

# Sutter County Historical Society

## News Bulletin

Vol. XXXIV No. 2

Yuba City, California

April, 1993



**FREDA EHMANN EXAMINING HER OLIVES CIRCA 1915**

*(Photograph credit: Special Collections, Meriam Library  
California State University, Chico &  
Butte County Historical Society)*

# Sutter County Historical Society

## News Bulletin

### OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Brock Bowen, President  
Constance Cary, Secretary  
Linda Leone, Vice President  
Linda Leone, Treasurer

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Brock Bowen	Evelyn Quigg
Constance Cary	Ronald Ross
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Linda Leone	Elaine Tarke

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 1993 dues are payable as of January 1, 1993.

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**

It has been my pleasure to have served this Society as president for the past two years. The newsletter is one of the keys to the continued success of this operation.

This issue introduces many new authors. The editors received information, pictures, and contributions from writers who wish to help preserve some of Sutter County's historical past. If you would like to participate in the newsletter or know someone who can share a bit of history with our readers, please inform our editors.

Help this historical society expand by sharing this newsletter with a prospective new member. By exposing others to Sutter County's history, our membership will grow.

Brock A. Bowen  
President



### **HISTORICAL SOCIETY DOINGS**

#### **ANNUAL DINNER**

The Sutter County Historical Society's annual dinner is Tuesday, April 20, 1993 at 6:00 p.m. at the Sutter Youth Organization Building in Sutter. Winners of the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest will be honored. The awards will be presented by Mrs. Judy Barr. The winning entries will be published in the July Bulletin. The entertainment program for the evening will be provided by the Methodist Chancel Bell Choir and the Yuba College Undivided Choir. A raffle will also be held. Elaine Tarke is the chairperson for the dinner and Bruce Harter is the raffle chairman. See you there!



#### **BOARD OPENINGS**

There are openings on the Historical Society's Board of Directors. Board meetings are held quarterly, the first Tuesday of January, April, July and October. General meetings with speakers/programs are held at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the above months at the Community Museum. You must be a member of the Historical Society to be on the board. If you are interested, please contact Linda Leone (673-2721) prior to April 16th.

## Director's Report

by Jackie Lowe

With the coming of spring, the Museum welcomes several annual events as well as an exciting new exhibit and accompanying programs. Spring and summer promise to be a busy and exciting time at the Museum and we hope that you will participate in the variety of programs and activities offered.

On Friday, April 9, at 1:00 p.m., please join us in a celebration of Easter past with an exhibit and a children's program with stories, activities and refreshments. The children's program is, as always, free to all who wish to participate. The Easter exhibit will be up through the month of April.

Toward the end of April, mark your calendars and make a date to attend the third annual **Wear and Remembrance Vintage Apparel Show** on April 24 and 25. This year **Wear and Remembrance** brings together over 27 dealers from California and Nevada who deal in vintage clothing, accessories, jewelry and textiles. The two day show is at the Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds and is an important fund raising event cooperatively produced by the Community Memorial Museum and the Mary Aaron Museum. Admission to **Wear and Remembrance** is \$4.00, but if you bring the special flyer included in this issue of the Bulletin to the door, you will get \$1.00 off of the admission price.

Following close on the heels of **Wear and Remembrance** is another Museum fund raising event, Mother's Day Decadence. This year Mother's Day Decadence has changed its traditional look to adopt a garden tea party theme. Each Mother's Day Decadence "basket" is full of wonderful goodies, including tea, scone mix, fruit honey creme spread, chocolate truffles, flower seeds and a rose posy for mother, or anyone you think is special. Delivery is included in the price. All proceeds help to fund the Museum's educational programs including the traveling trunk to the schools and activities like the Easter children's program. To order, you can fill out and mail the form in this issue of the Bulletin, or call the Museum at 741-7141.

"Breaking the Mold: Freda Ehmann and the Founding of the California Ripe Olive Industry", a new exhibit by guest curator Amy Schoap will open on Saturday, May 14. The exhibit is the culmination of Amy's graduate work at California State University, Sacramento in the Capitol Public History Program, and focuses attention on an area of California's agricultural history that has never before been explored.

In addition to the exhibit and its fresh new topic of discussion, several programs are being planned to look at various aspects of Freda Ehmann's life including a presentation on the agricultural fairs and expositions of the first part of this century and a reading/discussion group dealing with poetry. Further information will be coming to you in the May Muse News.

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

As you will notice, we have several contributors in this issue.

Amy Schoap not only provided us with an article about a very interesting and industrious woman, she also arranged for the cover photo. A thank you to the Merriam Library at CSU-Chico for access to the photo. Amy is working part-time at the museum while attending CSU-Sacramento. We are all very lucky to have her as part of our group.

Loadel Harter Piner is well known to everyone who is associated with the museum. It was her parents, Howard and Norma Harter, who made the present museum a reality. Loadel has been active on the Commission as well as the Board of Trustees. She's always ready to help with fund raisers and was instrumental in arranging the tree-moving demonstration which was held recently. Of particular interest to Loadel has been the improvement of the park located at the museum. There was no hesitation on her part when she was asked to contribute something for this bulletin. In fact, she immediately offered the article she had written previously for the Peach Canning Association and said to use what we wanted out of it. We wanted it all and have printed it in its entirety.

Dorothy Ross has apparently done a lot of writing for her family and has been gracious enough to share her "molasses" story with us. We hope there are many more stories to come from Dorothy. In addition to writing and doing research, Dorothy is a volunteer at the museum and has served as the Museum Auxiliary member on the museum Commission. Her husband, Ron, is currently on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society.

Shirley Schnabel's sister-in-law, Caroline Ringler, put the bug in our ear about Shirley's cattle drive stories. While Shirley was reluctant to write an article for the bulletin, she was willing to be interviewed and talk about various aspects of growing up in Sutter County. There will be more from Shirley in future issues.

Now, how many of you can contribute stories, anecdotes, or bits of history? If you don't want to write your story down, tell it to us in an interview. If you'd feel more comfortable, have one of your friends or relatives tape you. All of us are in the process of making the history of Sutter County. What each of us remembers fits into the bigger picture of what will be remembered in the future. Call us (Linda at 673-2721 or Sharyl at 674-7741) and let us know how we can help you help us preserve the history of Sutter County.

The July bulletin will focus on schools and school children. The winning essays from the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest will be printed. There will be stories concerning Brown School (130 years old) and Sutter High School (100 years old). We also have a "first" concerning Girl Scouts, thanks to Mrs. Zelma Corbin.

Linda Leone  
Sharyl Simmons



**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUILDING  
AND TRUST FUND**

In memory of **Rocky Amarel**  
Dan & Dylene Butler

In memory of **Clayton Armstrong**  
Bob & Katie Bryant

In memory of **Ila Brown**  
Newell & Shirley Burtis  
Dale & Alma Burtis  
Loretta Dean  
Melissa Easton & Jamie  
Jim & Lucille Hall  
M/M Albert King  
Linda Leone & Scott  
Mary Lou Naughton  
M/M R. A. Schnabel  
Sharyl Simmons  
Elizabeth A. Brooke  
Ivadel Simmons  
Ken & LaVerne Onstott  
Frank & Joyce Carleton  
Harry & Bernice Wilson  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey

In memory of **Herman Caldwell**  
Eleanor Holmes

In memory of **Jack Carrico**  
M/M Andros Karperos

In memory of **Chris Christensen**  
M/M Raymond Crane  
Ronald & Lila Harrington  
Jack & Helen Heenan  
Robert & Jean Heilmann  
Robert Schmidl Family

In memory of **Alvirda R. Davison**  
Connie Cary

In memory of **Patricia DeWitt**  
Connie Cary  
Norma & Deanna DeWitt

In memory of **Robert Dunn**  
Robert & Jean Hamilton

In memory of **Cash Epperson**  
Dewey Gruening  
M/M H. E. Edmonds

In memory of **Ed Fisher**  
Connie Cary  
Merlin & Carolyn Childers  
Norman & Loadel Piner  
Wanda Rankin  
Bob & Jan Schmidl

In memory of **Gus Franz**  
Bob & Jan Schmidl

In memory of **William Goerlich**  
Jim & Harriet Harbison

In memory of **Ewalt Heitman**  
M/M R. A. Schnabel

In memory of **Charles E. "Oat" Hill**  
Leo & Alice Chesini  
M/M H. E. Edmonds  
Grace Noyes Onstead

In memory of **Eunice L. Ingram**  
M/M R. A. Schnabel

In memory of **Carl Chris Lee**  
Bob & Jan Schmidl

In memory of **Keith Lennox**  
Wanda Rankin  
Caroline S. Ringler  
M/M Randy Schnabel  
Loretta McClurg  
Dewey Gruening  
Norman & Loadel Piner  
Jim & Gene Taresh  
Dorothy Lennox  
& daughter Joan

In memory of **Bill Lunsford**  
M/M Dick Akin

In memory of **Bert Manuel**  
Jack & Helen Heenan

In memory of **Dorothy McGee**  
Connie Cary  
Mike & Charlene Mitchel  
Wanda Rankin  
Caroline Ringler

In memory of **Thomas C. Murry**  
Connie Cary  
Jeanette McNally

In memory of **Vivian Phillips**  
Judith Barr

In memory of **Virginia McKeehan Pierce**  
Marcella Hardy, Roberta McCoy  
Elizabeth Phillips  
Roy & Stella Anderson  
Norman & Loadel Piner

In memory of **Harold "Barney" Reische**  
Mary Carnegie  
Ann Dietrich  
Linda Leone & Scott  
Ivadel Simmons  
Harry & Bernice Wilson

In memory of **Herbert Roulsten**  
Loadel Piner  
M/M R. A. Schnabel

In memory of **Lola C. Smart**  
Harry & Bernice Wilson

In memory of **Elizabeth Spooner**  
Bob & Katie Bryant

In memory of **Harriett H. Strader**  
Howard & Ruth Anthony

In memory of **Marion Sullivan**  
Norman & Loadel Piner

In memory of **Clarence Summy**  
Fidelity National Title  
Insurance Company  
Norman & Loadel Piner

In memory of **Roy Welch**  
Norman & Loadel Piner

In honor of **Meg Burgin**  
Loadel Piner

In appreciation to **Bob Kluender**  
Loadel Piner

In honor of **Calvin & Alma Marler's**  
**60th Wedding Anniversary**  
Dick & Cuba Scriven

In honor of **Burwell Ullrey's**  
**80th Birthday**  
Norman & Loadel Piner

## BREAKING THE MOLD: FREDA EHMANN AND THE FOUNDING OF THE CALIFORNIA RIPE OLIVE INDUSTRY

By Amy E. Schoap

Women have always been involved in agriculture. Women, particularly those with grandchildren, have not, however, generally served as leaders of large scale, successful agricultural businesses. While California is no exception to this rule, women were important in the establishment of several of the state's larger agricultural enterprises. Freda Ehmman is an example of just such a woman. Although she had little or no previous experience in running a profit-making business of any size, she gained recognition as the founder of California's multi-million dollar ripe olive industry. The story of how Freda Ehmman created the ripe olive market through her reliance on new technologies and husbandry methods reflects the histories of many of California's pioneer foremothers and forefathers. The social and demographic challenges she mastered were common to most of California's women pioneers. Freda Ehmman's story provides a long-overdue perspective on the genesis of California as a dominant force in world food production.

With her recently widowed mother, Freda Loeber Ehmman emigrated to the United States in 1845 at the age of five. Her father, the descendant of a long line of pastors stretching back to Martin Luther, had been a Lutheran minister to a small parish in Niederurf, Germany, for over twenty-five years. Freda Ehmman was raised in a home centered on deeply held religious principles that characterized much of her adult life. Hard work, devotion to family and a commitment to helping those in need were integral parts of the ethic that

shaped her childhood and future.

Freda Ehmman and her mother initially stayed with relatives in Buffalo, New York. Mother and daughter soon tired of the hustle and bustle of city life and moved with a young cousin to help him set up an upholstery business in the outskirts of St. Louis. In 1857 Freda met and married Ernst Ehmman, a recently emigrated German-born physician. Ernst Ehmman, a political activist while a medical student in Munich, was among the thousands of political dissidents who fled Germany following the 1848 Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after their marriage, the Ehmman's moved to Quincy, Illinois, where Ernst opened a neighborhood pharmacy and private medical practice. They lived in the apartments above the pharmacy. In 1858 their first child, Mathilda, was born, followed by Edwin in 1860 and Emma in 1873. The Ehmman's prospered. After the birth of their second child, the couple purchased the home next door to the pharmacy to house their growing family. Freda Ehmman was active in several philanthropic organizations and worked diligently as a seamstress, and as a fund-raising organizer and publicist for the Quincy chapter of the Civil War Relief Agency. The Ehmman's were dedicated members of the local Lutheran church, teaching Sunday school and providing leadership to the congregation. Freda also worked with the local suffragette and Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) chapters, groups that later remained quite prominent in her life.<sup>2</sup>

In 1889, Freda Ehmman's son,



Edwin Ehmann, made a decision that would later prove to be critical to the family's welfare. He accepted a position as a salesman with the Nathan-Dohrmann China Company and moved to San Francisco. With a large part of northern California as his sales territory, Edwin developed many business contacts that would serve him and his mother well in later years. Most of his customers were grocers, jewelers and restaurateurs, with a few door-to-door rounds thrown in for good measure.

In 1892 Freda Ehmann's life radically changed. Her eldest daughter, Mathilda, died of cholera, leaving Freda to care for her youngest child, Emma. After a prolonged, unidentified illness, Ernst Ehmann also died, leaving Freda alone for the first time in her life. Piece by piece the Ehmanns sold Ernst's carefully built private medical practice over a period of several years to pay for medical expenses incurred during his own and illnesses. Not long after Ernst's death, Freda sold the pharmacy and house to a local associate and, at her son Edwin's earnest urging, moved with Emma to Oakland, California, to begin the third chapter of her life.<sup>3</sup>

Oakland was not quite as wild a west as Freda expected. She soon joined the boards of directors of the local symphony and opera. With her son Edwin, who was already active in the Oakland Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA), Freda soon found herself serving on outreach and educational committees for that organization as well. She believed that her life would be little different than the lives of the other women with whom she served. She intended to spend the remaining years of her life finding spouses for her children, spoiling her grandchildren, and working for the

charities she loved. This illusion did not last long.<sup>4</sup>

In 1892 Edwin Ehmann joined a Marysville jewelry store owner and Nathan-Dohrmann customer, Hermann Juch, in a partnership to purchase an olive grove in Loma Rica, just outside of Marysville. The grove, planted in 1888 by Civil War veteran, Colonel Thaddeus Taylor, in anticipation of the creation of the Olive Hill Colony, had not proved a profitable enterprise.

As the use of imported olive oil by residential consumers grew in the 1870s and 1880s, many speculative investors purchased abandoned olive groves throughout California expecting to make an immediate profit on the fruit. Taylor, like most other orchard owners of his time, believed that olives would grow equally well in any location, under any conditions. River bottoms, arid plateaus and rocky slopes all were seen as likely places for new olive orchards. Older, neglected groves, some planted by the Spanish missionaries over a hundred years before, would be brought back to life with little effort or attention. Taylor and many other agricultural speculators of his time did not realize that, in order to produce high quality, profitable fruit, olive groves require grooming and care similar to other orchards. In the early 1890s many olive orchard investors, including Colonel Taylor, either sold their groves in frustration, or dug up the trees and planted peaches, pears, prunes, or apricots in their place.<sup>5</sup>

While many of these olive groves remained abandoned for a dozen or more years, several orchards in the northern half of California's Central Valley were purchased by a new group of agricultural investors, armed with a cadre of innovative

husbandry practices based on experiments in the burgeoning agricultural sciences industry. With new scientific farming practices grounded in chemistry and horticulture, these speculators invested in sapling trees, experimented with newly manufactured pesticides and herbicides and invested in commercial fertilizers.

Hermann Juch and Edwin Ehmman were among this group of hopeful pioneers. The Panic of 1893, however, bankrupted many agricultural speculators in California, including Hermann Juch. Edwin Ehmman soon found himself the sole owner of a young olive grove that was a significant drain on the young salesman's financial resources.

Since the Loma Rica orchard would not reach full production for several years, Edwin's bankers and creditors advised him to declare bankruptcy as well. His mother, Freda Ehmman, had other plans. Rather than see Edwin dishonor his father by claiming bankruptcy, she invested her savings from the sale of the pharmacy and house in Illinois in the Loma Rica grove, with the intention of withdrawing her capital once the trees were old enough to produce a profitable crop. In return for her assistance, Edwin deeded his mother the twenty acres forfeited by Hermann Juch. For the first time in her life Mrs. Freda Ehmman was a property owner.<sup>6</sup>

Freda Ehmman took her duties as part-owner of the orchard seriously. With daughter Emma, she moved into the house at the top of Loma Rica Road amidst the orchard. Edwin, busy with his increasing responsibilities in the Nathan-Dohrmann Company, left the management of the orchard to his mother. The values of hard work and commitment to family she learned as a child helped her adjust to her new role as business manager. Although

she had never worked in a profit-making environment, the experience she gained over many years of organizing volunteers, raising funds and maneuvering through conflicting political ideologies enabled her to quickly establish herself as an efficient business manager.

The winter of 1894-95 brought unexpected, record-breaking low temperatures and snowfall to Yuba County. The young olive trees survived, but they bore little fruit the following spring. An economizing measure, Freda and Emma moved back to Oakland to live with Edwin and his new wife, Charlotte. The 1895-96 crop was large and healthy, however, and confirmed Freda's firm belief in the value of the orchard, although the question of how to make the fruit profitable for the family had yet to be answered.

For most of the first half of this century, olive oil was produced so cheaply in Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy that California growers could not compete effectively. Even when import taxes were taken into account, higher labor costs, as well as higher business taxes, made it impossible for local olive oil producers to compete with less expensive imported brands.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than attempt to overcome the many obstacles to marketing domestic olive oil, Freda Ehmman, on the advice of the foreman of the Loma Rica grove, decided to try her hand at pickling her olives and selling the processed product locally. Although the techniques for pickling many varieties of olives had developed over thousands of years, Freda Ehmman was the first person to formulate a recipe for preserving ripe Mission olives with consistent results. The Mission olive, predominant throughout California, posed particular problems. Its high oil

content and lower acidity rate, rendered useless the traditional recipe and methods. The basic recipe called for lye, water and a variety of types of salt, but the right combination of these ingredients and the proper process for pickling the Mission olive variety, had never been successfully established. Freda Ehmann decided to try.

She first obtained a copy of the traditional recipe from Dr. Eugene Hilgard of the University of California, Berkeley. A highly regarded agriculturalist, Dr. Hilgard had spent several years with California viticulturists and olive growers developing strains of grapes and olives that could accommodate regional variations in soil composition and precipitation. Dr. Hilgard was well known for his support of the growing olive oil industry in California. With interest and curiosity he gave the standard olive curing recipe to Freda Ehmann. He also provided her with notes of examples of a few failed attempts by Berkeley agricultural researchers to pickle non-acidic fruits and asked her to share her experiments and results with him.

In the fall of 1896 Freda began shipping olives from the Loma Rica grove to the home she shared with her daughter Emma and new son-in-law Charles Bolles in Oakland. Charles, a local building contractor, cleared the back porch to set up her pickling laboratory, and split several wine casks in half to provide Freda with vats for her olive curing experiment.<sup>8</sup> Each member of the family thought this would be a temporary arrangement.

Throughout the winter months of 1896, Freda tested various combinations of the pickling recipe she received from Dr. Hilgard. She soon discovered that Mission olives were indeed difficult to work with and that precise timing, oxidation and

chemical balance were required to produce an acceptable product. After many hours of trial and error, she discovered that a particular combination of lye soaks, water rinses and oxidation prevented much of the unappetizing mottling and discoloration that usually characterized pickled ripe olives. Once she discovered that this process could be used to produce olives with a more consistent color and odor, she took a sample to Dr. Hilgard as he had requested. Unable to create a perfectly black olive as she had expected, Freda Ehmann approached Dr. Hilgard feeling defeated and unsure of her success. Much to her surprise, however, Hilgard was enthusiastic about the flavor, consistency, and texture of the preserved fruit and complimented her on her accomplishment. He encouraged her to sell her new product to the grocers in her area.<sup>9</sup>

Disbelieving the praise she received from Hilgard, Freda Ehmann and daughter Emma set off for a large grocer in east Oakland to examine the pickled olives on his shelves. They found that all of the preserved olives for sale were mottled and spoiled quickly. Freda showed the owner her samples. He purchased her entire stock of 200 jars, covering the expense of shipping the olives from Marysville to Oakland and providing her with a small profit. Her first sale of pickled olives was made.<sup>10</sup>

What began as an attempt to keep her son's finances solvent soon burgeoned into a multi-million dollar, multi-national agricultural enterprise. With 1897 a bumper year for olive growers throughout the state, Freda Ehmann had more olives than she could sell to local merchants. Noticing the huge success of the citrus industry's sales in the Midwest and East, she decided to expand her sales region and

set out on an aggressive marketing sweep that took her from Seattle to Vancouver, then on to Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Her first goal was to make canned olives a staple food for the miners rushing to the Klondike. On her voyage from San Francisco to Seattle, she distributed her olive samples to many passengers headed for the Alaska gold fields. Although she was unable to convince the Klondike merchants of the suitability of her products, Alaskans later became some of her biggest western customers.

She had little luck selling her products in Chicago and even less in New York. Her grandmotherly attire and the reputation of olives for spoiling unexpectedly made the task of selling her olive products all but impossible. Approaching the administrator of the largest olive products importation and distribution company in New York, she encountered skepticism and sarcasm. When she explained her new processing technique and the company inspectors tasted the samples, however, the president of the company agreed to buy her entire crop for the following year. Spanish and Italian merchants and stockholders of the company, fearing the budding olive industry in California, objected to the arrangement and used their influence to eventually rescind the agreement.<sup>11, 12</sup> Freda Ehmman moved on to the last stop on her trip, Philadelphia. There she "let the olives speak for themselves" and sold her full shipment to the prestigious Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, promising an additional 200 barrels as well. Having gained an important foothold in the eastern markets, Freda Ehmman set out to enlarge her enterprise immediately upon her return to California. Edwin's familiarity with the

towns and cities of northern California enabled him to quickly locate a large orchard, complete with an olive oil press and twenty-seven chinese field laborers for sale in Oroville. The owner, like many olive speculators, was weary of the depleted crops and slow market and was ready to lease or sell the property for a very low price. Leery of finding herself or her family in debt again, Freda decided to lease, rather than purchase, the property for a period of two years. She rented a room from a local Oroville merchant family and began to organize her first commercial olive pickling company.<sup>13</sup>

The Ehmman Olive Company was a family enterprise from the beginning. Freda was in charge of the orchard, fruit handling and pickling while Edwin took charge of the oil production and sales. Freda's son-in-law Charles was the construction supervisor, responsible for designing and building additional operating facilities and residence halls for the workers. Emma and Charlotte Ehmman ran the business office and grandson Walter Bolles eventually became a sales representative and distribution supervisor.

The Ehmman Olive Company incorporated in 1899 and the Ehmman trademark "Ancholias" was issued that same year. The Ehmmanns were the sole stockholders in the company, with Freda serving as president, Edwin as vice president and Charles and Emma as secretary and treasurer. In 1924 when Freda Ehmman retired, Edwin took over the duties of Chief Executive Officer.

In 1901 the Ehmman Olive Company opened a newly remodeled plant in Oroville, complete with redwood vats and newly installed processing machinery. In 1911 the plant expanded again, signaling a new era of prosperity for the

company. Frederick Bioletti of the University of California's Experimental Station perfected the use of metal cans for preserving perishable foods in 1905. The 1911 addition to the Ehmann cannery, reflecting this change in technology, included the machinery, temperature gauges, pressurizing equipment and water tanks necessary to store the cured olives in the now-popular cans rather than jars.

As with the production of many other agricultural goods in California, commercial olive production, particularly for olive oil, increased substantially in the early part of the twentieth century. Although competition was brisk in the local olive oil industry, the Ehmann Olive Company soon established itself as the leading producer of canned ripe olives. While competitors such as the Graber Olive Company and Lindsay Olive Company

In 1920 Freda Ehmann sold the original plant on the outskirts of Oroville and built a new, larger plant at the corner of Lincoln and First Streets in Oroville, adjacent to the railroad yards and Wells Fargo office. Transportation of the olives to their markets in the San Francisco Bay Area and the East coast was a major concern for the Ehmann Olive Company. The new 1920 location provided quick and efficient access to ground transportation. By 1922 the Ehmann Olive Company was the sixth largest employer in Oroville, with a payroll exceeding \$30,000 per year.<sup>14</sup>

With these plant expansions came the addition of olive groves in San Joaquin and Shasta counties. The Ehmanns purchased the El Rubio grove in Acampo, San Joaquin County from the widow of Edwin's former employer, Frank Dohrmann. The orchard needed of a great deal of work before it would be profitable,

but it did come with its own mission-style olive crusher, nick-named "Old Mary" and an oil vat. Freda Ehmann acquired the orchard in Happy Valley, Shasta County to supplement the Oroville, Thermalito, Loma Rica and Acampo supplies of Mission olives, as well as to obtain cuttings of the larger Sevillano and Nevillano olive varieties. In 1911 Freda Ehmann terminated her lease on the Fogg Grove orchard in Thermalito and purchased it outright.<sup>15</sup>

Although each of the groves was in a different location, the grove foremen utilized Freda Ehmann's formula for success with olive trees in all. From her extensive contacts at the University of California's Agricultural Experiment Stations, she learned that planting olive trees twenty-five to thirty feet apart provided optimum fruit production and a minimum of unusable fruit.<sup>16</sup> Freda Ehmann also used the expertise of the Agricultural Experiment Stations to determine the appropriate amount of water, drainage, and fertilizer to allow, and at what times these amounts should be varied. Mrs. Ehmann took great care to cultivate a long-standing relationship with the Butte County Agricultural Commissioner, Earle Mills. With his assistance, she gained access to the latest methods of pest and mold fumigation and prevention. By taking advantage of the extensive amount of new information in the agricultural sciences, she was able to revitalize old groves and plant healthy, rapidly maturing new ones in record time. In his 1919 annual report to the Convention of County Agricultural Commissioners in Los Angeles, Agricultural Commissioner Mills noted her determination in acquiring the information and assistance of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as the

state's agricultural testing and experimentation facilities.

The health of her orchards and the careful management of the processing of the olives enabled the Ehmann Olive Company to win many regional, state, national and international awards. Attendance at these fairs was an important part of the Ehmann marketing strategy. These trips also provided her with a pleasantly anticipated pastime. Fair attendees remember Freda Ehmann "holding court" outside her display in agricultural tents around the country and, as a founding member of the California Olive Association, she spent much of her time persuading would-be customers of the nutritional value of California's olive products.<sup>17</sup>

In 1911, the California Olives Association asked Freda Ehmann to describe her experiences in the canned olive industry in a publicity pamphlet to be distributed at the many fairs and expositions. Although Freda Ehmann was the author of several articles in the Ladies Home Journal, she had never written specifically about her business enterprise. The California Ripe Olive was a popular addition to the vast quantity of advertising literature produced by California's agricultural community. By combining the less traditional role of marketing strategist and the more conventional parts of hostess and author, Freda Ehmann was able to maneuver successfully within the traditionally male environment of big business, establishing her products as safe, healthful and better than those of her competitors.

Over the years a core "California contingent" attended most of the world fairs and large trade expositions promoting the beauty, thrift and healthful aspects of

California food products. These fairs gave Freda Ehmann and others the opportunity to open new markets for Ehmann olives and other California agricultural goods. Freda Ehmann was the only woman to serve as a business representative at most of these events. She and her son Edwin actively supported the expositions and were frequently appointed to one or more of the exposition commission's committees. Freda Ehmann won first prize among 1,500 entries in the canning contest at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, and again among an impressive 2,300 entries in 1918 at the Pan-American Expo in San Francisco. She was often praised by her male competitors for creating the demand for California ripe olives, but was chastised by her peers for setting standards of quality based on expensive and time-consuming processes that few could meet.<sup>18</sup>

Through the use of fairs, expos and other aggressive marketing techniques, sales of Ehmann olives grew steadily between 1905 and 1925. The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads were two of the most visible Ehmann Olive Cannery customers, contracting with the company to provide small sample jars to be sold as condiments in their luxury dining cars. The U.S. Army also ordered scores of cases to be shipped to troops in Europe during World War I. The number of residential consumers grew rapidly between 1915 and 1925 as more and more Americans purchased processed food products.

Freda Ehmann led a full life outside the orchards and company offices. She devoted much of her leisure time to philanthropic and political organizations, as well as business clubs and committees, in Oroville and Oakland. Deeply committed

to the WCTU, she was elected three times to serve as a representative to the annual international WCTU conference. She served as a campaign advisor to John Bidwell of Chico in his bid for the presidency on the Prohibition Party ticket and she worked for the passage of such local ordinances as dance hall closing hours and juvenile curfews.<sup>19</sup> A devoted Republican, she worked for the passage of state legislation to ban the alien deportation acts popular in 1916-1918 in order to protect the labor supply for her orchards and those of others.

Freda Ehmann maintained the long-standing ties to the women's suffrage movement she established in Quincy. Frequently she hosted local and national level meetings and rallies of suffragettes and their supporters in Northern California. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, among others, was a frequent guest at the Ehmann home in Oakland. She was also a board member of several cultural organizations including the Delphian Club and the Oroville Music Association.

Among the strongest ties to philanthropy in the Ehmann household was commitment to the YMCA. Edwin and Freda Ehmann both sat on the board of directors of the Oakland branch and, in 1911, they purchased the property directly adjacent to the Ehmann home for a branch in Oroville. A playground, named for the Ehmann family, was constructed in 1921 on the grounds of the YMCA. Edwin used the contacts he developed through the YMCA to further his business interests. Freda Ehmann also utilized the contacts she made through her involvement with diverse organizations to pursue her business objectives, but she was particularly sensitive to the impression she made on the mostly male members of these

groups. Several of her speeches begin with self-deprecating comments as, "While I am only a woman. . ." and "Although I may not fully understand. . .", even though in most case she was a recognized expert on the topic of olive culture and marketing.

Freda Ehmann was also a strong supporter of the Oroville Chapter of the Monday Club, serving in various cabinet positions over the years. Upon request of President Herbert Hoover, she wrote an open letter to all Monday Club members in California urging them to purchase locally produced food products, in an effort to boost the consumption of California's agricultural goods and provide jobs for field and cannery workers.<sup>20</sup>

Freda Ehmann's career was not without its pitfalls. In the opening months of World War I her German ancestry raised questions among Oroville and Oakland residents about her loyalty to the United States. Prejudice, fear and resentment of her success characterized complaints made against her. Following the example of many other German-American business owners throughout the nation, she anglicized the pronunciation of her last name to emphasize the importance of her American ties. This pronunciation remains in use today.<sup>21</sup>

Freda Ehmann's commitment to providing a Christian, efficient environment for her workers was particularly apparent in the way in which she treated the women who worked for her. Women were a part of the work force at the Ehmann Olive cannery from the first day, mainly working in the sorting and canning sections of the plant. Although the ethnic composition of the Oroville plant is unclear, each female worker was carefully selected for her cleanliness and

courtesy. A separate and well-equipped lunch room, included in the 1911 addition to the plant, came complete with electric tea kettles for each table. Freda Ehmann regularly joined the women workers for breaks and meals. Unlike the male workers, women were provided with a clean apron and cap each work day, emphasizing Freda's brand of femininity and decorum.

Freda Ehmann retired as President of the Ehmann Olive Company in 1924, leaving her son Edwin as the Chief Executive Officer. Although in her late eighties, she continued to make her daily rounds of the pickling vats and canning stations during the harvest season until ill health confined her to her daughter's home in Piedmont, where she died in 1932.<sup>22</sup>

Freda Ehmann's legacy continued under Edwin's leadership for several months. The Ehmann Olive Company prospered until late 1924, when a disaster many cannery owners feared overwhelmed the Ehmann Olive Cannery. The discovery of two deaths from botulism, traced to several cans of Ehmann olives, created a panic in the pickled foods market and was met with a terrific and immediate response by consumers. Although other canned goods had been found with traces of the bacteria that causes botulism prior to

1922, none had been traced to Ehmann products. The precipitous drop in consumer confidence, and the consequent severe financial loss, hastened the retirement of Edwin Ehmann from the company and the eventual merger of Ehmann Olives in 1926 with an Oroville competitor, the Mt. Ida Packing Company.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, while the history of Freda Ehmann's ownership of the Ehmann Olive Company may close on a less than positive note, the imaginative marketing strategies and use of scientifically based horticultural knowledge initiated by Freda Ehmann provided the basis for the tremendous growth of the ripe olive culture in California in the first quarter of this century. Her participation in such state-wide organizations as the California Olives Association paved the way for other women to join and influence its policies and goals. Her visible presence as a business representative at national and international fairs and expositions provided other women with the opportunity to market their products openly in what had once been a closed environment. Many of these business practices and opportunities, as well as the Ehmann name, are still in use today.

#### END NOTES

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5. Yuba County Grantee-Grantor Index, 1873-1895, Yuba County Library; Olive Hill Colony Charter, 1889, Yuba County Library; "Olive Hill Colony Established," Appeal-Democrat 13, January 5, 1888, p. 1, Yuba County Library; "Deciduous Trees," Pacific Rural Press 22, June 17 1917, p. 4, San Joaquin County Archives and Library.
6. Yuba County Grantee-Grantor Index 1858-1895; Freda Ehmann to Mary Ehmann, November 1893.
7. "Temperatures and Trees Drop," Appeal-Democrat 32, January 1894, p. 1; "Deciduous Fruits," Pacific Rural Press 42, March 1895, p.4.
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9. Eugene W. Hilgard papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
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11. This control of the olive products market by foreign investors proved a significant obstacle for all American olive growers and processors over the next two decades. Several years later, when the Ehmann Olive Cannery was a well-established international enterprise, the owner of the exchange wrote to Freda Ehmann expressing his regret over not pursuing his contract with her.
12. Letter, Charles Mason to Freda Ehmann, April 5, 1898, Butte County Historical Society.
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14. Oroville Chamber of Commerce activity register, 1901, 1911, 1917; Frank Bioletti, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin number 240 (University of California, Berkeley, 1904); "Growing Employment Base," Oroville Mercury-Register 72, September 1, 1922, p. 7.
15. San Joaquin County Plat Books, 1906, San Joaquin County Archives and Library; Oroville Grantee-Grantor Index, 1872-1905, Butte County Historical Society.

16. Previous practices had recommended no more than a twenty foot separation between the trees, providing little "breathing room" for the large, complex root systems characteristic of the olive.
17. California Olive Association Newsletter, 1902-1918, California Olive Association; Minutes of California Olive Association, 1902-1918, California Olive Association.
18. Pan-American Exposition papers, California Historical Society; Pan-Pacific Exposition papers, San Diego Historical Society.
19. John Bidwell Papers, Special Collections Division, California State University, Chico; Annie Hammond Bidwell Papers, Special Collections Division, California State University, Chico.
20. Butte County Historical Society Information File, Monday Club.
21. The German pronunciation of Ehmann is A-man. The Anglicized version is E-man.
22. Walter Bolles, "Freda Ehmann," Diggings (Winter 1979): 362.
23. United States Department of Agriculture, Investigation Division papers, Archives of the United States, San Bruno; National Canning Association Special Investigative Unit papers, 1920-1929, Washington, DC, National Canning Association; Articles of Incorporation, Mt. Ida Packing Company, 1928, California State Archives.

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### SOME OLIVES

The following report comes from Shasta county:

REDDING, July 20 -- Olives from Mrs. Freda Ehmann's place, the old Alexander ranch, in Happy Valley, took the grand prize over the olives from the whole world at the Panama-Pacific exposition in San Francisco, according to information received from J. N. Logan, in charge of Shasta county's exhibit.

Oroville Mercury

20 July 1915

# Harter Packing Company: The Cannery -- A Way of Life

by Loadel Harter Piner

No longer Sutter County's "biggest home enterprise," Harter Packing Company remains the county's sole peach cannery, still a vital force in the local economy with its annual payroll of \$5,000,000.

In the days when businesses did not spring from franchises, but developed gradually, their stories usually had more to do with families than with investment capital. Records reveal that George Harter arrived in California in November of 1864 with but \$27 in his pocket. When he set out from Michigan the previous spring, it had been to seek not gold or easy money, but a better climate for his wife's health. It would seem the arduous five month journey in a mule drawn prairie schooner with two little children could have been a threat in itself!

George credited his mules for getting him to California when teams of horses failed all others who started on the trail in the same train; and mules were the means of his livelihood after he arrived. After two years of hauling freight to the mining camps, he saved enough to buy a quarter section of land to provide the animals' winter feed. At one time he turned down an offer of an additional 160 acres in trade for one of his lead mules!

By 1872 he completed a house with lumber backhauled from the mountains. Four more sons were born, his family growing in pace with his land holdings. In 1887 he replaced 20 acres of grain with muscat grapes, but three years later lost some of his spirit when his beloved Hannah was killed in a tragic runaway accident. He retired from active management of his acreage, leasing it to his sons Clyde and Glen and moving to San Jose to be near his

only daughter.

For a while this enterprise was known as the Harter Brothers, but after four years Glen left the ranch in favor of the teaching profession, and Clyde bought him out, eventually purchasing all of his father's share as well. Section by section, grain gave way to more vineyards and fruit trees.

When the Northern Electric Railway (by 1989 the Union Pacific) was built through his property in 1907, Clyde could see the opportunity of drying and marketing fruit. He built a dehydrator to supplement sun drying, a plant to process and package various dried fruits, and a warehouse. Helpers in the growing business were his four eldest boys: Chauncey, Howard, Orlin and Leonard. (Clyde married Flora Hain in 1892. The youngest son, Gordon, is a retired physician. Daughter Ruth married William U. Hudson and lives in the Bay Area.)

The business of C. B. Harter & Sons grew and prospered with ever more land devoted to the propagation of cling peaches, which sparked the idea of building a cannery close to the orchards so that sun-ripened fruit could be canned on the day it was picked. Harter Packing Company was incorporated in 1927, and the cannery began operation the following summer. This writer does not remember its infancy, paralleling as it did her own, but does remember the growing up years.

At first, most of the peaches headed for the can began in company-owned orchards. What old-time peach farmer doesn't recall the silhouettes of men on either side of mule-drawn tanks, spraying a silver-blue mist through skeletal trees

reaching into winter skies, the same rigs later lurching through knee-high grasses dotted with mustard, wild parsnip and monkey flower? The buds flowered, leaves grew lush and dark; the fruits shed their jackets and swelled until many were doomed to the thinner's fingers. Those remaining grew even larger, colored, and developed a fragrance that hung heavy in the air as summer's heat brought them to peak ripeness. It was at that precise moment that there were plucked, placed into metal-topped canvas bags strapped around a picker's shoulders and carefully rolled into lug boxes for their trip to the grading station and ultimately the cannery.

After the grading, sorting, cutting, pitting, peeling, and canning, the filled cans were stacked in great metal crates and immersed by hoist into wooden vats of boiling water to cook. They were then raised, dripping and sweating, to cool and dry before being moved to the warehouse.

And what a wondrous place that was! Stacks of cans rose to the ceiling high above any head, between them alleys perfect for precision roller-skating. In one corner, the label room--hushed, dim and cool, smelling slightly of ink and glue--held a special sort of magic. Box after box of colorful labels bore witness to the far places the pack would go.

For pickled peaches, there were great burlap bags bulging with whole cinnamon sticks and whole cloves, like giant pomander pillows. And what a delightful discovery if one of the huge bags of sugar happened to have a tiny hole in it!

In the early days the cannery variously packed apricots, plums, pears, spinach and olives. Peaches were the mainstay, however, and by World War II plant capacity reached 4,000 tons per season (compared to 22,000 today). When the war

removed local manpower, the "boys from Beale" (Camp Beale, "Home of the 13th Armored Division") helped out, sometimes devoting precious leave to the domestic war effort, for indeed many cases of golden fruit found their way into mess kitchens from North Africa to remote Pacific islands.

Almost every year saw some new building addition or modification of the grounds. In addition to the cannery proper and ever-expanding warehouse there was a cafeteria, tree-shaded cottages for year-round employees, even a day care center for their children.

Inside there were changes as well. Men pushing hand trucks with cartons of empty containers were replaced by overhead lines which dispensed cans as needed. Automatic fillers and sealers were installed. Old open vats gave way to pressure and "atmospheric" cookers. In the mid-fifties, the Filper pitter revolutionized the cutting room, replacing the "modern" mechanical pitters which had in turn, replaced knives and hand pitters. Moving belts, rather than dish pans, carried away imperfect fruit sorted out of the line. Sacks of sugar became obsolete when syrup could be piped in from tank cars.

Green gage plums were a popular item until the late sixties, when both that product and spiced peaches were phased out. In 1970 the cannery was converted to pack tomatoes at the end of the peach season, a practice which continued until a separate tomato cannery was added in 1977. Just three years prior to that, a sophisticated tomato paste plant had been put into operation.

From the beginning, what made Harter Packing Co. special was the people. The company logo of a wagon wheel with three hearts is a reminder of the pioneer roots from which it grew. George Harter

was a deeply religious man, and a humble one. Following his footsteps, Clyde Harter set respected standards for his employees: no man was to work without a shirt, swearing was frowned upon, and the plant never operated on a Sunday. His sons were addressed by their first names--perhaps even their nicknames--but he was always Mr. Harter.

The Harter "family" embraced key personnel who participated in the cannery's opening in 1928 and remained until retirement, taking personal pride in their role in producing a quality product.

Indeed the cannery was a way of life--for the extended Harter family--for the Filices, the Perellis, the Wools, the Richardses and all who were part of that era of independence. It was a way of life for housewives, teachers and students who counted on summer work to provide that extra income they depended upon. It was a way of life for the white uniformed floor ladies: Mina, Edna, Mary, Lois and

Blanche; it was a way of life for Mike and Monroe, George and Bud. All the Harter family was active in the community, in service clubs, lodges and churches, on school and hospital boards and in local government.

But along with the new buildings and techniques, the sophisticated equipment and computers, came new rules and regulations, some good, some not so good. There are no more open prune bins to slide upon, no box barns for lugbox hideouts, no more pungent sacks of spices, definitely no roller skating in the warehouse! We've all grown up...

In 1969 Harter Packing Co. became a division of C.H.B. Foods; in 1985 a leveraged buyout changed it to California Home Brands. Most recently, in October of 1988, it became Harter, Inc., dba Harter Packing Co., owned by the Richelieu Group, Inc., of Barrington, Illinois.

Though no longer privately owned, the company is still managed by fourth and fifth generations of the founding family.

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Loadel Harter Piner, whose reminiscences are included in the accompanying article, wants it to be known that she came before the peach! In the late forties her father, Howard, discovered a sport branch of ripe fruit in the family experimental orchard. Taking it home to his kitchen, his observation showed the peach to have a small pit, firm texture, good color and a rich flavor which held up through the canning process. With Dr. Davis from the University of California and veteran nurseryman Henry Spoto, he developed the variety and named it for his daughter. It has proved profitable for many growers in both the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. (Loadel's name came from her maternal grandmother, Loa Delphine, and is pronounced with three distinct syllables, accent on the first.)

This article was previously published by the California Peach Canner's Association.

## MAKING MOLASSES IN SUTTER COUNTY

by Dorothy Ross

Soon after father settled on Sunset Colony, near Live Oak, in Sutter County in 1910 his letterhead read:

### CLARENCE W. JENKINS FARMER

Selected Seed of Orange County Prolific and Giant Saint  
Charles Field Corn. Improved Red Kalir  
and Colman Sorghum,  
White Tepary Beans. Sorghum Syrup.

Sorghum syrup?

The irrigated lands of this development were new in 1910. Fruit growing was being promoted in the area, but nursery trees were scarce. Seed for grains had to be ordered from catalogs. Some early settlers started nurseries. Father began raising seed for early colonists eager to plant something while waiting for fruit trees and grape vines to become available. Having grown up in Kansas and having attended Kansas State Agriculture College, he understood the growing of grain.

Grandpa Jenkins made sorghum molasses on the Jenkins' farm in Kansas and father must have had fond memories of this endeavor of his youth. It wasn't long before he planted sorghum cane, assembled a mill and built a concrete furnace at our farm near Live Oak.

For several years in a field near the levee of the Feather River rows of sorghum cane grew all summer like tall corn. Autumn was sorghum making time, when

the weather was crisp and cool. In the field, the stalks were topped of their dark red seed heads and stripped of the long leaf blades which would be used as livestock feed. The stripped canes would be cut off at the ground and loaded on a wagon. I can remember us children sometimes riding on the rear of the wagon swinging our legs over the back while chewing and sucking a joint of sweet, juicy cane on the way back to the mill. Father, who always believed in making a learning experience enjoyable, would pick out an extra fine stalk, cut it into joints, and peel them for us.

The cast iron mill had rollers to squeeze juice from the cane. Power for this operation was a mule harnessed to the end of a long pole, with the pole having the other end attached to the top of the mill mechanism where the gears were located. Someone fed the stalks into the rollers which turned as the mule went round and round, prodded on occasionally by us children. The rollers mashed out the sweet green juice

that ran through a trough to be filtered into a bucket.

The long, low walls of the furnace supported a long, shallow metal pan for evaporating the juice as it was ladled in from the bucket. These furnace walls were about 8 feet long and about 2-1/2 feet apart. The pan was first filled with water and as it evaporated with the first firing, the juice was poured in at the warmest end of the pan near the furnace opening where a wood fire was kept burning. The pan was very shallow and divided into compartments with baffles and partitions that had small openings that could be opened or closed. In this way the juice, at first 2 or 3 inches deep, could be kept moving slowly along as it thickened, to the end of the lower heat. Someone with a long handled wood paddle would push the syrup along or hold it back as it thickened. At the cooler end of the pan, the thick, dark molasses - as it was often called - went into a large container and was skimmed of its golden foam. After settling a bit it was put into syrup buckets or glass jars. Another special treat for us children was getting to eat some of the frothy foam that would be ladled out to us in tin cups.

Sorghum molasses in early Kansas would have largely taken the place of sugar on a farm, but now, although father expected it to take the place of syrup, I remember we children preferred maple syrup poured from the "smokestack" of the popular log cabin-shaped can of the day.

Syrup was traded or sold to neighbors, or sold for cash in town. When our neighbor, Bradbury Barber, showed an interest in the operation, father, who believed in making any new experience profitable, talked him into going into syrup sales. Barber had time on his hands and no income yet from new orchards. Soon business cars were being passed out with JENKINS AND BARBER, SORGHUM SYRUP printed on them. Father raised the cane and oversaw the milling. Barber was the salesman, delivering the product in his Stanley Steamer.

When fruit trees came into bearing, alfalfa and grain crops were abandoned and the processing of sorghum syrup was soon forgotten. Because bees were needed to pollinate the fruit trees, honeycomb became available to chop and strain. Honey was now poured into maple syrup cans and offered to us as a special treat for our pancakes.

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#### MRS. FREDA EHMANN, PURITY DELEGATE TO NATIONAL CONVENTION

At the last meeting of the Oroville W.C.T.U., Mrs. Freda Ehmman was elected a delegate to the Purity convention to be held in San Francisco, beginning tomorrow and continuing until July 24. Mrs. E. C. Burnett was chosen alternate and these two ladies left Oroville this morning for San Francisco on the special train carrying delegates to the convention from points East.

Oroville Mercury

17 July 1915

## THE CATTLE DRIVE

by Shirley Dean Schnabel

(The following is the result of an interview Linda Leone did with Shirley Schnabel on March 18, 1993.)

My father raised cattle when I was a child. There must have been 100 cows. He didn't milk all of them. They had a dual purpose. They were milking short horns so those that didn't fit in the milk herd were raising calves. The home ranch was down on the by-pass and then we had another ranch up in the Buttes. They moved half or more of the cows up into the Buttes and milked there from January through April and sometimes through May, depending on the rain and weather. They were then returned to the home ranch and the two herds were combined. My older brother, Ralph Dean, usually milked the bunch that was left down at the lower ranch so I spent a lot of my time up in the Buttes as a young girl. Weekends, especially, I spent there.

We usually moved the cows in November after the rains. It seems like it always came near Armistice Day and there was always all kinds of traffic on the road. We'd start from the home ranch which was located south of Franklin Road, right off of the by-pass. There would be three or four people on horseback, depending on who was available to ride. We'd drive the cows through Sutter -- up Acacia, Butte House Road, up Mallott Road and onto private roads all the way up to the Buttes. That would take most all day. The roads were not like they are fixed today. They were pretty much two cow trails put together. Then we'd turn around and ride our horses all the way back again which made it a long day. My mother used to fix lunches for us. She made great big biscuits. When she

fixed the lunch, she always took left over biscuits and smeared them with bacon fat and put them in for the dogs to eat. I have the biggest dog [referring to her husband Randy] in the country. Randolph loved her biscuits, bacon grease or not.

You'd always have one or two cows break off from the rest and go through the cemetery. Somebody'd have to ride in there to get them back. The rider would feel guilty as everything. One time, a lady had a very nice yard and, of course, the cattle kept breaking out, going places. The rider had to go right through her yard and she was yelling at him. I guess he still can hear her to this day.

In the spring we reversed the deal. We'd go up and round them up and spend the night in the Buttes. We'd start out early the next morning and bring them down to the home ranch. You felt pretty tired when you got there and then my father (Edward Dean) would come out after we'd eaten and say, "Now, it's time to sort them.". We spent the rest of the day sorting the cows into various groups to go into various pastures. That was another long day.

I think the worst one was during the flood in 1955 when we had to drive all of the cattle. Usually we took only part of the cows up to the Buttes, but this time we had to take them all plus the calves and pigs. We sent our son, Randy, up to the Buttes with a pickup load of calves and pigs. My husband, Randolph, was manning the Naval Reserve radio station. He called and said I'd better go get my folks out because the



levee had broken. I gathered up the younger kids, John and Margit, and loaded the car with sleeping bags and changes of clothes which I dropped off at my aunt's home in Sutter. From there I went to my folks' ranch.

I tried to tell my father that he had to leave because the levee had broken. He said, "Oh, no, we'll put the cows up on the levee and the calves will be all right. Everything will be all right." I said, "No, you haven't lived through a break since the (by-pass) levees have been in. You don't know what will happen. It'll all back up." Then one of my relatives went by driving his cattle, headed for his place in the Buttes. He said the water was coming in on his place as he was leaving. My father was in his 80's at this time. We got him up and got him to the barn to see the water. Finally, he conceded we could go.

The cattle had been used to being fed in the haystacks down there and they weren't willing to go. I was there and I had to take all the horses; I had about three or four of them to lead. I had the two young kids on horseback. I looked at my father and said, "You'll have to help me; you'll have to ride. All I've got are these two kids to help me." So he finally conceded that he would ride, but he was so arthritic that it was terrible. My nephew came along and said the best way to avoid all of the traffic was to go right up the levee. I said, "There's a fence at the railroad crossing." He said not to worry about it, that he'd take care of it. I don't think it was needed any more -- it had been put up during the days of the third rail. Sure enough, when we got that far, the

fence was gone and we could go right straight up the levee.

Randolph had shown up and I had him on a horse. About that time here came some Seabees or Coast Guard or something and they just roared -- "Sailor on horseback!" They helped and my niece-in-law helped with the traffic and we got across Highway 20.

From the levee it was a left turn onto Butte House Road and then a right turn onto Mallott Road. Here I hit all these people that were roaring ready to go through and I wouldn't let them. I had my handy bullwhip out and I said, "No, we're only going to be on here a short space of time and then we'll be out of the way because I have nobody to guide them through." It was just impossible. Finally, we turned off and then they could go down the road as fast as they wanted. From then on, it was just driving them.

We reached the Buttes after dark. When we reached our gate, my father said, "I'm going on in." It was cold and miserable. I said, "Yes, you go in and take those two little kids with you." I was still leading those horses and one of them was a pull-back that almost jerked my arm off once in a while. My father came out and said, "You've got to get those fresh cows out of there." Here it was dark, no lights, and I was trying to find the fresh cows and put them in the corral so those calves would have milk. I found all but one. I found her the next day. My father said, "You've got to milk her." I hadn't milked in years. I'd milk and my arms would drop and he'd stand over me and say, "Keep milkin'."

# KID'S PAGE

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Can you find these words?

AGRICULTURE  
AMY SCHOAP  
ANNUAL DINNER

CANNERY  
CATTLE DRIVE

DAIRY  
DEAN RANCH  
DOROTHY ROSS

EASTER BUNNY

FREDA EHMANN

GERMANY

HARTER PACKING

LOADEL PINER

MOLASSES

OLIVES

PEACHES

SF EXPOSITION  
SHIRLEY SCHNABEL  
SORGHUM  
SUNSET COLONY

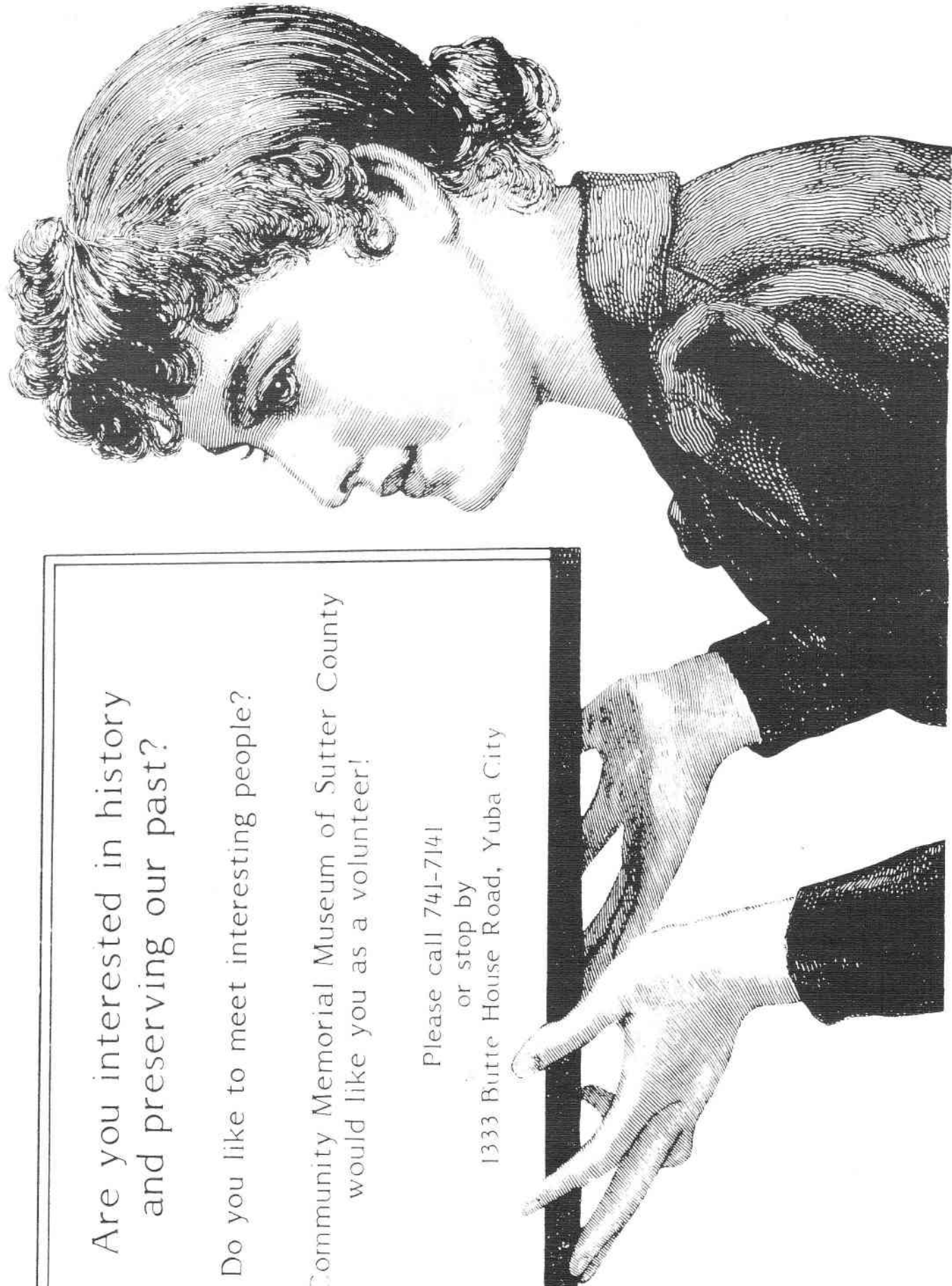
Are you interested in history  
and preserving our past?

Do you like to meet interesting people?

The Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County  
would like you as a volunteer!

Please call 741-7141  
or stop by

1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City



## COMING EVENTS

### APRIL

- 9 Children's Easter Program-1:00 p.m. at the Museum  
17 Historical Society Buttes Bus Trip (Sold Out)  
20 Historical Society Annual Dinner  
Sutter Youth Building -- 6:00 p.m.  
Program: Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest Awards  
Methodist Chancel Bell Choir & the  
Yuba College Undivided Choir  
24-25 Wear & Remembrance Vintage Apparel Show  
Yuba-Sutter Fair Grounds

### MAY

- 7 Mother's Day Decadence Delivered (Order early)  
9 Mother's Day  
15 Freda Ehmann Exhibit Opens at the Community Memorial Museum

### JUNE

- 5 Sutter Buttes Day  
14 Flag Day

### JULY

- 4 Independence Day

Friends of the Library will be hosting a series of lectures concerning the Sutter Buttes and local Indian history. This will be held at the Sutter County Library. Dates have not been set.

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOX 1004  
YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95992

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