

Sutter County Historical Society

News Bulletin

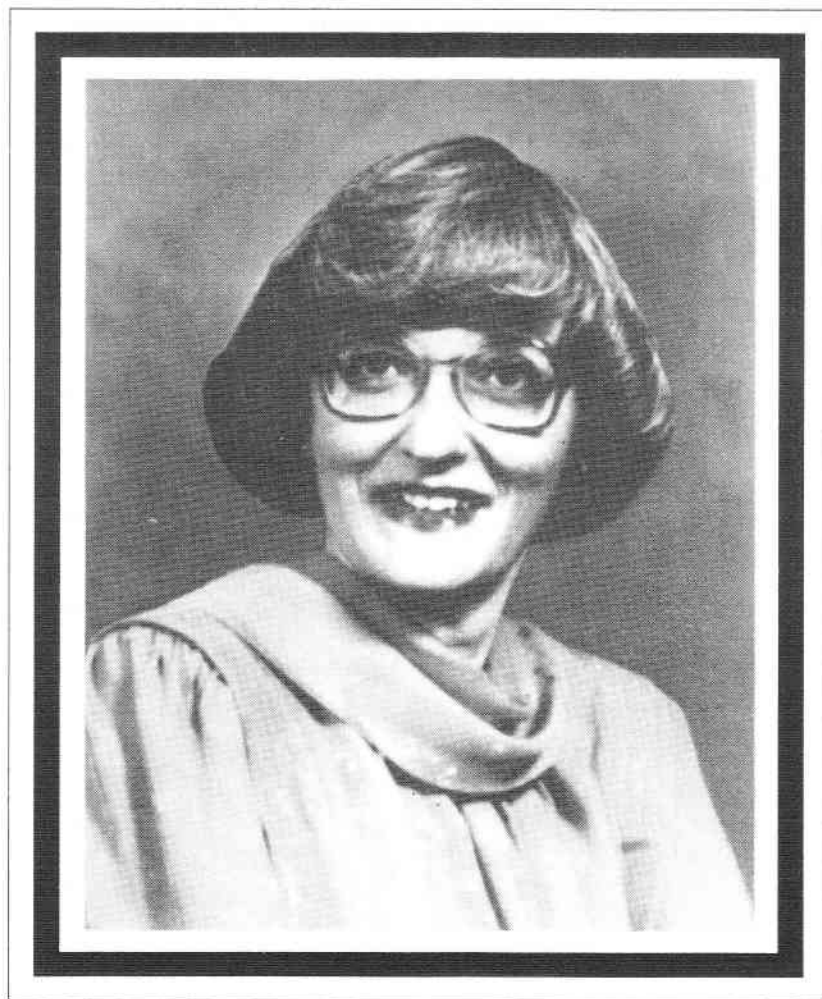
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Vol. XXXIII No. 3

Yuba City, California

July, 1992

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Judith Barr Fairbanks

# Sutter County Historical Society

## News Bulletin

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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 Annual Dinner Meeting it was voted to change the By-laws to combine the memberships of the Society and the Museum.

The 1992 dues are payable 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

## Letter to the Membership

This is our second newsletter in this new format. The board of directors is excited about this positive change and hope that it will improve with each additional issue.

If you have any information, i.e., letters, articles, stories or photographs that you would like to share with the membership through this newsletter, please call Linda Leone (673-2721) or Sharyl Simmons (674-7741) so that arrangements can be made for possible publication, in the newsletter, of your contributions. This is a major way for the entire membership to participate in preserving the past for future generations.

We have an obligation to preserve as much of our past as we can and our newsletter is an excellent way to accomplish this task. With the growth of the newsletter will come growth of the Historical Society. A larger membership will ensure the continued success of the newsletter as a vehicle to record and share the culture and history of Sutter County's colorful past.

Thank you for your future contributions to the Sutter County Historical Society.

Brock A. Bowen  
President

## Museum Director's Report

If you haven't come to the Museum yet to check out "Honee Tooweydom: Heart Praying", you still have a chance. Yet to come: a children's workshop on July 21 and one more basketry demonstration on July 25. We are extraordinarily lucky to have Denise Davis' work at the Museum. She is one of only a handful of people in the world who weave baskets in the Maidu tradition. She is also a gifted artist who is just beginning to come into her own and receive widespread recognition. Come by and take a look, then when Denise becomes famous you can say you saw her work way back when. The exhibit closes on Labor Day.

Less than one week after "Honee Tooweydom" closes the Museum Commission will be at the Prune Festival selling their latest creation the 1993 Sutter County history calendar. The theme for this 16-month calendar is recreation and we think you will be surprised and delighted by the variety of ways in which people in Sutter County have entertained themselves through time. The printing of the calendar will be extremely limited this year and we expect to sell out quickly. The calendar will make its debut at the Prune Festival as will the Museum's first-ever selection of black and white postcards. The postcards will feature images from our photo collection. We hope that you will find both of these new products a fun way to enjoy and learn more about Sutter County's heritage and that you will share them with others as well.

Other events taking place at the Museum include the return of the September Salad Luncheon, a fund raising event sponsored by the Museum Commission. Scheduled for Thursday, September 10, tickets are \$10.00 and can be purchased at the Museum or from any Commissioner. Also in September, "A Sense of Place : The Ethnographic Photography of Scott M. Patterson", opens on September 25. This photo exhibit focuses on the Native Americans of Northern California as they struggle to maintain some of their traditional ways, while being a part of modern life. "A Sense of Place" will be at the Museum through November 22.

Jackie Lowe  
Museum Director

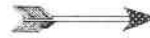
## Editors' Message

As you may or may not know, "Editor of the News Bulletin" was one of the hats worn by Wanda Rankin prior to her move to Silverdale, Washington earlier this year. The last News Bulletin was a joint Museum/Historical Society venture. Jackie Lowe, curator of the Community Museum of Sutter County, had a grant associated with the Depression Era exhibit. Part of this grant was used to publish the last issue. We, Sharyl Simmons and Linda Leone, are in the process of learning the job of editor.

We are sure you noticed the difference in the format of the last bulletin. Some of you probably liked it and some of you probably didn't. The column format is something we are going to try for a while when we think it makes the article easier to read. We are interested in your opinion concerning the layout as well as the printed vs photocopied look of the bulletin. Any comments (either pro or con, but please be constructive) are welcome. You can leave a message for us at the museum.

One of the things we are adding to the bulletin, beginning with this issue, is a page for children (of all ages). There will also be trivia questions or information gleaned from past issues of local newspapers included throughout the bulletin. From time to time, possibly every issue, we will include a "Can you identify this?" photograph from the museum archives or a picture of an item which has

been donated to the museum which may be stumping the staff. Do you have other suggestions? Let us know.



We are looking for contributions to the bulletin. If you have a story to share, have done a research paper concerning Sutter County or its inhabitants, or are willing to write something for the bulletin, please leave a message at the museum and we will be in touch with you as soon as possible.

In the October bulletin, we would like to feature residents of Sutter County, or residents of other locations who were born in Sutter County, who will have celebrated their 100th birthday by December 31, 1992. If you, or someone you know, have reached this milestone, please contact the museum.

In the January 1993 issue, we plan to share various "firsts" in the county. If you know of a "first", please share it with us. For example, who owned the first car in Sutter County? Right now, we don't know!

First and foremost, this is "our" bulletin -- it is for you, me, our children, neighbors and friends. Help us continue to make it something we can look forward to receiving each quarter.

Linda Leone  
Sharyl Simmons

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUILDING  
AND TRUST FUND**

In memory of **Claire E. Bardon**  
Mary C. Gillis  
Frances Davis

In memory of **James H. Barr**  
Mrs. Myrtle Newcomb  
Beta Chapter of Alpha Sigma  
Oscar Franson & Delores  
Giffin  
B. T. Berndtson

In memory of **Brent I. Brooke**  
Harry & Bernice Wilson  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey

In memory of **Wilbur H. Brugmann**  
M/M R. A. Schnabel  
Cassius C. Epperson  
M/M Robert Bryant

In memory of **Brenda G. Castillo**  
Mary Phillips

In memory of **Leslie Childers**  
Constance A. Cary

In memory of **Esty Childs Clifford**  
Georgia & Wilbur Green

In memory of **Franceska Day**  
Constance A. Cary  
Linda Leone  
Wanda I. Rankin

In memory of **Robert Dreisbach**  
Bruce & Virginia Harter

In memory of **Essie Gardner**  
Mary Phillips

In memory of **Sandra S. Grossman**  
Constance A. Cary

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Ila Brown  
Sharyl Simmons  
Bettie McCollum  
Mary Phillips  
Gary & Linda Phillips  
Mike & Mary Phillips

In memory of **Joyce R. Hartman**  
Robert & Jan Schmidl

In memory of **Eldon Jopson**  
Gene & Jim Taresh

In memory of **Jennie S. Linteo**  
Dan & Dylene Butler

In memory of **Jim Matheson**  
Dale & Alma Burtis  
M/M Harold Quigg

In memory of **Eunice Menth**  
Georgia & Wilbur Green  
Jack & Helen Heenan  
John & Audrey Breeding  
M/M Robert Kratz  
Joseph & Kathleen Ruzich

In memory of **Ted Messick**  
Ila Brown  
Dale & Alma Burtis  
Jane & Walter Ullrey  
Linda Leone  
Betty & Bill Arnett  
Clifford & Helen Abbott  
Roy & Estelle Welch  
Franklin School Staff  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey  
Anna Ulmer  
Albert & Mary Ulmer  
Helen Brierly  
Donna & Barry McMaster  
Robert T. Coats

In memory of **Gladys Mills**  
Ivadel Simmons

In memory of **Laura Moore**  
Dale & Alma Burtis  
Grover & Meriel Davis  
Richard & Sandy Giusti  
Mrs. Welby Folkes  
M/M Thomas Folkes  
M/M Dean Folkes  
Kenneth O. Miller

In memory of **Bernice Otis Potter**  
Caroline S. Ringler  
M/M Bob Bryant

In memory of **Hazel Salmonson**  
Holli & Jeff Trailer  
Caroline S. Ringler

In memory of **Dorothy Mae Scott**  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey

In memory of **Betty Shannon**  
Joseph & Kathleen Ruzich  
Dorothy Jang

In memory of **Jake A. Smith**  
Constance A. Cary

In memory of **Lila M. Smith**  
Constance A. Cary

In memory of **Dorothy Sneed**  
Bill Z. & Mel M. Tsuji  
George H. Inouye  
All her friends at  
Bourbon & Water Co.  
The Saunders Families  
Caroline S. Ringler  
Sam Shannon Family  
Wanda I. Rankin  
Peach Tree Women's  
Golf Assoc.  
Woodrow & Dorothy Jang  
Ken & LaVerne Onstott  
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Mrs. C. E. Sullivan  
John & Hope Sheehy  
Rowena & Elmer Ames  
Bob & Jean Lynch

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Celia Ettl  
Bruce & Virginia Harter  
Gordon & Rebecca Northern

In memory of **Ann Treadway**  
Constance A. Cary  
Wanda I. Rankin

In memory of **Alston Wallace**  
M/M R. A. Schnabel

In memory of **Estelle J. Welch**  
Donna & Barry McMaster  
Dan Stevenson Jr.  
Herb & Sally Brannen  
Geraldine Cheim  
Judith V. Barr  
Beta Chapter Alpha Sigma  
Mrs. E. H. Liston  
Bill & Jane Wineinger  
Ralph L. Welch &  
daughter Holly  
Alice Dreisbach

In honor of **Wanda Rankin**  
Norman & Loadel Piner



## The Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest Winners

The Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County and the Sutter County Historical Society co-sponsored an essay contest for third and fourth grade students in Sutter County. We hope the essay contest will become an annual event emphasizing cultural awareness by targeting the historical contributions of a different ethnocultural group each year.

For our first year, the topic of the essays focused on Native American contributions to the development of California.

We invited third and fourth graders to do some research and then write a California Indian legend or myth based on what they learned.

The Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest winners, their parents and teachers were honored at the Historical Society's Annual Dinner Meeting in April. Mrs. Judy Barr, mother of Judith Barr Fairbanks, presented the awards to the winners. Prizes ranged from a first place award of \$50.00 to \$10.00 for fourth place. All of the students who entered the contest received a Certificate of Participation.

We would like to thank all the students, teachers, and schools who participated in this year's event. It gives us great pleasure to present the winning essays in the First Annual Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest.



From left to right: Brad Beardsley, Jared Paddock, Mrs. Judy Barr, Christine Heckman, and Sarah Harling.





Fourth Prize  
Sarah Harling  
Barry Elementary School

### The Shooting Star

"Grandma, why are there shooting stars?" a small child asks.

"Oh, it's a long story, and you are tired."

"Oh, please!"

"Well, all right."

A long time ago, when the world was young, there were two brothers. They were both proud and boastful. They were twins that looked alike except that one had a small star that shone brightly on his forehead.

One day they were walking along the riverbank shouting to anyone who could hear, "We are the fastest! We are the best!" Well, Old Man River got tired of it. He said, "Tomorrow I will race one of you."

"We accept," chorused the brothers.

They went away quietly. "Let me race, for I will win." "No, it shall be I." They argued for some time until the first brother, the one with the star, said, "I am not sure. How can we be fair?"

"I know!" the younger explained. "I will begin running and at the halfway point, I will step behind a tree and you will come running out. That way Old Man River won't stand a chance." "Good idea, but what about my

star?"

"Well," replied the second brother, "we can tie a deerskin band around it. And I shall wear one too."

Meanwhile, the river had been sending the news far and wide that he would stop the bragging. Many animals anxiously waited for the day.

Finally it came. The first brother stepped forward and announced he would run.

At the halfway point he began to tire so he was grateful to step behind the tree. Now, the twins were excellent runners, but they could not endure long stretches. Presently the second son began to feel tired also. His fatigue soon grew to exhaustion.

He called to his brother, "Aue! my brother, come and help me."

"What?" exclaimed all the animals at once. "Have you been cheating?" The younger brother admitted he had, and deer was sent to find the elder brother. He, too, confessed.

The animals held council for many days to decide a punishment. As they couldn't come to a fair decision, Mr. Moon was summoned. The moon simply said, "I shall take them both." "No," protested the river. "I was the one who was wronged, so I should have a say."

Then the moon and the river argued for hours until the Great Spirit said, "Stop fighting, my sons. You shall

each get one." The moon decided to use his boy as a star, but the river was so angry he drowned the second.

"That, child, is why we have shooting stars. It is the first brother trying to reach the second."

incredible amount of strength. The sun went up. But Light Streak's son decided that people would need time to sleep too. So at the end of the day he goes down. He says goodbye by sending beautiful colors up into the sky. And that is how the sun came to be.



Third Prize  
Jared Paddock  
Robbins Elementary  
School

#### The Beginning of the Sun

Once the world was dark. People wanted light. One day the Indians decided to do something about it. They built a big deer skin ball. (Which was very hard to do in the dark.) Then they filled it with reeds. When the time came they took their strongest man to throw the ball. But the Shaman spoke up. "How can the ball bring light when it doesn't produce it?" Then another man said, "Yes, how can it?" "I know how. Why doesn't somebody go over to the home of Light Streak," said the Shaman. "I will," said the youngest of the bunch. Then he left. A few days later he came back. He said, "Light Streak will be here in a few days." A few days later he did come and set fire to the ball. Then they had another problem. No one would lift the ball. Just then Light Streak said, "I will send my son to guide the ball of flame. Light Streak's son flew up into the sky and pulled the ball up with his



Second Prize  
Brad Beardsley  
Central Gaither  
Elementary School

#### Why the Grasshopper Hops

It was a hot day. The Maidu Indians were working in their huts. The Shaman came out of the sweathouse and looked out over the Feather River when he remembered a story his father told. When story time came, he called the Indians. They lit a fire and the story began.

On a hot summer day Creator was watching the Indians capture the defenseless little animals. He decided to create an insect to tell the animals that Creator would give them power to get away from the Indians. He decided that the creature would destroy an acorn tree to get revenge on the Indians.

He took a branch and bent it so it would look like this:



Then he wrapped it in green grass. That night he thought

of a name for the insect he created. He decided to call it Grasswalker. When the insect arrived at his destination, he gave Creator's message to the animals.

Then he chomped down an acorn tree. When the Indians discovered Grasswalker chomping down the tree, they tried to kill him. Creator sent down power to give the animals power to make the animals able to get away from the Indians. These are some of the advantage he gave the animals. He gave the porcupine spikes, he gave the skunk his odor, he taught the jack rabbit how to hop and grasswalker how to hop.

When Grasswalker learned how to hop Creator called him Grasshopper. And that's why the Grasshopper hops.



First Prize  
Chrissie Heckman  
Meridian Elementary  
School

#### Why California Was Created

Long ago when there were no living creatures in California, Old Man Above said, "I am lonely. All I ever do is sit around. I need something to keep me busy." So he decided to make something. He decided it would be best if the things he made moved because then he could watch them all day long.

First he made an area of

water. He put turtles, fish, sharks, and whales in the water. He took five of the baby whales to make the Sutter Buttes. He took big whales to make other mountains. He covered the whales with mud. Sometimes the whales needed to blow water out of their blow hole. When that happened a volcano erupted. So the next time a volcano erupts you know what is really happening.

After Old Man Above was satisfied with the mountains, he broke off a piece of rock from a mountain, crumbled it up and said, "Trees grow." They grew. He broke some branches off the trees, poked them into the ground and said, "Flowers and grass grow," and they grew. He took a few blades of grass and some flower petals. He made all the animals you could think of.

He found a blue pansy. He dipped it into the water, pulled it out and said, "Put color in the sky. I want it this exact color," and that it was.

After that he made man by cutting his finger. He let three drops of blood fall from his finger onto a stick. The stick grew and grew until it was six times bigger than it had been before. It had hair and flesh. That was the first man. He did the same thing again but instead letting the blood drip onto a stick he let it drip onto a flower. That was the first woman.

Next he pulled a few strands of red hair out of this head. He rolled them in his hands for along time. Pretty soon it was a huge ball

of hair. He lifted it into the sky and made the sun. The sun gave off light. The light made everything more beautiful than it had been. The sun was too hot to be shining on the creatures all the time so Old Man Above asked his wife to knit a black blanket. When the blanket was finished he poked little holes all over it and one big hole in the middle. His wife asked, "What are you doing that for?"

"You'll see," he replied.

After the sun had been in the sky for a certain amount of time Old Man Above covered California with the blanket. The holes were the moon and stars. With the new darkness everything started to get tired, except for the owls and other animals like that. The time that the blanket was on California is called "night". The time that it wasn't is called "day". And now you know the story of how California was made to entertain Old Man Above.

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The Sutter County Farmer  
Friday, July 1, 1892

#### The Glorious Fourth

Next Monday, as the anniversary of our independence, will be celebrated in almost every hamlet and town in the Union. The people of this county will attend exercises at Oroville, Gridley, Colusa, Woodland, Sacramento, Lincoln and other towns where the observance of the day is made. Some of the Grand Army men are talking of going to Carson, Nev., where a grand celebration will be held. The greater portion from here will probably take advantage of the reduced rates and go to on the excursion to Oroville.

The Sutter County Farmer  
July 8, 1892 - page 1

The registration of voters, as generally understood, will begin on the 30th of July and close on the 22nd of October. The person registering will have to give a full and particular description of himself. His height, complexion, color of eyes, and the description of scars, or any other marks and their location must be given. Besides preventing a man from voting under a name that does not belong to him, the description can be used by the

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH  
DENISE DAVIS ON MARCH 18, 1992  
by Jackie Lowe

"Honee Tooweydom: Heart Praying" an exhibit of paintings, prints and basketry by Denise Davis will be at the Museum through September 6, 1992

D: In the '80s I taught myself to weave. I always wanted to weave. I was given gift baskets when I was 2 by my Great Aunt Selena, who was a pretty prestigious weaver, and they were taken, stolen, when I was 6. I had them with me under my bed until I was 6 years old and they were taken. My mother had them on display somewhere, so about 6, I realized I always wanted them, it was like something was missing, so I think that is kind of what propelled me to do this, to recreate those. So I carried it around, but there was no teacher. In 1984, I taught myself. I bought reed and rattan, and made shaker baskets, the egg baskets, donkey baskets and those funny things. I sold those for about 2 or 3 years in gift shops, in Davis and Santa Barbara and Hillcrest Plaza, at Vicki's I used to sell a lot of baskets there. And I was just getting closer to what I was supposed to be doing, and then I happened to find Lily Baker, who is the last master weaver of the Maidu.

In the meantime I was studying with Mabel McKay, who is Pomo, so I was gathering information on how to collect. This wasn't handed to me. It's like 'This is redbud, go

find it. This is maple, go find it.' It took two years to kind of get to where I could take care of plants before I could weave.

J: I think that's the part that people don't realize, that there is a lot of preparation involved, that you just can't sit down and weave when the spirit moves you.

D: You have to wait for everything to dry for a year, after you pick, sometimes two years. Through Mabel and Lily both, I got my homework done. It's like trimming and trimming and learning how to split straight, because you don't automatically split straight. You break a lot of sticks in fours and eights and sixes. Once I got that, it becomes like second nature. Lily says I have to weave every day.

J: And do you?

D: No. I do, at times, in the summer. When you weave you have to have good thoughts. You have to be in a very centered place, and the amazing thing I have found with weaving is you have to be in a centered place to create, to weave, but when you weave, it brings you there.

J: So sometimes do you sit down and weave when you are stressed out and it brings you to a centered place?

D: It does for me. They say you have to be there to do it, but for me it brings me there. For me, the longer I sit the more balanced I get, and I've talked to a few other people and they feel the same way. It is meditative, the creation part and the doings just coming out. That's why I started to weave.

J: Had you been painting all this time?

D: No, I hadn't. I had the three boys and when they were small, they took up all my time and energy, and so it was on hold.

J: So that started when you went back to school?

D: Yes, and when I started weaving, that element was in a lot of paintings. It was either a circle or design from a basket. A lot of it is based on dream kind of stuff and inner world stuff, which is where the baskets are from, so its kind of integrated. I still do landscapes once in a while, like I'm working on a little manzanita. I still like trees.

J: Do you do this because it brings you closer to your family and it's closer to where you came from, or because it appeals to you or something in your soul?

D: Yes, it's something that has to be done.

J: You don't have a choice?

D: No. I think partly that's because of the respect I have for my teacher, who has given this to me, the knowledge to learn, to carry on the traditions. That's very important, otherwise it's going to die. And it's something that you really don't have a choice about doing, it's something that is in your heart that comes out. And if you have the knowledge of taking care of plants and creating the object, it's just something you have to do.

It's in your heart; it's something that I love. I do it because I love it. If I didn't have to be out in the real world and go to school or work I would weave every day because it's wonderful.

J: Since you've learned from Lily, do you feel a responsibility to carry that on?

D: Yes, she's taught a lot of people in her life, and it's hard to find a student who will continue because it's so demanding. I'm hoping from my connection with the kids in the schools, with the native kids, that there will be some that will continue it someday. That's why I keep doing it. It's an art form that shouldn't die.

J: You started learning from Mabel, who is Pomo, and then you went to learn from Lily who is Maidu. Are there some basic differences between Pomo and Maidu basket weaving?

D: Yes, there are differences. I didn't get to study long with Mabel. It was only about two years, I think, and I only learned the single rod from her. Basically the trimming's the same, the materials are different. We [Maidu] don't do any single rod baskets. We only do three rod. Pomo also do three rod, but I only learned single rod from Mabel. There are a few differences between the weaving, besides the materials, the single rod, the triple rod--we hold the baskets differently. I was learning at the same time and I would go to Lily and she says 'You're holding the basket like a Pomo!' And then I would go back to Mabel, and it was kind of confusing. Lily says I have a half breed basket, because it is made out of sedge and she told me, 'This is your half-breed basket', because I put sedge in the Maidu stitch. But Lily also has told me, the whole time studying with her, to do what I do. You do what is today and you go forward, whereas there are still some people around who say you don't do that.

J: Some people when they see your work are going to say this isn't Indian, this is too modern.

D: I think it really is universal; I think the message behind a lot of the native art now is universal. They want to see skulls and that's not universal, that's not connecting all of us and we are all connected.

J: Is that the message?

D: With Native Art? I think with a lot of people it is. With me, I'm kind of set in design quality because of the baskets; it pops out in all of them, but those could be universal too. They are design elements, and it is kind of like symbolism. In a way, you're actually reading something. In most of mine, in most of the pieces, there is a story. The titles usually describe them. The baskets are all stories too.

J: Your designs are original, based on the stories that you want to tell?

D: Yes. There is no ancient history behind those designs. They just come out of me. The first twined basket I did out of bear grass and pine root she [Lily] pulled me through. She made me create it wrong; it was the wrong stitch. She told me how to overlay the two, the root and the bear grass and then the red bud skin, but she didn't tell me the stitch. She just said, 'Here you start it like this.' So I started and I was actually rolling the stitch, which is Pit River, my great grandmother's people. I was rolling it and she watched me for a period of, I don't know how many months, and she said, 'This is fine and this is nice, but next time do it this way.'

J: Why did she let you do it that way?

D: Because I had to finish it, I started it that way and I had to finish it completely that way. So knowing that

you're doing it wrong and having to finish it is painful. Painful in a sense, although it's really no big deal, too, but you remember, and you learn and you never do it again! So there is a lot of that kind of work that goes on.

J: Are traditional designs carried down through time?

D: They are through families, in certain families. But Lily is so open to a lot of wonderful, new things. She's very innovative in that way. She tells me, 'You don't worry about this. You want everything to be perfect -- don't. Don't trim so fine and don't be so perfect. Just do the work. Get that basket done. Just do it. You want to be a perfectionist, don't be, just do it.' Just doing it is what they [early Maidu women] used to do, because the baskets were important to produce so they could eat.

J: How many coiled baskets have you produced in your career?

D: Probably about eight.

J: Baskets are a lot of time and thinking and energy --

D: Yes, whatever you were thinking at that time goes into that basket. They say a lot of people don't start [basket weaving] until they have their first grandchild.

J: Once they are done, how do you feel about them?

D: They are just another part of the family. I call them 'the kids'.

J: So you don't sell the baskets?

D: Yes, I do. Well I've sold the small ones. They are on commission. People ask for them.

J: I would think, given the amount of time involved, it would be hard to sell them.

D: Oh no, I do create them for reasons.

J: Do you think up the designs before? Do you plot them out?

D: With some its automatic.

J: Are you sometimes surprised at what is coming out?

D: No, I've been told by teachers that happens, but there are some that I see before I'm done. I see the whole, as a whole and then the hands just do it. They aren't all that way. I think that if you're in that place where you're supposed to be when you're weaving, it just happens. It just flows.

J: You were really meant to do this.

D: It's amazing. When I started weaving all these people just plopped into my life that were supposed to be there. And they are still plopping into my life. I definitely know I'm on a route and a direction I have to continue.

J: Everything is connected, isn't it?

D: Yes.



NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF NATIVE AMERICANS  
AS REPORTED IN THE MARYSVILLE HERALD  
DURING ITS FIRST YEAR OF PUBLICATION  
AUGUST 1850 - JULY 1851  
by Sharyl Simmons

The Marysville Herald was first published on 6 August 1850 in Marysville, California. R. H. Taylor was the sole editor of the paper until 28 January 1851 when Stephen C. Massett became co-editor. Until 15 July 1851, the paper was published twice weekly, on Tuesday and Friday. A third editor, L. W. Ransom, was added at that time and the paper began publishing three times a week, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Agents for the paper were located in mining camps (Goodyear's Bar, Foster's Bar and Long Bar), Yuba City, Eliza, Fremont, Vernon, Sacramento City and San Francisco.

During the first year of the paper's existence, I found quite a few stories concerning Native Americans. These were divided into very distinct categories. For the purposes of this article, I separated them into conflict stories, which include letters from the mines and reports from other sources, direct contact between the editor(s) and Native Americans and the few stories that were published as narratives of questionable veracity that the paper's audience might find interesting.

By far, the most common mention of Indians was found in the reporting of conflicts between the white miners and settlers and the Native

Americans already living in Northern California. Much of this information came in the form of letters from the mines in Yuba County. In a letter from Bidwell's Bar published on September 11, 1850, Mr. John Van Vechten wrote about a robbery on August 23rd in which an Indian stole \$80.00 out of a box containing \$100.00. One of the men who had been robbed went to the nearby rancheria and found that the man left there and gone to Long's Bar where he purchased blankets with the money. The author of the letter went on to tell of another Indian who was caught stealing meat on August 31st. He was tied to a post and severely whipped. Five days later, at a different camp, two miners were shot with arrows. One of the miners died from his wounds. The surviving miner was able to recognize their assailants and the author of the letter admitted that "no doubt the whipping of the Indian was the moving cause of the outrage."<sup>1</sup> The author of the letter closed with the comment that 20 men had "left here last Sunday, well armed, to surround the Rancheria and kill each and every Indian they may fall in with. May they be successful."<sup>2</sup>

Another account from the mines was from a Mr. Ford who recently had returned from Butte Creek. Two brothers

were working a mine in that region. One remained in the camp because of illness and the other went out to work and was killed by a blow to the head. Mr. Ford explained in his account that a party of 20 men pursued the Indians the next morning. He reported that they found Indians two or three miles from the site and killed seven or eight, including two or three women. While they were out hunting Indians, another sick miner was killed by an Indian in a camp where there were some sick men. He claimed that some miners were becoming alarmed and leaving the area of Butte Creek where the murders took place.<sup>3</sup>

Both of these incidents illustrated a policy of retribution on whatever group of Indians that happened to be found first, rather than an attempt to punish the individual who committed a particular crime. In neither article was there any indication that the Indians killed were the ones responsible for any crime nor was there any indication whatsoever of the concept of due process of law.

Another letter sent from Rose's Bar recounted the killing of a young man by two Indians. The young man lived long enough to describe the two assailants and there was another witness, a teamster, who came upon the assault. This letter was different in that it described the actions taken to find the two men who committed the crime, their arrest, and noted the fact that there was to be a trial in Rough & Ready. The author

complimented the magistrate for at least following the law in this case.<sup>4</sup> In a rare follow up on any story that found its way into print, it was noted that one of the Indians had been tried and sentenced to hang. The article included the fact that a large number of Indians were present at the execution and none objected to the punishment.<sup>5</sup>

In January of 1851, a series began in the Herald regarding Indian/white warfare in Mariposa County. This began with a description of a battle fought between a party of about 50 men under the command of Captain James Burney and four hundred Indians. This battle occurred when the militia attacked an Indian village. There was no indication of any reason for this attack. The report stated that the village was burned and the Americans withdrew. Included in this article was the story of a massacre of 72 people by "ruthless savages"<sup>6</sup> but there was no indication of which act took place first or whether this particular village was involved in the attack.

The upheaval in Mariposa County was followed closely in the paper because it became interwoven in the politics of the day. This appeared to be the first incident of conflict with the Indians in which the State of California became involved. There were bills introduced to raise money to pay the men who fought the Indians. The Senate passed the first bill to authorize a

war loan of \$300,000 to cover the cost of the Indian wars.<sup>7</sup> Articles in subsequent papers appeared regarding the Senate's and Assembly's attempts to agree on a bill to raise money. By January 31st, there was a report that "United States troops in California have been ordered to march into Mariposa County for the purpose of suppressing the Indian hostilities."<sup>8</sup> In March of 1851, the Committee of Indian Affairs recommended that the Assembly pass a bill from the Senate that authorized the Government to "call out troops"<sup>9</sup> and to set the pay for the participants in such actions.

In covering the action at the Capitol, the paper also printed a synopsis of the first State of the State address from the governor. The governor's opinion regarding the Indians in California was stated as, "...the Governor thinks the Indian race must become extinct before our troubles with them can cease."<sup>10</sup>

The most detailed account of violence was found in a letter from someone whose initials were G.R.S.<sup>11</sup> He wrote a letter to the editor from McKeestown on July 1, 1851. He stated that he was writing to pass the time and the events that he described seem to fulfill the governor's desire. He described an "Indian expedition to the mountains."<sup>12</sup> He travelled in a party of 20 whites and 55 Indians and describes taking supper at a rancho and then proceeding into the mountains:

"...we were obliged to go rather slow, the Indians being tired, having walked some forty miles during the day; however, they knew they had a tramp of about thirty miles before sunrise to make in order to get among the wild Indians...All of course were on the 'qui vive' for the anticipated sport....We now almost despaired of finding any game, as the Indians were almost exhausted, and it was only by continued driving with our ramrods and running them down with our horses that we were enabled to get them along at all."<sup>13</sup>

After describing a dawn that brought them in contact with their prey, he recounted what happened once they found the rancheria for which they were hunting. In the author's words, "Then commenced the slaughter."<sup>14</sup> Out of an estimated 37 Indians, 20 were killed and 12 were taken prisoner. The author claims that:

"Some of the party were lucky enough to get three boys and two girls from 7 to 12 years of age. The poor devils had neither bows, arrows, nor other arms, and consequently could

make no resistance;  
and it appeared  
almost like murder  
to kill them"<sup>15</sup>

The author closes by explaining:

"...that this was the second party that had been among the Indians. The first did much greater execution. They (the Indians) are decidedly hostile and say they will not treat with the whites."<sup>16</sup>

The second category of articles in the paper were articles written by the editor about Indians with whom he had contact. The tone of the accounts was one of unquestioned superiority, but some of the information included was interesting. The description of things and people that the editor viewed in person were the most interesting and seemed to be, in the earliest accounts, more description than condemnation. In an expedition to visit Captain Yates of Yatestown, the editor of the paper recounted their visit to the nearby rancheria where they witnessed an evening of gambling. The editor described it as,

"...a gambling house, and although not quite like the El Dorado here, we were highly amused. The Indians were gambling for beads, and the whole affair appeared very

grotesque, as we, among the Indians, were sitting 'a la Turk", watching the game."<sup>17</sup>

This encounter with the local Indians seemed to spur the editor on to educate the readers in his paper about them. In a long article entitled Diggers or California Indians, the editor gave a rather fanciful detailing of the Mexican rule of California and the end of the mission system. He then divided the Indians into the industrious, hard working, seemingly assimilated Indians who lived near the San Joaquin River and its tributaries and those on the Sacramento and its tributaries. The latter were described as being "...lazy, having no motive for exertion and usually spend most of the day and night in gambling."<sup>18</sup> The author provided details about the food, living quarters, and fishing habits of the two types of California Indians. It is interesting that even when describing California Indians, the ones furthest away from the author are the more "civilized" by his own standards.

This long article ends with a very detailed description of a method of gambling favored by the Sacramento River Indians. This was described in detail that was a different style of writing than the author used in the first two thirds of the article. The author closed with a promise that he would return in the future to give another account of the

California Indians.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, at least in the first year of publication, there was never again an article similar to this one.

The rest of the articles about local Indians concerned the rancheria in Yuba City located across the Feather River from Marysville. There was a small article in which the editor states that,

"The males of the tribe of Diggers in Yuba City go naked in warm weather--bathe frequently in the "Feather" or "Yuba" (both local rivers)-catch fishes-eat acorns...mind their own business...The females wear short gowns and nurse the little ones of both genders."<sup>20</sup>

Some months later, in response to a disparaging article regarding Yuba City<sup>21</sup>, the editor wrote a rather facetious article in which the Indians in Yuba City demanded a retraction of the comment made about their own despair over living in Yuba City. The editor ends with,

"We trust this retraction will be satisfactory to their amiable chief, the elegant Wocataw, as also to his wives, and the warriors of his clan."<sup>22</sup>

In April of 1851, the editor again wrote an article

about the local Indians living in Yuba City. This was a critical article as the writer degraded the Indians, their way of life, their surroundings and ended with the wish that the children could be removed and sent out among the local farmers to work in order to "induce them to habits of cleanliness and industry."<sup>23</sup>

The last type of articles I found were fewest in number and were the most complimentary to the Indians they described. However, none of these Indians were California Indians and the tone of the articles were very different from any which dealt with the California Indians. This seemed to further support the idea that the greater distance between the Indians and the author-editor, the more attractive they were.

The first was an account of Indian newspapers. The author describes the "Cherokee Advocate" as being well known and this article was written to introduce the "Choctaw Telegraph, published in Doaksville, the capitol of the Choctaw nation."<sup>24</sup>

The second item in this category is entitled Death of Tecumseh and is the account of this respected Indian leader's death by Shaw-ben-eh, a Pottawotomie chief, who was present at the battle of the Thames.<sup>25</sup> The third, and final, item in this category was an account of a Choctaw maiden and a white man who married and became quite prosperous. It had an overtone of the Pocahontas-

John Smith story with the beautiful Indian maiden saving the life of the white man, except in this case, the beautiful maiden and the man she saved were married and lived happily ever after in a most civilized way.<sup>26</sup>

In the first year of its existence, the Marysville Herald dealt with the subject of Indians in fairly definable ways. The major concern of the paper with regards to the Indians was the threat they posed to the miners in the gold fields. Locally, the concern was with the Indians living in Yuba City and the editor's attitude changed over the course of the year. At first, the Indians were a source of amusement and some interest, but soon they were merely eyesores, not people, but items in the way of progress and growth. The sprinkling of items regarding Indians further away and much more 'civilized' supported the contempt with which the immigrants viewed the California Indians and served to further dehumanize the local Indian population.

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**NOTE:** This article was first published in the Marysville Herald on September 27, 1850.

While the term "digger" is a negative one, because of the historical nature of this information I have chosen to follow the nineteenth century source's lead rather than apply a twentieth century conscience to the material.

## Diggers or California Indians

The Indians of California are divided into two classes, the mission, and wild, or uncivilized Indians.

Down to 1820, when Mexico declared herself independent of Spain, great numbers of California Indians were attached to the missions of San Jose, Santa Clara, San Juan, &c. During the troubles between Mexico and Spain, many of the padres or priests at these missions were assassinated, and others driven from the missions by the Mexican troops, in consequence of their adherence to the mother country; and the Indians were dispersed. At these missions were manufactured various of the necessary articles, such as soap, leather, serapes, frisadas, or blankets, and coarse woollen cloths, since which revolution none of these articles have been made to any considerable extent, and the room for conducting such manufactures are now occupied for stables, yards, barns, &c.

Upon the breaking up of these missions, most of the cattle belonging to them were driven off down the coast and slaughtered for their hides and tallow, leaving the Mission Indians with little or no food; and without spiritual advisers such as the Jesuits were, they dispersed to the mountains and plains of California. These Mission Indians joined the wild ones, carrying with them the Spanish language and Catholic religion, the former of which they still retain, but the

latter of which has been forgotten, or at least is now neglected in all of its observances. There is scarcely a tribe this side of the Sierra Nevadas but that more or less of its members speak the Spanish as we know from personal travel and experience among the Indians of whom we are writing. These Spanish or Mission Indians usually fill the subordinate offices in the tribes on rancherias and are usually the interpreters and business men of the tribes in their intercourse with the whites.

Those Indians living on the San Joaquin and its tributaries are more civilized than those on the Sacramento and its tributaries and have generally adapted the American dress and use the more common culinary utensils, while these on the latter river, go nearly or quite naked, and subsist upon seeds, roots, acorns, grass hoppers and a species of clover. The former are comparatively industrious, made necessary to supply themselves with the articles uses, and the latter are intolerably lazy, having no motive for exertion and usually spend most of the day and night in gambling. The former cultivates the soil and raises corn, melons and potatoes, while the latter content themselves with the wild productions of nature. Both are usually well formed and athletic, and almost every tribe speaks a different language.

Those Indians near the sources of the tributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin are much addicted to horse and mule stealing, both of which

they steal for the purpose of food. The Indian men, for the most part, summer and winter, go entirely naked, while the squaws wear only a sort of petticoat extending from the waist to the knees. They live in houses built partly under ground and oven shaped, in the tops of which are small apertures for the escape of smoke. The entrances to them are small and require the inmates to get in them on their hands and knees.--Within they sleep on lofts or scaffoldings built of poles and reeds, and have less of the simple conveniences of life than perhaps any Indians on the Continent. On the San Joaquin and its tributaries, they have a few canoes, while on the other river and its tributaries they are generally supplied with mere dug-outs, evincing little skill in their construction. In both quarters of the State they have dams and racks for catching salmon.--In the former, when the fish go up the river, and in the latter when they come down.

In the former part of the state, the Indians are comparatively industrious, and many tribes have placed themselves under Mr. Savage, who is at present on the Fresnoe (sic) engaged in mining and other tribes are working under the direction of Judge Marvin on the Tuolumne, while in the latter Capt. Sutter and Capt. Yates are almost the only men who have turned Indian labor to any account, and here but to a moderate extent.

Gaming seems to be the chief amusement of the Indians in both of the aforementioned

parts of California. On the San Joaquin and its tributaries they play monte, like the Mexicans, and usually for money, while on the Sacramento they gamble with sticks for beads and clothing. One of the modes of gambling with sticks is for four Indians, two on a side, to contribute an equal amount of beads or clothing, when two go on one side of the lodge and two on the other. The parties being seated, a white, smooth bone, about the size and length of a man's thumb is brought forward, and another bone of equal dimension, with a black ring around its centre.

Before each party is placed a small pile of fine dry grass, a portion of which is wrapped around either bone with great dexterity, sometimes both bones being wound in one ball of grass and sometimes separate balls.--The party guessing in which hand the marked bone is, wins, and is entitled to shuffle the bones in the grass giving the opposite party an opportunity of guessing. There are, in

addition to these bones, twelve or fourteen rods, as counters, one of which is passed over to the party guessing rightly, and if wrongly the party loses and passes over a rod. In this manner they set and play till one party loses all of the sticks, and then they finish the game by playing a rubber, and the party winning takes the articles played for. During the whole of the time, the party shuffling keeps up a continued shouting, or chant, on a high key, which is exceedingly exhausting when continued.

We witnessed, the other evening, in one of their lodges, together with two chiefs, a gambling contest in which all of the Indians present were naked, and those engaged in the contest were dripping with sweat, and at the last of the game nearly fainted from exhaustion. We shall resume this subject at some future time and give some further account of the California Indians.

#### NOTES

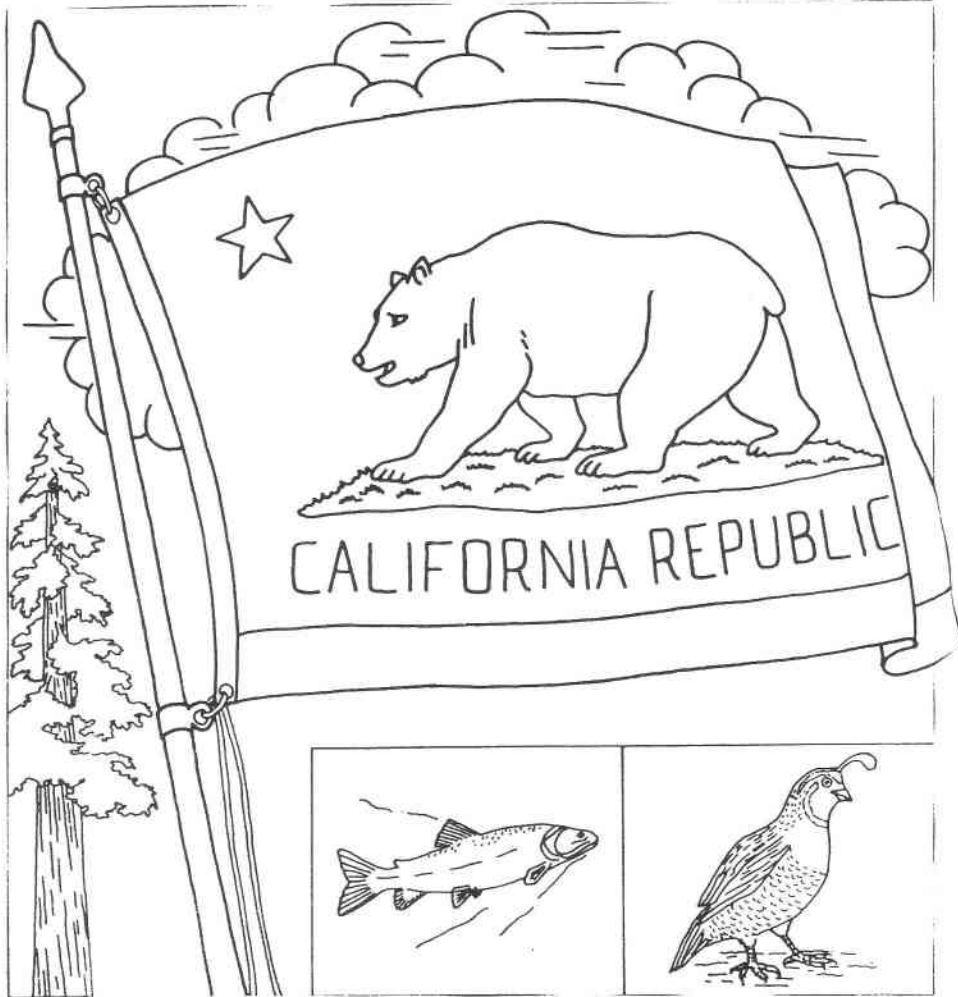
1. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 12, 13 September 1850, Page 2, Column 4.
2. Ibid., Page 2, Column 4.
3. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 23, 22 October 1850, Page 2, Column 2.
4. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 68, 20 March 1851, Page 2, Column 2.
5. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 69, 22 March 1851, Page 2, Column 3.
6. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 50, 24 January 1851, Page 3, Column 1.



7. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 51, 28 January 1851, Page 1, Column 4.
8. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 52, 31 January 1851, Page 2, Column 5.
9. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 69, 22 March 1851, Page 1, Column 5.
10. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 47, 14 January 1851, Page 2, Column 1.
11. Most letters from the mines were printed with initials replacing signatures and names removed from the body of the letter or coded with the first initial and dashes used for the rest of the name.
12. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 118, 17 July 1851, Page 2, Columns 3 & 4.
13. Ibid., Page 2, Columns 3 & 4.
14. Ibid., Page 2, Columns 3 & 4.
15. Ibid., Page 2, Columns 3 & 4.
16. Ibid., Page 2, Columns 3 & 4.
17. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 16, 27 September 1850, Page 2, Column 1.
18. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 16, 27 September 1850, Page 2, Columns 4 & 5.
19. Ibid., Page 2, Columns 4 & 5.
20. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 16, 27 September 1850, Page 2, Column 5.
21. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 56, 14 February 1851, Page 2, Column 2.
22. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 58, 21 February 1851, Page 2, Column 3.
23. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 75, 5 April 1851, Page 2, Column 1.
24. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 15, September 1850, Page 3, Column 1.
25. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 51, 28 January 1851, Page 3, Column 1.
26. The Marysville Herald, Volume I, No. 33, 26 November 1850, Page 1, Column 3.

KID'S PAGE

California was admitted into the Union as the 31st state on Sept. 9, 1850. Some state symbols are: the Bear Flag, the Redwood tree, the Golden Trout, and the Valley Quail.



Y Y H A C D W J B D L  
 C M I L O C K M R W E  
 Z A C L S H A M A N G  
 K I A S A R A H D J E  
 U D D P F I N D I A N  
 B U T T E S J L X R D  
 Y W Q M Y T H H C E Z  
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 O L D M A N A B O V E  
 U P P X S E J B E W W  
 R R I W K W S V B X C  
 A H P M E Q C V S L R  
 U O L X T P Y Q P B L

Can you find these words?

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| BASKET    | MAIDU         |
| BRAD      | MYTH          |
| BUTTES    | OLD MAN ABOVE |
| CHRISTINE | SARAH         |
| INDIAN    | SHAMAN        |
| JARED     |               |
| LEGEND    |               |

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1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City



COMING EVENTS

**July**

- 4 Independence Day  
8 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum  
15 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum  
21 Children's Workshop with Denise Davis-1:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
at the Museum  
Historical Society Meeting-7:30 p.m. at the Museum  
Speaker: Clyde Bush  
Topic: My Years as a Photographer in Marysville  
22 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum  
25 Maidu Basket Weaving Demonstration with Denise Davis-  
12:00-4:00 p.m. at the Museum  
29 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum

**August**

- 5 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum  
12 Children's Reading Program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum  
19 Children's Reading program-2:00 p.m. at the Museum

**September**

- 6 Denise Davis exhibit closes  
7 Labor Day  
9 California admitted to the Union in 1850  
10 Salad Luncheon and Cards  
12-13 Prune Festival at the Fair Grounds  
26 New Exhibit at the Museum: Sense of Place  
(Northern California Native American Photo  
Exhibit)

**October**

- 3-4 Beckwourth Days-Marysville  
20 Historical Society Meeting--7:30 at the Museum  
Speaker: Maggie Moyers  
Topic: Maidu Traveling Trunk

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