

# Sutter County Historical Society News Bulletin

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Yuba City, California

July 2001



*Left to right: Harjot "Hargi" Rai & Ana Gonzalez*



*Drew Battaglia*

**Judith Barr Fairbanks  
Memorial Essay Contest Winners**

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The **Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Historical Society in Yuba City, California. Payment of annual membership dues provides you with a subscription to the **Bulletin** and the Museum's **Muse News**. At the April 1987 Annual Dinner Meeting the membership voted to change the by-laws to combine the memberships of the Society and the Museum.

The 2001 dues are payable as of January 1, 2001.

Student (under 18)/ Senior Citizen/Library .....	\$ 15
Individual .....	\$ 20
Organizations/Clubs .....	\$ 30
Family .....	\$ 35
Business/Sponsor .....	\$ 100
Corporate/Benefactor .....	\$1000

## President's Message

As we start our 2001-2002 year I think about what we as Sutter County "Historians" should set as our goals. We need to acknowledge the fact that the Society has been active and an asset to Sutter County for 47 years; has played a major part in the building and operation of the Museum; has published a bulletin that has featured many facets of Sutter County History; and most importantly has sparked an interest in discovering and preserving the history of our County. Our goal should be to continue and enlarge these accomplishments.

Our Annual Meeting in Meridian was a great success and the survey response concerning future meetings indicates that the members would prefer to have luncheons. I will propose to the Directors at their July meeting that we restructure the meetings as follows: Annual Meeting in April a luncheon on Saturday; the October meeting a luncheon on Saturday; the January meeting an evening dessert meeting held at the Museum; and the July meeting a Tuesday, Saturday or Sunday Picnic-in-the-Park.

I would also like to establish a SUTTER COUNTY HISTORY DAY to be held as the theme of the picnic-in-the-park. This would be a time to get together and share historical families, events and happenings. My suggestion is that this be a social event with a program centered around Sutter County History and not have it develop into anything but a picnic social. This could be an "old-fashioned" family picnic time.

We will strive to continue to increase our MEMBERSHIP, encourage better attendance at our quarterly membership meetings, ask members to assist with committees and projects, and stimulate community support and interest in preserving Sutter County history.

The Hock Farm Doors project and the Sutter County Historical Preservation Register/Project will be the major projects for this year.

Congratulations to the Officers and Directors who were elected at the Annual Meeting. I am looking forward to a busy and productive year. Please feel free to call and volunteer to help in any of our activities and projects.

John V. Reische  
President

## Director's Report

This summer at the Museum visitors can view the new exhibit *Taking Off: Early Aviation in the Yuba-Sutter Area*. It's an information-packed treat with over 200 photos, artifacts and stories from early aviators in our community. Our own Museum and Historical Society member Allen Herr served as guest curator for the exhibit. His knowledge of local aviation history is truly astounding. The exhibit will remain through September 9. Be sure to put Thursday, July 12 on your calendar when Karen Angel of Arcata will speak about pilot and barnstormer Jimmie Angel. Jimmie Angel helped establish Angel Airport, the first airport in Yuba City. His colorful life led him to South America, where he discovered Angel Falls in Venezuela. The free program will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Round up your favorite children for the Summer Vacation Children's Program on Wednesday, July 18 at 1:00 p.m. Aviation is the theme, and lots of activities and maybe even a few surprises are in store. The program is suitable for all ages and for both girls and boys. No reservations are required, and there is no fee. It's an afternoon of learning fun.

The staff is busy this summer working industriously on the agricultural wing exhibits. Sutter County Facilities Management will be working on the patio preparing for the laying of the memorial pavers. We are looking forward in the fall to the traveling exhibit from the Oakland Museum, *Awakening from the California Dream*, an environmental history. Happy Summer!

Julie Stark  
Director

## Editor's Message

Welcome to the July Bulletin. We hope that the energy situation has not left you too uncomfortable this summer. How many of you had air conditioning growing up? For those of you that didn't, how did you keep cool? Sharyl can remember nights of cool showers and then jumping in bed and trying to get to sleep before the after effects of the shower wore off. What do you remember trying? We'd love to hear about your experiences keeping cool.

Every year we look forward to seeing the results of the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay contest. We are pleased to present the winners of the contest and their. Two of our three winners, Hargi and Ana, were able to attend the April luncheon as our guests, but Drew had other commitments and was unable to attend. We are grateful to his teachers at Winship School for providing us with a photograph of Drew to include on the cover.

The Society has quite a few new programs and plans coming up. Most of you know that the Hock Farm Project has been on the burner for quite some time. Well, we turned up the heat this past spring and plans have been drawn up and engineering done to move ahead with the project. More information will be forthcoming the night of the Picnic in the Park and in future Bulletins.

Speaking of the picnic, remember that it is a week early this year. We decided that two great events in Sutter County do not need to be in competition with each other for participants. The re-dedication of the Hall of Records will be July 17<sup>th</sup> so the July general meeting was changed to July 10<sup>th</sup>. We hope to see you at both events.

The Society has added a new committee focusing on site preservation and family heritage issues. We will begin a listing of potential preservation sites including documenting the existence, condition, and historical value of various sites in Sutter County. This will be very convenient when an agency, such as Caltrans, makes an inquiry about the historical importance of a site to be considered for construction. The Century Farm Project has been placed under this umbrella as well and we will have more information on that program in the near future. We are working on a definition, a qualification outline, and a packet to submit for inclusion in the Century Farm listing. Also under consideration is what we are going to do with this information - a book, a register, a plaque to the included farms - do any of these make sense or do you have an idea for acknowledging those working farms held by the same family for 100 years or more? We would love to get your feedback.

Sharyl Simmons (743-3741)  
Phyllis Smith (671-3261)

## Memorials

In Memory of **Eddie S. Baker**  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel

In Memory of **Judith Barr**  
Bee Brandt  
Connie Cary  
Raona Hall  
Suzanne & Leonard Reynolds  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel  
Yuba City Wednesday Club

In Memory of **Harold Brown**  
Barry Lemenager

In Memory of **Philip Carlos, Sr.**  
Christy Carlos

In Memory of **Fern H. Custis**  
Robert and Sandra Fremd  
George and Dottie Post  
Mr. and Mrs. Clinton L. West

In Memory of **Eunice Del Pero**  
Connie Cary  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ullrey

In Memory of **Gary Engelken**  
Ev and Liz Berry

In Memory of **Marian Gallagher**  
Tom and Jean Pfeffer

In Memory of **Harry Graham**  
Liz and Ev Berry

In Memory of **Charles Hansen**  
Helen Heenan  
Bob & Jean McCourtney  
The Spilman Family

In Memory of **Janet Heisch**  
Bud and Joan Doty  
Janis Stillwell

In Memory of **Arthur Hill**  
Tom and Jean Pfeffer

In Memory of **Kay Howell**  
Janis Stillwell

In Memory of **Emma Montna-Howard**  
Tom and Jean Pfeffer

In Memory of **Elwood Munger**  
Connie Cary  
Barry Lemenager  
Mike and Patty Whitmer  
Family

In Memory of **Mary D. Poole**  
Bee Brandt  
Mrs. W. D. Chipman  
Julie Large  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel  
Sutter Orchard Supply

In Memory of **Edward Putman**  
Evelyn & Harold Quigg  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel

In Memory of **Margie Stagg**  
Connie Cary

In Memory of **Irene White**  
Marie E. Fuller

# Kevin Starr, California State Librarian, Visits the Museum

by  
Dorothy A. Ettl

Dr. Kevin Starr discussed his views and insights on California history at a March 20 reception and program at the Museum.

According to Dr. Starr, California has a culture of its own. It is not a product of a slow agricultural frontier, but rather a product of a spirit of urbanism. In California there was "rapid monstrous maturity." Markets were created by "the cities." Even in the Gold Rush, urbanism was predominant. Our history is one of social cooperation and complexity. California was never a slow agricultural frontier.

Time in California has been on "fast-forward" since the discovery of gold in 1848. Unlike other regions in the west, California bypassed being a United States Territory and went from Mexican rule to becoming a U.S. state.

Sutter County in the 1850s was the entrance to and the exit from California. When a person crossed over the Sierra into California they saw oak-dotted foothills and vast fertile plains. There is a power in the California landscape and it is constantly revealing itself.

California has been described as a coastal state with a majority of Californians living on the coast. But that is changing, and Californians are moving to the interior.

Dr. Starr talked about the "checkered careers" of John Fremont and Sam Brannan. He told about water engineering projects developed in the Sacramento Valley as a result of flooding. He discussed the contributions of and the conflicts between Chinese, Irish, and Native American people. There was mistreatment among and between groups and yet we "belong to each other." From the beginning, multi-culturalism has been a part of California.

According to Dr. Starr, California has always had a quality of abstraction. It can be difficult to see it as a whole because local identities are very strong.

The evening with Dr. Starr was sponsored by the libraries in Yuba and Sutter Counties and the Community Memorial Museum. Refreshments were served and musical entertainment was provided by Cell Block B# of Marysville High School. Their "Library Song" was creative and humorous.

## News

### Picnic in the Park Pot Luck

Join us for our July meeting in the Howard Harter Memorial Park and bring something to share. County Supervisor Dennis Nelson will tell us about the refurbishment and upcoming dedication of the Hall of Records.

When: Tuesday, July 10, 2001, 5:30 p.m.

Where: The park behind the Museum. 1333 Butte House Road.

For more information call John and Dorothea Reische (674-8106).



### Christmas in July

The Society is excited to present the 2001 Christmas ornament. This year's model is a glass ball in light blue with a dark blue design of the 1901 Meridian Ferry. We are paying tribute on the hundredth anniversary of the ferry.

There are a limited number of ornaments and your first chance to purchase yours will be at the Picnic in the Park. The ornaments are only \$8.00 each and display stands are \$2.50 each.



### Hall of Records Dedication

The r-dedication of the refurbished Hall of Records is scheduled for July 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. The festivities will be on the lawn at the Hall on Second Street. Let's show our support for local history by celebrating the restoration job that the County did on this important building.





## Hock Farm Project

The Society's next building project is to refurbish the Hock Farm doors at the monument on Garden Highway. For years, sightseers have looked for the Hock Farm, found the metal doors and then proceeded to the Sierra Gold Nursery offices to ask where Hock Farm is located. With these improvements, visitors will be able to get information at the site. The engineering for the project has been completed and we will have more news of where we are in the process and drawings of the proposed changes at the Picnic in the Park.



## October Meeting

Because of the positive feedback about the April luncheon, we are going to repeat ourselves and have the October meeting on a Saturday afternoon. The luncheon will be at Hermann Sons Hall in Nicolaus. Date and program will be announced in the next News Bulletin.



## HELP WANTED

### REPORTERS FOR SCHS BULLETIN

**DUTIES:** In coordination with the editorial staff, conduct interviews, do minor research projects (or major if you want), and, if comfortable with the idea, write articles.

**QUALIFICATION:** Interest in supporting the Bulletin.

**COMPENSATION:** Satisfaction of seeing your name in print. Pride in a job well done. Glory. Fame. The undying appreciation of certain editors.

**CONTACT:** Phyllis Smith (671-3261) or Sharyl Simmons (743-3741).



## Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest

The Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest was established in the fall of 1991 with the first essay produced in the Spring of 1992. The contest was named to honor Museum Commissioner Judith Fairbanks, a widely loved fourth grade teacher who loved history.

The Essay Contest is sponsored jointly by the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County and the Sutter County Historical Society. Originally opened to fourth graders in all schools of Sutter County as they studied California history, the contest is now also open to fifth graders, who are studying the westward movement in the United States. Students from public schools, private schools and home schools are eligible to enter the contest. Rules and procedures are established jointly by the Museum and the Historical Society.

The title of the essay contest is "Letters Home." Contestants study California and Sutter County in the 1840s, '50s and '60s, then put themselves in the place of a migrant or immigrant new to the Sutter County area and write a letter to the folks back home telling them about how they traveled to the area, what they found and their experiences in this new land.

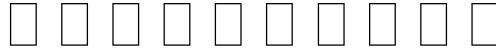
On April 1, 2001, Mrs. Judith V. Barr, mother of Judy Barr Fairbanks, made a donation to perpetuate the Essay Contest. She directed a special fund be established and administered

by the Historical Society so the contest will continue for many years.

The following are general guidelines outlining the contest expenses that are authorized to be paid from the fund:

- 1) Cash awards made to the winners of the contest. The amount of award payments shall be based on recommendations of the joint Historical Society/Museum Education Committee made to the administrators of the fund.
- 2) Informational, educational and promotional materials for the essay contest.
- 3) Certificates, rules and regulations, postage, and other expenses associated with implementation of the essay contest.
- 4) Meals of winners, two family members, and a teacher of winners at the awards ceremony.
- 5) Consider future possibility of awarding scholarship(s) to winners and/or increasing cash awards as funds become available.
- 6) In the event that investment/expenditures allow the fund to increase significantly that a "special" educational or historical project could be funded.

# Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest Winners – 2001



## First Place

Drew Battaglia

Winship Elementary School

Teacher: Mrs. Barbara Smith

October 1850

Dear Angelo,

How are things in Rome? Is Mr. Divinchi's pasta shop still open? As you know, Mama and I left Rome in March, and we arrived at New Orleans in May. Our ship took us up the Mississippi River all the way to St. Louis. At St. Louis, Mama and I got on a wagon train. Our wagon master's name was Doug. He was a cowboy.

After only being on land for half an hour, we were traveling again. At that point I was tired of travel. I just wanted to get to California to see my Papa.

After two horrible long months of bumpy trails, dust, dirt, Indians, and wild animals, Mama and I had arrived in California, but we still had to go to Marysville. In about two weeks we were in Marysville.

We found Papa in a small mining camp. Papa told us he would go get his pans and cradle and he would take us to his cabin. I was excited.

While Papa was getting his things I took a look around. In only

the short amount of time I had to look, I knew this was going to be a rough, but beautiful town to live in. The oak trees are tall and there are huge snow capped mountains that surround me. Blue rivers and streams rolled by me ... I was finally here.

Before I could observe any more Papa was back with his tools.

He led us to a small cabin in the woods. It was made of big logs split in two and stacked on each other. He said, "This is where you will stay." We walked inside and there were two beds and a wood stove. Papa said he would stay in the mining camp and come home on weekends. He gave us both a kiss and left.

Mama and I went to the general store after Papa left. On our way we saw very odd things. People were wearing funny clothes and kids were running eating what I later found out was called Red vines.

Life is great. I have my own Red vines and I'm learning some English from an American boy. I hope your family comes to California also. Write me back.

Your friend,



Second Place  
Ana Gonzalez  
Pleasant Grove School  
Teacher: Mr. Jerry Moore

Dear Familia,

This place is as strange as a double-headed cow, but is as beautiful as the pyramids of the Aztecs. It is more beautiful and exciting than before we (the Mexicans) were defeated. Our language is barely remembered here. So rare when I speak it everyone stares. There are many men from other countries. Women are so rare here when there is on they put on ties or bow ties. They treat you like a queen or as if you are the only woman alive on earth. The men here have a strange name. It's "Forty-niners." I know not why they call them that. Most of the men came here by boat and I hear that those men almost died of a disease called "scurvy." The call "oro" gold. The language is confusing and I have little patience with it. I have not seen Sr. Marshall or Sr. Sutter. The food is strange. We have our food cold and raw. Right now I highly regret leaving home because the food there was (is) hot and delicious. Especially the tamales. It is most the most beautiful as the blue eyes of a white tiger, but in the winter it looks as triste as a mother when her son dies. In the spring it looks as if it were a fairyland or enchanted land. Another strange thing here is the clothes. Here they wear flannels and jeans. In Mexico, the men wore (wear) bell-bottom type pants,

bandanas and loose type shirts. The women in Mexico wore (wear) colorful skirts and shirts. Oh, I almost forgot. I cut my long beautiful hair to short hair. I cut it because all of it was bothering me. So I cut it all the way to my shoulders.

I met a man. He is sensible as a flower, but looks as tough as a bull. He is not much taller than I. He has sparkling hazel eyes, his hair is brown and his favorite color is black. He also comes from Mexico. His name is Ricardo. He has found gold. I have gotten to know him. We've become very good friends. Here I have to bathe with cold water. I have made another friend. Her name is Mary Ann Garcia. We spend most of our time together. She is married to a rich man. She was (is) the one who taught me how to read and write in English. I haven't gotten it down perfect, but I'm going a little bit at a time. She was born in Pennsylvania. So she is a migrant. Her husband, Henry, is not a migrant. He is an immigrant from Germany. He is here for two things: for gold and for a better new life.

My family, I love and miss you all dearly. Every day I think and pray for all of you. I think that we all have a better future here. After the gold rush all of you should come and live in the grand California. Hope to see you soon.

Sincerely

P.S. Write back soon



**Third Place**  
**Harjot "Hargi" Rai**  
**Nuestro Elementary School**  
**Teacher: Mrs. Nina Sharma**

Dear Ma and Pa,

I have just arrived in Sutter last week. When I first arrived I was scared of this big place. I didn't know anyone when I came to Sutter. There were long bushy trees that stood so high only a bird could see the top.

Later on I got a job cutting wood. I made 7 cents an hour and worked 10 hours a day. I made \$21.00 a month. That's pretty good for an 18 year old.

There was a flood that caused people to evacuate to the Sutter Buttes for their safety. I also had to evacuate for my safety. After the flood, all the fields were growing well because of all the new topsoil that was left after the flood helped the fields. The crops were growing very well too. It's a good thing the flood never reached my hut because my hut was on the edge of the buttes.

Three days later I found out that my cousin Kevin was living in Sutter too. Kevin is 20 years old now. He was wondering if you two were coming to Sutter or not. Kevin also has a job of cutting wood and makes \$23.00 a month. Kevin and I are working together in our own shop and are making \$45.00 a month together.

Did you know you can get a loaf of bread for a couple of cents? But still it is cheaper in India.

My first day here was really hard because I didn't know anyone or know what to do or where to go. "But" I'm not that stupid that I don't know how to ask people how to find a place.

Ma, Pa, I really like Sutter and hope you guys come here soon. If you two do want to come then just write me a letter and tell me and I will send tickets so you can come on a ship here. I'll be waiting. Whenever you guys come I can show you my shop and hut.

Well I hope everything is going well back home. And if anyone else wants to come tell me. I miss you guys a lot and hope you guys come soon.

Your son,

## April Luncheon

Members and guests of the Sutter County Historical Society gathered in Meridian last April for our annual meeting, an outstanding luncheon, presentations of awards to winners of the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest, the ever-popular raffle, and a fascinating talk by Don Burtis on the Northern Electric Railway Company.

The Marysville-Yuba City street railway got underway in 1889, and was bought out by the Northern Electric and running under the new name, with a new mode of power, in 1907. Northern Electric rebuilt the horse-drawn tracks, built a new bridge, and put in the "third rail" - the source of power for the engineless trains. The rail ran 600 volts of electricity.

The train had several branches. At first it ran just from

Sacramento to Marysville, but later expanded to include Chico and Colusa, with a junction at Tierra Buena. It also had a branch running to San Francisco, but at Oakland a train ferry took the cars and passengers across the bay.

Train service to San Francisco ended in 1941 - automobiles had taken over. The last streetcar in Chico stopped running in 1947, and in 1965 the last electrified line in Marysville and Yuba City was converted to diesel.

The Sacramento Northern itself lasted until 1983, but then Southern Pacific merged with Union Pacific and the electrical railroad company was history. The tracks currently end at the Harter Packing Company, the train right-of-way is now the bike path from Tierra Buena to Acacia Street in Sutter.

## Tales of the Northern Electric

### Elizabeth Smith

Elizabeth Smith remembers the train well. As a small child, she lived near the track and saw the car make its daily trips. She rode the car to Sacramento, and later when she went to college she rode it to Chico.

The most memorable thing about the train was the movement of the cars. They rocked so much passengers had to hang on tightly to stay in their seats. The cars were regular large train cars, but they ran on electricity without an engine. Sometimes trains had two cars, sometimes three. She never saw who drove the train, but there was always a conductor to take the tickets.

She remembers it was funny when three train cars rode down the middle of D Street in Marysville.

The power was provided by the third rail, except in town, where there were overhead wires, and at road crossings, where there was a break in the rail. A long train would reach the other side and touch the rail again before the back end had lost its power; a short train had enough momentum to cross the intersection and pick up power again.

Despite the warnings about avoiding the third rail, Elizabeth knew boys with rubber soled tennis shoes who could jump onto the rail and then jump off again.

The train did not automatically stop at every boarding point, so someone wanting to get on the train had to raise the flag, like a semaphore, to get the train's attention.

Crossings were grade crossings - built up like a levee, so it was hard for some cars to get across the track. There were no crossing arms, just warning lights. Elizabeth remembers the story of a woman with a baby who's car got stuck on the tracks - the woman grabbed her baby and got out of the car before it was hit by the train.

### **Bernice Wilson**

Auntie Faye told me that she and Mama (Ruth and Faye Summy) would take the train to high school. We were probably talking about the clothes that kids wear today and Faye told me this story and we had a good laugh. It seems she and Ruth were as bad as the kids are today when it came to what clothes they wore. The fashion then was long, straight skirts that were even narrower at the ankles. This was fine if you were walking sedately as a young lady of the time might be expected, but there were days that the girls were late getting to the train and had to run to catch it. The narrow skirts made it difficult to run so they would have to hitch the skirts up quite high to get any speed. Luckily they had the rest of the trip into Sutter to get their breath back and their skirts back in place.

Occasionally when I was a child, I'd get to go to the movie in Colusa and take the train to get there. As I remember it cost a dime to ride from Meridian to Colusa and back and the movie was another

dime. That doesn't sound like much today, but in those days it was a lot of cash for a day's entertainment. You can imagine that being able to do this was a real treat and it didn't happen very often

I also remember going from Sacramento to Meridian. I think the station in Yuba City was near where Lee's Canton is now. In any case, I remember a man helped me with my suitcase because it was pretty big and I was pretty little. I'd been to Sacramento to stay with my Uncle Ira and Aunt Vivian Warner and then took the train home.

Another thing we kids would do was to flatten pennies on the train track. For some reason it was exciting to see what you ended up with after the train finished with it. Of course, this didn't happen very often - at least not with my pennies - as there simply weren't that many "extra" pennies to waste.

### **Anonymous**

We loved to stay with our Aunt and Uncle. One time when we were staying with them, we walked up to the railroad tracks which weren't too far away. We had heard from other kids that if you jumped on the third rail (the one with the electricity) with both feet you wouldn't be electrocuted, so naturally we wanted to see if this was true. Uncle came along and saw us. He was so upset. He told us that we had to stay at the house and if he saw us be that foolish again, we wouldn't be able to stay with them. Since their house was one of our favorite places to be, we hurried back to the house and never tried any more experiments with the third rail. And, happily, Uncle never told on us.

# THE MARYSVILLE – YUBA CITY RAILROAD

by  
Winifred Peirano Greene

(reprinted from the Sutter County Historical Society News Bulletin, July 1969)

One of the names most frequently heard in accounts of early industrial developments of Marysville and the surrounding area up to 1900 was that of David E. Knight. Some of his enterprises included gas, woolen mills, navigation and the subject of this article, "The Marysville-Yuba City Railroad."

In the early 1860s attempts were begun to acquire franchises to operate railways on the streets of Marysville, and later some proposals were made to run a street railway line between Marysville and Yuba City.

These proposals involved promoters, city councils, boards of supervisors, and the state legislature; and the conflicts of interest could supply the subject for an entire article. Fears were expressed that the granting of a franchise would give the railroads complete control of the city streets.

In the spring of 1888, after assuring the Marysville City council that the venture was in the public interest, an ordinance was adopted by the Council on May 14, granting a right of way for a railway over city streets, to David E. Knight, Charles Weeman, S. H. Bradley and S. C. Deaner.

As Yuba City was not yet incorporated, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors granted a franchise to these same four men to operate on Yuba City streets.

The company incorporated as The Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad Company, and had as its

officers D. E. Knight, president; J. N. Jewett, treasurer; and W. T. Ellis, secretary.

Construction was started in Marysville in May of 1889, and shortly thereafter in Yuba City. Numerous legal difficulties were encountered and injunctions issued or threatened over some aspects of the right of way, methods of construction, weight of rails, etc., etc. Two buildings were acquired in Marysville, one facing on C Street and one on Oak Street just north of Second Street, and these were remodeled for use as the car barn and stable.

Four cars, two open and two closed, were ordered from Holt Brothers in Stockton. Seating capacity was 16 for the closed car and 20 to 30 for the open car. A span of mules was hitched offset so the animals would not have to walk on the rails.

The 19th of August, 1889, was the first regular day of operation, and it followed this route: From Sixth Street in Marysville near the Southern Pacific tracks to C Street, north to Second Street, west to D Street, south to Fifth Street, then across the river onto Bridge Street in Yuba City, north on Plumas Street, east on B Street, then south on Second Street, back to Bridge Street and across the river to Marysville.

The author's father, Thomas W. Peirano, who had been working for Mr. Knight since coming to Marysville from Kansas, was employed as one of his drivers. He was later promoted to "superintendent," and held this



position until the service was supplanted by the Northern Electric Railroad in 1906.

Numerous happenings to himself and the other drivers were related by Tom Peirano to his daughters, some comic, some serious. One of the drivers was held up at gun point by two armed robbers on B Street in Yuba City one night, and five passengers were relieved of a small amount of cash. An inebriated gentleman who had tarried too long at The Cliff House on the Marysville side of the bridge was discovered badly mangled near the tracks and was presumed to have been run over by the car. According to a later account in a Marysville paper, he had recovered sufficiently to resume drinking.

Groups of boys and young men would sneak up behind the car and attempt to derail it, and if the driver could reach them with his whip, they paid dearly for their fun. More often the boys were eager to assist by helping the driver hoist the car back on the tracks when it became derailed.

Another incident related was that of a group of pranksters placing a dummy on the track on the eve of April Fool's Day, which spooked the mules and caused the car to run over the supposed body, giving the driver a terrible scare.

A stub track extended from Second to First and D Streets, to the Marysville Theatre. The cars operated there each night for the convenience of the theatre patrons.

In 1893 Knight attempted to put a motor-driven car in operation, but after numerous trials, the idea was abandoned. The car was noisy, but the chief reason for discontinuing it was that it frightened horses.

During the 1890's some of the streets were being paved in

Marysville, and there was great contention between Mayor W. T. Ellis, Jr., the City Council and Knight over costs, and how the rails should be relaid after the streets were paved.

Knight passed away in 1900. In 1904 rumors began to be heard that the road was to be sold because of its franchise to an electric line that was then building toward Marysville and Yuba City. These rumors proved to be true, and in 1906 the Northern Electric Railway purchased a controlling interest in The Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad, and on November 2, 1906 mule car service was discontinued. The closed cars were moved out on the electric line going north from Yuba City and were used for temporary stations.

At country stations on the steam and electric roads were there was no agent, the trains did not stop, but a flag was available for the patron to wave to the engineer, indicating that he wanted the train to stop. At night a lantern was used or a handful of newspapers set afire.

One of Tom Peirano's sayings, evidently stemming from his railroad work, on seeing a scantily clad person was, "He didn't have enough clothes on to flag a handcar."



Special thanks are due Mr. Earl Ramey for his invaluable help in supplying data for this article.

For persons desiring more details of the Marysville and Yuba City Street Railroad, an excellent article appeared in The Western Railroader issue of August 1966, by Kirby M. Harris, railroad buff, formerly with the Marysville Fire Department.

# Good For Another Hundred Years

by  
Steve Perry

In 1891 the Sutter County Board of Supervisors (L.P. Farmer, L. Summy, P.L. Bunce, W.T. Spilman and W.H. Smith) resolved that the construction of a new Hall of Records for the County of Sutter was necessary. On July 17, 1891 the payment for building a Hall of Records was adopted by resolution agreeing to pay the following:

- 1) \$4,000 in 30 days after execution of the contract and agreement and the giving of a bond;
- 2) \$4,000 when the basement walls are completed;
- 3) \$3,000 when the roof is completed and the balance when the building is accepted by the Board of Supervisors.

On Monday, April 4, 1892, the following resolution was introduced and adopted:

*"Resolved, that the contract of Marysville firm, Swaine and Hudson for building the Hall of Records be accepted as completed, and that the Auditor be and he is hereby authorized to draw his warrant on the County Treasurer for the sum of \$8,833.15 the amount still due said firm on said contract and for extra labor and material furnished by order of the Board."*

(The total cost of building the Hall of Records amounted to \$23,833.15.)

On Tuesday, May 3, 1892, the following resolution was introduced and adopted:

*"Resolved, that Supervisors L.P. Farmer, P.L. Bunce and L. Summy, committee on the Hall of Records, be and they are hereby authorized to have the Hall of Records lot surveyed and grade stakes set, and to enter into any contract for the filling of said lot with dirt and sand, and to do any and all things necessary in the matter of filling said lot."*

On Monday, July 18, 1892, the Board accepted as completed the contract awarded to Office of Specialty Mfg. Company for the furnishings and fittings and instructed the Auditor to draw his warrant in favor of said company in the sum of \$4,100.

On Tuesday, July 19, 1892 the following resolution was adopted:

*"Resolved: -- That the office of the Clerk Auditor and Recorder be and the same is hereby changed from the Court House to the Hall of Records and that said officer be and he is hereby authorized and instructed to move all the records and files belonging to said offices from their present place and place and properly arrange them in the new building."*

It was also authorized for the Clerk to purchase two bookcases for the Hall of Records for \$157.50 and to buy eight chairs for the office. The new Romanesque Revival style building constructed of brick and stone was open for business as the keys were handed over to the Clerk

Recorder, A.H. Hewitt, and for over 100 years the building has been a landmark in Sutter County.

On February 4, 1994 at 12:00 noon, the official Recorder's time clock was unplugged and moved to the new location at 2<sup>nd</sup> and C Streets. It was an emotional time for all. A small group of county employees, with cake and punch in hand, shared memories of the old days of Bette Bell, Jeanine Secrist, Geraldine Hall, and E.M. Boyd. At 5:00 p.m., Cindy McMillan, Deputy Recorder, locked the large, heavy doors for the last time, and the old building sat empty for the first time in 101 years.

Several years later the Sutter County Board of Supervisors decided that the old Hall of Records was a diamond-in-the-rough and should be restored and used as a public meeting hall. The first task at hand was to replace the old roof and clean out the building. This turned out to be easier said than done.

The building was empty from 1994 until the present and in that time the building deteriorated rapidly. With no heat to the building and a failed roof, water seeped into the plaster walls and "melted" it off the walls. None of the documents stored in the building were damaged, however.

Relatively soon after construction was finished in 1892, the flooring on the main floor cracked and the building began to sag and sink in one space. One side of the building had begun to settle. Edward von Geldern, a local engineer, was called in to examine the continuing problem. He noted that the interior pillars were

sturdily holding up the center of the building while the extremely heavy outside walls were settling and cracking. He suggested building perimeters ("checks" to you farmers) around the pillars and filling them with water. This was done and the plaster in the pillars began soaking up water, adding to the weight they were already carrying. Shortly, the center of the building began to settle under the extra weight. When the floor was level, the pillars were allowed to dry, a concrete floor was poured in the basement and concrete walkways were placed around the building to stabilize exterior and interior supports and keep the floor level. When the floor was lasered during the recent restoration, it was found to be not quite level and they poured a new floor on top of the old floor.

Now, for the real story known only by county employees and a few die-hard history buffs, such as Don Burtis, "THE BASEMENT," also known as the place where old county documents went to die . . .

The "BASEMENT" is a room 42' X 55' with beautiful brick arch columns and was the storage room for Sutter County for over 100 years. Anything that was not being used by or was not needed by the Assessor, Tax Collector, Auditor, Schools or the Courts was stacked under the Hall of Records in the "BASEMENT." As one opened the basement door and peered into the darkness, the stale, musty aroma of old books and papers was overwhelming.

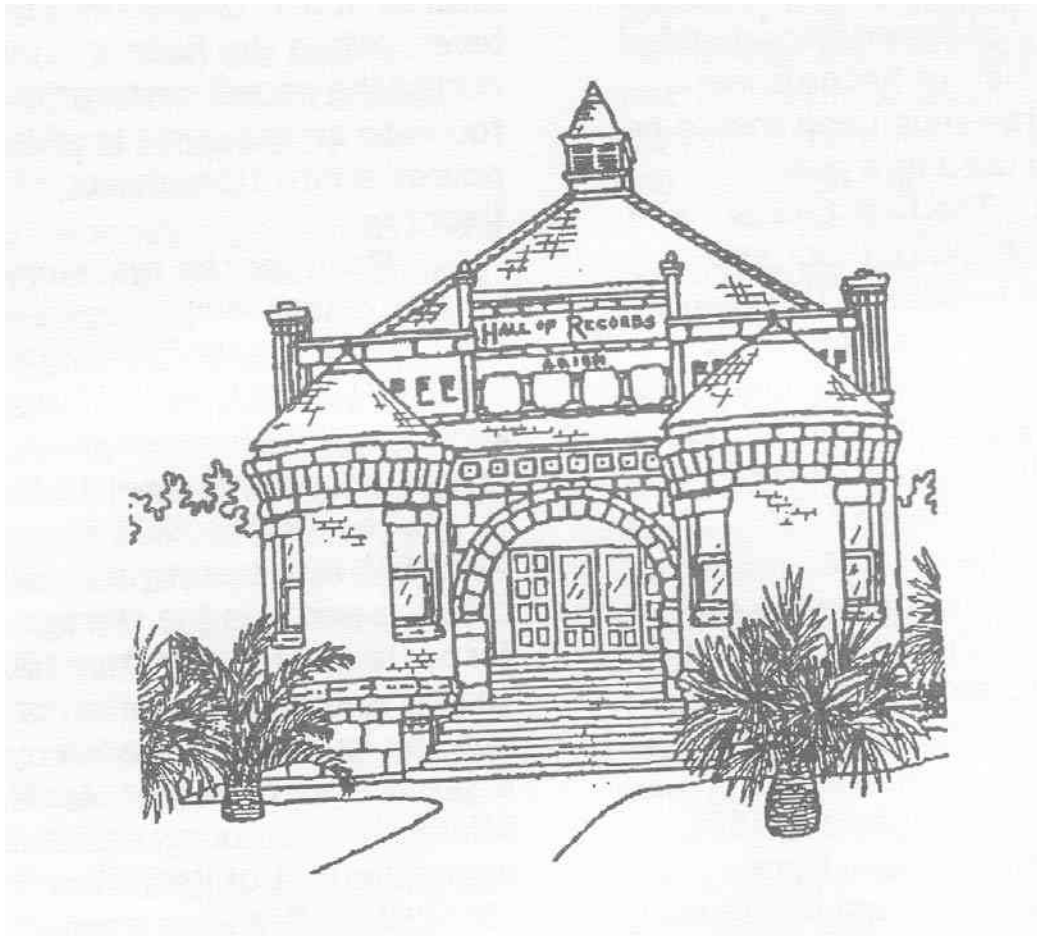
There was, however, a system to this paper junkyard. Each

county office had its section of the basement, and as you turned on the lights the first thing you noticed were row after row of shelves stacked to the ceiling with books and papers covered by years of dirt and dust.

The order to clear out the building for the restoration was given, and each county office was asked to have a department representative examine that office's section of the basement and decide what should be kept and what

should be discarded.

I was the representative for the Assessor's Office. Wearing old jeans and a T-shirt and armed with a flashlight, I discovered many treasures. The assessments of property owners went back to 1858. There were beautiful, hand-colored, hand-drawn maps that disclosed all of the property owners back to the 1870s. I kept it all. Each county office took its turn sifting through the treasures in the basement, and most of the old records were kept.



## Bus Trip Around the Buttes

An interview with  
Marian Regli

This year's Bus Trip Around the Buttes was a success, despite being rained out its first scheduled weekend. Twenty-seven people made the trek and as far as Marian Regli could tell, they all enjoyed themselves. Of course, she sat in the front of the bus, the better to hear guides Don Burtis and Randy Schnabel, so if there was any grumbling she missed it.

Marian first moved to Sutter County from Stockton in 1944, and from the beginning she was fascinated by the Buttes. Until this spring, she didn't realize she'd have a chance to ride through them, and she was surprised by what she saw.

She expected pastures and interesting peaks. She expected brown grass as winter gave way to spring. Instead, she saw many beautiful houses, some apparently patterned after Southern plantations, with pillars at the front. She saw cattle grazing. And she saw green

oases amid the brown.

She was also surprised at the number of schools and cemeteries. Don, apparently without notes, was able to tell all about the schools - who had taught there and when, how long the schools were holding classes.

The crew made one stop, at the Stohlman Cemetery. Marian was impressed by its large size, and again by Don's knowledge of who was buried there.

Thanks to Marian, the group drove all around the town of Sutter (Marian says the bus driver was very accommodating). Marian had only seen Sutter in the dark, and she was interested to get a good look during daylight hours. Don came through again, rattling off facts and interesting information about the various buildings and sites of Sutter.

Marian had such a wonderful time, she urges all those who have not yet made the trip to "get on board" next spring!

## Historical Preservation Committee

The Historical Society is pleased to announce the formation of a new committee. The committee's goals are: 1) Identifying buildings and sites of historical significance in Sutter County, in anticipation of potential listing with state and/or national registries; 2) Identifying and preserving buildings and sites important to our common heritage that may be at risk due to deterioration and development; and 3) Identifying and honoring Sutter County farms that have been owned and operated continuously by the same family for at least one hundred years, i.e. Century Farms.

The committee is looking for volunteers to assist in adding to our list of identified historical buildings and sites, and/or visiting and recording the condition of those sites. We also need information about possible farms or ranches for inclusion in our Century Farms project.

If you are interested in participating in this project, or just know of information that may be useful to the committee, please call the committee chair, Phyllis Smith, at 671-3261.

# Puzzle Page



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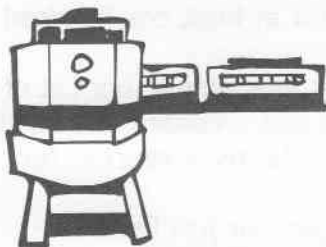
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 HOCKFARM  
 RAILROAD  
 SUTTER

BUTTES  
 ELIZABETH  
 MERIDIAN  
 RECORDS  
 WILSON



# COMING EVENTS

## September

28 *Awakening from the California Dream: Environmental History* opens

## October

6 luncheon in Nicolaus  
11:45 a.m.

12 *Awakening from the California Dream: Environmental History Reception*  
6:00 p.m.  
Program: Phil Mumma, Oakland Museum  
Bob Dawson, Photographer  
7:00 p.m.

18 Bay Area filmmaker Judy Irving  
Dave Rubiales, Local Environment History

## September

8-9 Prune Festival

9 Aviation Exhibit Closes