with the Historical Society, Wanda responds, "While shopping at S.O.S. one day (in 1972), my husband was cornered by Randy Schnabel who sold him a membership in the society. However, he put down my name instead of his. During the third meeting I attended, I was elected to the Board of Directors. When Lola Case retired as Treasurer, I became her successor. Later I served one term as President (1975-77). Someone else was Treasurer the first year, but due to ill health turned the job back to me."

With the building of the new museum, a Commission was formed. Wanda was appointed to serve at the Historical Society representative.

She served eight years (1975-1983). After a brief rest, she was reappointed to the Commission as the Muse News editor. In 1983 she also became a museum helper. Later Wanda took over the Historical Society's bulletin as editor.

During this time, Wanda was the Society's Treasurer and her duties included taking care of membership dues, memorial acknowledgments and checking the Post Office box. She also worked as a museum volunteer.

We will miss Wanda for all of the jobs she has been doing all these years. We'll also miss her ability to recall names, families, and faces. Most of all, we will miss her smile and laughter.

COMING EVENTS

April

- 4 Buttes Hike
- 11 Buttes Bus Tour
- 11 & 12 Wear & Remembrance - Yuba Sutter Fairgrounds
- 21 Annual Dinner - Sutter Youth Building
Speaker: Jeff Jones - Curator of Sutter's Fort
Topic: Restoration of Sutter's Fort

May

- 30 Sutter Buttes Day

July

- 21 Historical Society Meeting – See July Bulletin for topic

October

- 20 Historical Society Meeting
Speaker: Maggie Moyers
Topic: Maidu Travelling Trunk

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