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Yuba City, California

July 2002

Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Award Winners



Melissa Hemphill and Spencer c'deBaca
Not pictured: Gurjit Takhar



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*The year the director joined the Board.

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President's Message

Summer is here and that means it is time for our annual pot-luck dinner meeting in the Howard Harter Park behind the Museum. This is always a fun meeting as we are treated to the favorite dishes of those attending. The plan for the event is the same as in the past: time to visit, eat, and enjoy a program. In keeping with our series of talks about Sutter County history our speaker will be Dorothy Coats, who will share her knowledge of Pennington, the man and the town. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, July 16.

It appears that 2002 opened a new door to Sutter County development. Urbanization and industrialization are creeping in! I wonder what John Sutter would say about all the growth that is taking place in his old "empire?" Progress and development are inevitable; many of us wonder where it will all end. Some say the day is coming when the entire Sacramento Valley will be urbanized and industrialized. If so, what will happen to all of the historical building and sites the Historical Society feels should be preserved? Our Society should take a strong and firm stand toward their preservation, restoration and declaration of historical landmarks. We need to keep vigilant and express our concerns as developers and politicians make plans that could destroy parts of our history.

As many of you know, the Meridian annual meeting was a great success with a large turnout and an excellent program. The Saturday luncheons are proving to be very appealing to the membership and we will continue with two luncheon meetings a year.

As the community and nation continue to adjust to the war on terrorism, we find many changes happening in our lives; we are warned we have a long, hard road ahead of us and it is improbable we will ever return to the ways we enjoyed before "9-11." I hope stabilization can be accomplished without another great loss of lives. The world has changed and adjustments will be necessary but let us give thanks that we live in the "good old USA" where we are free and enjoy a high standard of living.

Have you visited the Museum lately? The Agriculture Wing is open and offers a look at the farming activities of Sutter County. The Andrew Jackson Grayson Audubon of the West is an excellent exhibit and one I know you will enjoy.

I am indebted to the Directors and members for their continued support and never-ending work to make our Society the success that it is!

John V. Reische
President

Director's Report

The walls of the Museum still echo with the happy and excited voices of the third and fourth grade children who visited the Museum this spring. Each class takes an hour's tour, which is really an intense and information-packed course in local history. The Assistant Curator, who gives two to three tours daily during most of April and May, is exhausted! But it is an important job well done.

Now the staff is squeezing in time to complete the agricultural wing exhibits. Our goal is to have the finishing touches put on before Assistant Curator Kristen Childs leaves in September to attend graduate school. The project has gone on for a long couple of years, as the staff sandwiched its design, research and construction in between full-time regular duties. But the end is now in sight, and, by fall, we know you will be pleased with the results.

An afternoon of old-time games and activities is promised by the Summer Children's Program. On Thursday, July 18 at 1:30, children of all ages are invited to the Howard Harter Memorial Park behind the Museum for lots of fun. In the shade of the big trees, sack races, tug-of-war, a cake walk and lots of other activities from summer days past will bring new memories. The museum will provide cold lemonade and popcorn. The event is free and no reservations are needed.

The new Museum patio is moving right along. The pavers have been laid and walkways and edging are in process. Metal fencing and red rose bushes have been ordered. Paver sales have reopened with 12" terra cotta pavers containing two lines of engraving (20 letters and spaces in each line) available for \$100 each. Pick up a brochure at the Museum to make your family, business or organization name, special event commemoration or memorial a permanent part of the new patio. Your support benefits the Museum. Be a part of history!

The last day to view the *Andrew Jackson Grayson, Audubon of the West* exhibit is Sunday, July 14. In September we look forward to a new exhibit featuring the art photography of Tim Moen. Tim has documented California's oak trees as they face the threat of the new disease, Sudden Oak Death Syndrome. Countless of our native oaks have fallen victim to this disease, as scientists struggle to stem its spread in the oak species, as well as to understand whether it poses a threat to other California trees such as redwoods. Watch for the opening and program dates coming soon.

Enjoy a wonderful summer.

Julie Stark
Director

Editor's Page

In this issue we are pleased to offer several articles taken from documents written by our members or inspired by interviews with local residents. We're sure those who are showcased or contributed can tell you it's painless, in fact it's fun, to tell stories about your history and what life was like for you and your family in years past.

Celia Ettl wrote about her house in two documents, one a letter to a friend and another a report for the book Worth Keeping. She gave great detail about the house's origins, how it was when she moved in, and the improvements her family made. She included a floor plan to show how the remodel changed the house. We have combined the documents to give you a picture of the house, as well as the event that led to the letter.

Many of you may have comparable documents about old houses, or stories to share about the house where you live or where you grew up. The history of houses can be fascinating, and we'd love to have you share your stories with our readers.

Leo Michel grew up in Sutter County on a farm homesteaded by his great-grandfather. He lives on a Century Farm, and we are pleased to share some of his memories about growing up near Nicolaus.

Warren Hall talked to us about early grocery stores in and around Yuba City. Mr. Hall worked in, or owned and operated, grocery stores most of his adult life. We are hoping to jog some memories about businesses in Sutter County. While the backbone of our county may be agriculture, we've had cities chock full of businesses for over 150 years as well. We'd love a chance to focus on "city living" in Sutter County.

Kristen Childs, who leaves this summer to attend graduate school in Riverside, provided an article on the origins of Yuba City. Perhaps we can prevail on her to contribute from her new location.

In our next issue we'll continue this trend of sharing information from long-time Sutter County residents. We'd love to talk to you or someone you know - please give us a call!

Sharyl Simmons
743-3741

Phyllis Smith
671-3261

Memorials

In Memory of **Melvin C. Adams**
Howard & Ruth Anthony
Dorothy Ettl
Etta Frink

In Memory of **Laura C. Hilbers Ahlers**
Mr. & Mrs. R.A. Schnabel

In Memory of **Edward Allen**
Sparky & Marilyn Kirby

In Memory of **John Borgstrom**
Bob & Katie Bryant
Etta Frink
Gene & Babs Lonon
Jane Washburn

In Memory of **Frank Bowles**
W. C. McFarland

In Memory of **Herbert G. Brown**
Robert Coats
Mr. & Mrs. R.A. Schnabel

In Memory of **Eva Chan**
Gene & Babs Lonon

In Memory of **Arthur W. Coats**
Robert Coats

In Memory of **Donald S. Donaldson**
Howard & Ruth Anthony

In Memory of **Henry Ehly**
Frederick & Jane Boone

In Memory of **Phyllis Hall**
Gordon and Betty Brant
Wilma Eells-Schwartz

In Memory of **Leo Lopez**
Elizabeth & Everett Berry

In Memory of **Marilyn Seagren Mesch**
Bob & Katie Bryant

In Memory of **Gil Mulcahy**
Sadao & Irene Itamura
Pat Kiesow
Robert Kemp
Harry Covey

In Memory of **H. Earl Parker**
W. C. McFarland

In Memory of **Suzanne Reynolds**
Nancy Barbaste
Michelle Christensen
Sadao & Irene Itamura
Gene & Babs Lonon
Dorothy Munger
Maureen Tarke

In Memory of **Hilda Rose**
The 39er's Club
Bogue Country Club
Frederick & Jane Boone
Sam & Becky Anderson
Allen & Dorothy Sutfin

In Memory of **Ivadel Simmons**
Francisco & Rosey Damboriena
Edith Love
Richard & Elaine Tarke

In Memory of **Abner Sneed**
Robert Coats

In Memory of **Catherine Webb**
Dorothy Munger
Allen & Dorothy Sutfin

Museum Gifts

California Retired Teachers
Judy Wessing
Elizabeth Hadley

Potluck Picnic in the Park

Come to our general membership meeting Tuesday, July 16 in the Howard Harter Park behind the museum. Social time begins at 5:30, dinner at 6:00, and the program will follow. Dorothy Redhair Coats will speak to us about Pennington - the Man and the Town.

Mark your calendars and bring the dish of your choice. See you there!

October Luncheon Buffet

There are a few changes in the works for our October luncheon meeting. This year the meeting will be Saturday, October 12 at the **Native Daughters Hall** at 7393 Lyons Street in Sutter (the corner of California and Lyons). Information about the price, menu and program will be in the next bulletin.

Patio Pavers

Patio pavers are again available for engraving with a message of your choice. The 12-by-12 terra cotta tile can display a memorial message, a family, organization or business name, or commemorate a birthday, wedding, anniversary, or other special event. Each paver can display two lines of 20 letters each. Remember spaces count too! Stop by the museum and see the engraved pavers that are already in place in the new patio.

Pavers are \$100 per tile and for that price you can make your message a permanent part of the museum patio. The sale of the pavers is a benefit for the Community Memorial Museum. We are encouraging residents, businesses and organizations to become a permanent part of history while supporting the museum.

Order forms are available at the museum or you can call for information at (530) 822-7141.

Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest Winners – 2002

The Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest honors Museum Commissioner Judith Fairbanks, a fourth grade teacher who loved history.

The Essay Contest is sponsored jointly by the Museum and the Historical Society. The contest is open to fourth and fifth graders, who are studying California history and the westward movement in the United States.

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.

Melissa Hemphill, First Place

Winship School

Teacher: Barbara Smith

Grades 4 and 5

Dear Ma and Pa,

I'm here. I am at Sutter County. I have just arrived. It is so different here than at home. The people are different, really different. We live in a way different house than home. The houses are so plain compared to ours. The houses are made out of wood. The houses are very small only a few people can fit in the houses. I am living with Uncle Kam. I work at his shop with him. He is a blacksmith. He has another shop where he sells axes and timber or wood stuff like that.

A lot of people don't own that much land except for some richer people. It is really different here, people, food, the look and most important of all is the town. It is not a large town.

It is pretty small. The food we eat is like squash, porridge and beans.

In the town we live in our house is the only house by a river.

The people here are hard working, very hard working and nice and generous. The food is not bad. It was just different. I kind of like the food here because I'm trying new things. Now it has been about 2 weeks since I have been here.

Everywhere we travel we always travel on Uncle Kam's horse. But if the place is nearby we usually walk. Uncle Kam's horse's name is Yukon. I will be coming back in about 4 or 5 days. The last 2 or 3 weeks were really fun. I think I might be a little bit homesick. Well we are about to go to sleep now but we always have a fire. Everyone in town has to keep themselves warm. Well I had a good time at Sutter County for 4 weeks. But now I am ready to come home. Bye.

Spencer c'deBaca, Second Place
Pleasant Grove School
Teacher: Wendy Rosell
Grade 4

Dear Annette,

It is great here in California. My friend James Marshall discovered gold a few months ago. I've counted 14 years since I last layed eyes on you. I have seen many animals here like bears, beavers, cattle, chickens, coyotes, eagles, foxes, frogs, goats, and hawks. Many people live here in California including Africans, Americans, Asians, Chinese, Egyptians, Irishmen, Mexicans, Russians, and Spanish. People here have many unalike jobs here like Baptists, businessmen, doctors, farmers, hunters, lawyers, priests and trappers. As I was saying about James Marshall discovering gold that date was January 24, 1848. He came into my office and asked to talk to me secretly. I led him to a small room where we could not be overheard. He took a small pouch off his belt and tore it open. A couple of tiny little flecks flew out on to the desk. He thought he had discovered gold here in California. I ran some tests on the yellow metal and it turned out that it was gold. We both stood there in disbelief staring at the yellow metal. When I got here to California I wished you were here with me. I wish you

could see the things I saw and the things I did, but alas I have come to a conclusion that you my darling are not here in this wonderful valley of Sacramento. Did I mention how many plants are here in this marvelous land? There are rows and rows of wheat and other crops. There are mile after mile of roaming cattle in California. I've been to a bunch of places in the United States like New York, New Mexico, Oregon, Sitka, Alaska, and Hawaii. All of which I love dearly for all the fun I've had. I love you and I wish you were here in California.

Your disgraceful Husband,

Johann Agustus Sutter



Gurjit Takhar, Third Place
Nuestro School
Teacher: Nina Sharma
Grade 5

Dear Aunt Mala,

We have finally arrived in California. After we got on the ship in Italy we crossed the Atlantic Ocean and landed in New York. It was an awful trip. Almost everyone got seasick including me. I was really glad to see land.

After we landed in New York, we were lucky to find a wagon train going west. It took us several weeks to get a wagon and enough supplies for the long trip. The wagon train went very slowly and it was hard crossing the waterways. When we would go through the water and over bumps some of our things fell out of the wagon.

We then headed for the mountains, the journey was getting harder every day. I was hoping that the journey would soon end but it went on and on. Pa told us to be patient because life will be better for us when he finds gold. I hope he finds gold quickly after he arrives.

Finally we arrived at Sutter's Fort. Pa is headed for the diggins to get gold. He says that it is no place for women and children so Ma and I went with a group of people up the Sacramento River. Going up the river we saw many trees, birds,

wild animals and finally saw a mountain range the Buttes. The others in the party decided to settle in the valley below this mountain range, so Ma and I decided to stay, too. Since there were only a few men with the party it was very hard to get houses built so we lived in a tent for a long time. Ma and I planted a garden and it was hard work. It was exciting to finally move into our wooden house. You can't believe all of the chores that must be done each day. Ma and I have to get up early to feed the animals, get water to wash clothes, wash the clothes, and lay them in the sun to dry. We have to tend the garden, make soap and candles, cook all the meals and keep the house clean. It will be easier when Pa returns from the diggins. Sometimes, Ma tells me to go out and play with my corn husk dolls that you sent with me.

Sometimes I write to Pa but it takes a long time for the letter to get home to him. I miss him and hope he comes home soon with lots of gold.

The Ettl House

by
Celia Ettl

Garmire Road, Meridian
Walter & Celia Ettl
Original owner/builder: Myers, father
of Roy Myers and Margaret Madden
Built 1905
Subsequent owners: Dick Hoffman
(1911), Bank of America (1929?)
Built of redwood
Typical 1900 ranch house

4/18/84

I went to the Sutter County Historical Society dinner and annual meeting in Yuba City at the Methodist Church on B Street last night. I rode in with Min Harris. We picked up Sarah in Sutter. In the parking lot we met the Maddens - Mrs. T. S. Madden and her son and his wife. They are friends of Min and Larry Harris. We all sat together at one table for 8. Trent Myers (no relation) sat with us. Trent and Sarah were in high school together at Sutter.

The old Mrs. Madden is Roy Myers' sister. The Myers family used to own our home ranch. They sold it to Dick Hoffman in 1908 (Roy told me 1911). Then Dick Hoffman lost it to the bank at the time of the Great Crash - around 1929. The Bank of America owned it for years. At one time Cecil and Cecilia Davis (Jane Givyer's parents) lived here. When they lived here Mary Capaul and Jess Perry (Gene Perry's parents) lived in the Blackmere house. They had a dairy down there. After Cecil Davis moved out this house was empty. Arnold Christiansen rented it and the Tisdale ranch. He used this

house to store his hay in. He repaired the house while we lived at the Noah place so that Red and Margaret Troughton could live here.

When we bought the place in about 1950 no one lived here. We remodeled the house. It was built on a brick foundation. We put it on a concrete foundation and lowered the house and bolted it to the foundation. Mr. Don Staple of Yuba City did our contracting on the house. Our door and window frames are his signature on all of his work.

The house Mr. Myers built in 1905 faced almost north and south. The front door was to the north. The original walls are 1x12 redwood boards, a one inch air space with the air blocks, and a 1x12 redwood board. On each side is two layers of sheetrock or wall board. The north wind howls here so I did not want a north door.

We have seven children so we needed four bedrooms. We added the two bedrooms where the front porch used to be. We added a big south porch and bathroom with a shower (no tub). I made the pantry into a real pantry full of shelves, raised all of the kitchen windows, put a double sink and drainboards under the south windows, and cupboards under the east windows. We put a door into the west bedroom from the kitchen. That bedroom became my dining room.

We closed the door to the porch (west) from the dining room. We closed the door to the bathroom (north wall). We knocked the wall out between the bathroom and the closets

between the two bedrooms on the west side of the house. That made a big bathroom. We used the closet doors to go from the bathroom to the dining room or to the north bedroom. Between the north bedroom and the new bedroom on the front porch we put two closets to service each bedroom. We built in drawers on the west wall of the old bedroom - and double desks!

On the east side I changed the dining room into my living room. We changed the stove to the south wall and moved the three windows together. Later we added book cases and a window seat to the east wall. The doors all the same.

We changed the old parlor into a bedroom for the girls. We put a closet the full length of the north wall with two doors. We also put in built in drawers and desks on the full east wall. At the end of the hall are the doors to the two new bedrooms and my linen closet. The very end of the hall is a big square closet for the northeast bedroom.

Mrs. Madden last night asked questions about the house. The original house was remodeled in 1905. Just as they finished remodeling it the house burned. So this house was built in 1905 to replace the old house.

Originally the house faced the Sacramento River levee. There were two rows of orange trees from the house to the palm trees at their gate. They lined the path to the front door. The trees were planted in the 1880s or earlier. They were large trees when Mrs. Madden was a little girl. I told her we had two of the original trees here at the house and the grapefruit tree. I told her how the grapefruit grow in

clusters like grapes. She said that she had forgotten that until I reminded her.

She said that their family orchard was south of the house. When we moved here wild blackberries grew so high over that site that when Walt removed them we found a three room cabin and several dead fruit trees. Mrs. Madden and I decided Dick Hoffman built the cabin as a bunk house for his dairy crew. We moved the cabin up to where it is now. The room to the east is my store room. The other two rooms became one and is Walt's "pool room" because we have a pool table in it. When we first moved here we bought a 1917 Brunswick pool table from a defunct pool hall in Linda for \$100. We got the table, ceils, two grannies, several balls, chalk, etc.

When we moved here in 1950 there were five orange trees and one grapefruit tree left. We built a wood shed onto the north end of the cabin. That removed two of the juice orange trees. These juice orange trees were trees that froze in the 1927 freeze and came up below the bud or graft. They are from the original rootstock. We built our garage to the south end of the cabin. It's a two car garage. Later we made the pool room larger and added a one car garage plus a big store room west of the original garage. Off the pool room but part of the storeroom wall we built a half bath (a toilet and wash stand). When we did that we took out two more juice oranges. We also planted two lemon trees and three orange trees, a tangerine tree and five cumquat trees.

We dug a well between the garage and the shop. The well east of the house was always full of sand. The new well was dug by Bill Flynn from Sutter. We have our pressure system

there. We tore down the pump and water deal east of the house. We closed the well and planted it into lawn and it is my east lawn.

Mrs. Madden said the trading boats landed at their house. They made butter to sell to the trading boats. They also sold their eggs to them.

They walked down the levee to the weir to catch fish. The men got them with pitch forks from pools within the weir.

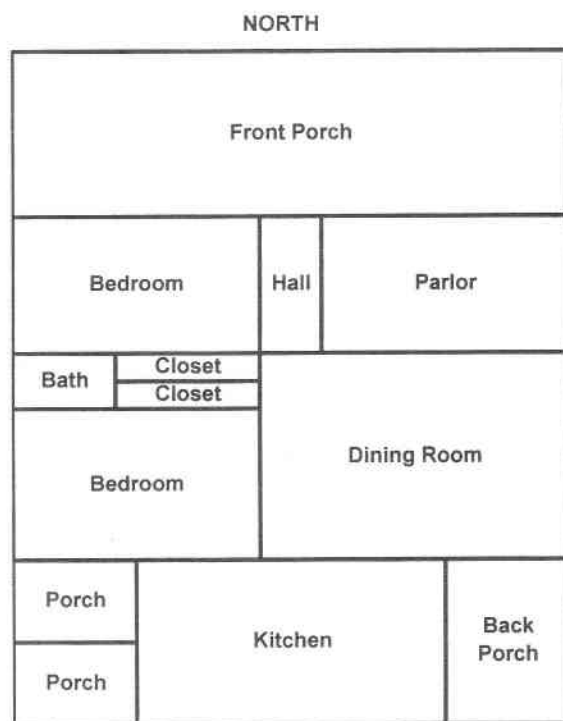
The roads used to be on top of the levee. That is why the house faced west.

Mrs. Madden attended school with Alvin Weis (my cousin George's

granddad) (the dean of lawyers in the Yuba-Sutter area). Mr. Ed Reische, the teacher at Winship at that time, said that Alvin Weis was the most brilliant brain he ever met! Roy was in Alvin's class (?)

Mrs. Madden started school when she was 5 years old to bring the attendance at school up to required A.D.A. to keep the school open!

When the Myers moved from here to the Myers ranch on South Butte Road (where Wayne Myers lives now) they took black walnuts from the trees here and planted them on their new homestead. When Roy married he built a house across the road from the Myers home place.



Interview with Leo Michel

Leo Michel lives on a farm in Nicolaus that was homesteaded by his great-grandfather in 1865. At well over one hundred years old, the farm is a Sutter County Century Farm.

Leo's great-grandfather came from Germany in 1865 and homesteaded 120 acres. The farm has been worked continuously by the Michel family ever since. Michel Road near Nicolaus is named for the family.

The farm has grown over time - two of Leo's boys now farm 800-900 acres of alfalfa, rice, and wheat, and have some beef cattle. Leo's great-grandfather and grandfather raised mostly wheat and cattle - they didn't irrigate, so they couldn't grow rice. But now rice and alfalfa have taken over. Leo's father also had a dairy - when Leo was a kid, most farmers had some dairy cattle. The farm got automatic milkers when Leo graduated from high school. Leo sold the dairy in 1977 or '78 as keeping it going was a constant operation and his boys weren't too keen on it.

Leo recalls that all farmers also raised chickens and had a vegetable garden.

Leo was born on the ranch in 1924. He had one younger sister, who is now his closest neighbor. As a boy, Leo watched the summer baseball league. In those days, they would go to Sacramento for movies or other entertainment, but now they go more often to Yuba City than Sacramento. He also rode horses for fun.

Leo went to Nicolaus Grammar School, then to East Nicolaus High School. The grammar school is still standing on Marcum Road and is owned

by the St. Boniface Catholic Church. The high school no longer exists and the local kids go to high school in Trowbridge.

There were about 100 students in the whole high school. When Leo graduated in 1942, there were 26 students in his graduating class, about half girls and half boys. As a boy Leo worked on the farm with his dad and planned to continue farming, but due to the war, he, along with probably 95% of the other boys, went right into the service. Leo served in the Air Force and went to Korea in 1946-47, where he worked in the motor pool as a mechanic. He already had some experience with vehicles from his work on the farm. Leo says the Koreans were always telling them they should go home - a buddy of his replied that he'd be glad to go, "just show me the way!"

Leo went to school with most of the same people his whole childhood. And while many people have moved away from the area, some have stayed nearby. His class will have its 60th reunion this summer at the Rio Oso Hall, and Leo hopes 15-20 people will show up for it.

When Leo came back from the service he went home and worked the farm with his dad. They did most of the work themselves but sometimes had hired hands. They did not provide housing but his sister helped their mother cook for the workers. They had tractors but also used horses for cutting or raking hay or herding cattle. They also had one cattle dog.

Leo didn't work all the time - for fun he went to Swiss dances and

watched Swiss wrestling. The Hermann Sons Hall used to have Swiss dances every month or six weeks. It was at a dance that Leo met Eleanor, his future wife. Eleanor was from South Sacramento, but her parents were from Switzerland. In 1950 Leo and Eleanor married and built the house they live in now, on Lee Road, on the Michel farm. They added on to the home to accommodate their family of six children.

The children are still in the area. In addition to the two boys who farm, one son is a teacher at Yuba College, one is a salesman for Farmer's Rice, and both daughters live nearby. In fact, three of the boys live on Marcum Road.

Leo has not seen many changes in the area because Nicolaus has not been subject to development, but a few businesses have gone by the wayside. Nicolaus used to have a grocery store and two bars, but they have been gone for a while. One of the bars reopened last year. Leo's mother did her shopping in Nicolaus or East Nicolaus, but Eleanor now goes to Yuba City once a week.

Leo and his family never felt isolated living away from town - they were used to the solitude and had friends from school and St. Boniface Catholic Church. When he was young they had a doctor who made house calls. As an adult their family doctor was in Lincoln, 18 miles away, and when he retired they began going to Yuba City. Although Leo was born on the farm, his children were born at Mercy Hospital in Sacramento.

When Leo was a kid, probably in the 1930s, people who owned the area that is now Lake Minden sold ten acres of it to Gladding McBean in Lincoln.

The dirt had the right composition for the clayworks, and Gladding McBean dug it out and hauled it away. The next people who bought the property had a big hole, so they filled it with water and opened a Thousand Trails campground. Now people come from all over to camp there.

Like everyone else, Leo's family had to evacuate during the flood of 1955. The water came to the top of the windows inside their house. They had enough warning to drive their cattle away, but lots of hard work went down the river. Eleanor and their three small children went to her folks' in Sacramento. When the waters receded, they rented a house near their ranch while theirs was being rebuilt. They were not able to move back in until May or June of 1956. And they had to replant all their crops.

Leo fled flood waters twice more, in 1986 and 1997. Both times he hauled his cattle out in trucks. He hired help and also got assistance from neighbors. They'd hitch up a trailer behind a pickup and take a few cows at a time.

Leo has traveled to Switzerland three times to visit his wife's family. Some of them have also visited here. Her family speaks Swiss, but the younger ones speak English. Leo says he's tired of traveling and doesn't plan to go again. His wife visited without him two years ago.

Leo is now retired, but stays active. About four to five years ago he gave up most of his farming activities, but he still rides around the ranch every day in his pickup, telling the boys what to do and when to do it. Part of being a farmer and a dad is to pass on what you know. We're glad that Leo decided to let us in on some of his past.

The Early History and Development of Yuba City

by
Kristen Childs

The beginnings of Yuba City mirror many of the typical gold rush towns in California. But as many of the gold rush towns faded away after the 1860s, Yuba City began to grow. Its fate as a city had everything to do with its location in California and very little to do with the people who founded the city and its early inhabitants.

In 1859, with the gold rush in full swing, investors were looking into property all over California's interior. On July 27, 1849, in Sacramento, property was deeded from John Sutter to Sam Brannan, Henry Cheever, Pierson Reading and himself. The property was located on the west bank of the Feather River where the Yuba River flowed into its waters. The gentlemen hired Joseph Ruth to map out the plat of the potential town. Ruth's map divided the four miles along the river into square blocks numbering the streets from A to Z from the north to south and 1st to 13th from the river to the west. Most blocks were divided into eight plots for sale, but a few were left for city parks and a courthouse square. The town was named Yuba City after the Maidu Indian village that was located on the site.

Earlier in July, an expedition to the site by a group that included Henry Cheever chose the site of Yuba City and secured a partnership with Sutter.¹ By the time the deed was drawn up, the group had grown to include Sam

Brannan and Pierson Reading. The site was chosen for its location on the Feather River. It was the furthest point north that the large steamboats could navigate and a perfect location for men and supplies to use as a jumping off point for the northern mines. The west bank was chosen over the east bank because it was believed to be a better location for ships to dock. This decision would prove to be the failure of Yuba City as a great Gold Rush town, but ultimately gave the city its ideal location for a thriving agricultural town.

Like many entrepreneurs and founding fathers, these men were connected through many different investments and adventures. All of the four partners had been in California before the Gold Rush. John Sutter, of course, was the first settler in Northern California. His contacts originated through his fort on the Sacramento, which everyone visited for supplies. Sam Brannan had many contacts through his newspaper, the *California Star*, and his landholdings. Sam Brannan had already purchased property from John Sutter on the Feather River at Nicolaus. Reading had purchased land in other parts of California, and had done well in mining operations. Only Cheever was a newcomer to northern California, but he was experienced in business partnerships. Cheever wasted no time and was in business with Sutter by 1848, moving supplies to the miners.²

¹ Earl Ramey, "The Cheever Family and the Founding of Yuba City," *Sutter County Historical Society Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 7, October 18, 1960, pg. 4.

² Earl Ramey, "The Cheever Family and the Founding of Yuba City," *Sutter County Historical*

Despite the number of founding fathers of Yuba City, who divided the property equally among them, none of them actually lived in Yuba City. The first inhabitants of the city were David Cheever and Tallman Rolfe. David was the brother of Henry and recently arrived in California upon hearing his brother's account of the Gold Rush. What better place to settle than your brother's newly founded town of Yuba City? The two partners took their first trip up to the Yuba City site in August with building supplies, as well as store supplies. Their first task was to build a store. "The store was made of rough posts split from trees growing in the vicinity. These were set upright in a trench as palisades, and cotton cloth was stretched over a light ridge pole overhead to form a roof." They took a second trip up the river in September to bring more supplies.³ At this point they were open for business in the new town of Yuba City. They advertised in August in the *Sacramento Banner* that "Rolfe & Cheever, having established a store at Yuba City, will keep constantly on hand a large and general assortment of dry goods, groceries, provisions, &c, which will be sold low for cash or gold dust."⁴ The original store of Rolfe and Cheever was located on Water Street. Currently that location is under the levee behind the county buildings on Second Street.

Yuba City's first year proved to be a success even if its

accommodations were sparse. William Armstrong, a Scottish immigrant, who writes an account of Yuba City in his memoirs, built the first house.

"...At that time Yuba City consisted of (Mrs.) Linder's tent and a half pole, half canvas tent put up by Rolfe & Cheever. These last two offered me two lots if I would put up a house on one. I agreed to do so and put up the first house at Yuba City. The house was built of oak clapboards and in the spring I put a floor in that cost \$500.00 a thousand feet. Every night after the house was built, men would come and offer to pay a dollar a night to sleep on the floor. Travelers, I mean, of course. In Feb. 1850 I started the first ferry at Yuba City and my first job was ferrying over the packs of thirty-five mules. I had a whale boat to use for a ferry boat."⁵

Armstrong's account may have been an exaggeration since there are conflicting stories about the first ferry in Yuba City. Other claims to the first ferry go to Rolfe & Cheever and George M. Hanson.

By the census of 1850, there were 336 people inhabiting the little city. In April, a reporter from the *Placer Times* described Yuba City as "rapidly increasing" and "enjoying an active trade."⁶ This would prove to be its largest population for the next twenty years. Among the new improvements were "a great many tents, some used for stores, some for saloons and gambling houses, and still others for residence purposes."⁷

Society Bulletin, Vol. 2 No. 7, October 18, 1960, pg. 3.

³ Earl Ramey, "The Cheever Family and the Founding of Yuba City," *Sutter County Historical Society Bulletin*, Vol. 2 No. 7, October 18, 1960, pg. 5.

⁴ Thompson and West, *History of Sutter County*, 1879, pg. 100.

⁵ William Armstrong, '49 *Experiences*, Bancroft Library, 1877, pp. 10-11.

⁶ Thompson and West, *History of Sutter County*, 1879, pg. 100.

⁷ Thompson and West, *History of Sutter County*, 1879, pg. 100.

The city of Marysville across the river had also been established and settled by the spring of 1850. There seemed to be no problem with the steamers landing on the east shore of the Feather River, so most landed at Marysville to drop their supplies and passengers on the same side as the mines. Yuba City's traffic came from those traveling by wagon from Sacramento. Some crossed over the Feather River farther south at Nicolaus but many traveled up to Yuba City and then across the river by ferry to Marysville. While Yuba City had its businesses, most business owners chose to establish themselves in Marysville for obvious reasons. Marysville was growing rapidly and well on its way to becoming the third largest city in California.

In 1851, there was a mass exodus of Yuba City to Marysville. Marysville had proved to be the business center of the area. Yuba City was reduced to a small agricultural hub that relied on Marysville for supplies and goods. According to Mrs. D. B. Bates' diary, "Yuba City, with the exception of three or four houses, has been removed to Marysville." A poem, written by John R. Ridge to mourn the city, referred to it as "thus doomed, and thus deserted."

The years between 1851 and 1870 was a period of slow growth for Yuba City but steady growth for the county of Sutter. Most of the events that helped to root the small city were county related. In 1856, Yuba City was voted the county seat, bringing all the county affairs to the little city. To house the records of the county and to conduct judicial affairs, a new courthouse was built in 1858 on the present site at Second Street. Also

during this time Sutter County was gaining its reputation in the fruit industry. "In 1852, Yuba City consisted of one hotel, the Western House, one small grocery store, two saloons, one blacksmith shop, one justice of the peace's office, a post office, fifteen or twenty houses, and a population of about one hundred and fifty."⁸

The early developed boundaries of Yuba City were Water Street at the Feather River, Bridge Street to the North, C Street to the south and the end of B and C Streets to the west. Second Street became the center of town. The first extension to the city was in 1869 with the Hudson Addition. The Hudson Addition opened Yuba City up to a sixteen square block area. Only Second Street remained from the original Ruth map; the Hudson Addition renamed the streets west from Second Street to Sutter, Yolo, Solano, and Sonoma Streets. From north to south the streets were renamed Main, Oak, Webb, Bridge, and A Streets.

The original courthouse burned down in 1871 and a new one was built on the same location. The new courthouse was expanded to accommodate the growing county. Unfortunately, the new courthouse also burned down in 1899. It was decided that the courthouse should be rebuilt exactly as before, which is the current courthouse still in use by the county.

A new industry found its way to Yuba City in the 1870's causing a boom to both Yuba City and Sutter County. Fruit orchards abounded in Sutter County and packing and canning houses begin to be established in Yuba City. This time the city was on the right side

⁸ Thompson and West, *History of Sutter County*, 1879, pg. 101.

of the river for convenient access to the local orchards. At the same time, the railroads became an economical way to ship fruit in California as well as across the country and opened up Sutter County's influence to the nation. In 1879, Yuba City included "one Court House, two churches, one school house, one Masonic Hall, one brewery, four warehouses, one flouring mill, one general store, one drug store, two grocery stores, nine saloons, one meat market, one barber shop, one confectionery store, one hotel, one livery stable, three blacksmith and wagon shops, one post office, five attorneys, two physicians, one weekly newspaper, about seventy dwelling houses and a population of about six hundred."⁹

Expansion in Yuba City continued. In the 1880s the local chamber of commerce started a campaign to attract people to Yuba and Sutter Counties claiming that anything would grow in its rich soil. A brochure from 1887 boasts of the many amenities that Yuba City had to offer.

"There are many fine residences, with beautiful grounds filled with orange trees and flowers of kinds so tender that it is difficult to keep them alive as house plants in the East. The town is furnished with gas and water by the Marysville companies, and enjoys all of the benefits of city life without any of the discomforts."¹⁰

The Teegarden Addition extended Yuba City to the western boundary of Plumas Street in 1888. A Hall of Records was built in 1891 to hold the county records and relieve the

crowded courthouse. The new Hall was built on the site adjacent to courthouse. To protect the Hall from fire the county board specified that the Hall of Records be constructed of all non-flammable materials. The building was restored in 2000 and is still being used by the county.

Incorporation for the city of Yuba City finally came in 1908. Instead of a small city surrounded by orchards, Yuba City began to envelop the orchards around it as its borders spread. Yuba and Sutter Counties would be labeled the "Peach Bowl of the World" in the 1920s and Yuba City's future would forever be connected with the fruit industry.

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⁹ Thompson and West, *History of Sutter County*, 1879, pg. 101.

¹⁰ Community Memorial Museum Archives, 76.10.1, pg. 21.

Andrew Jackson Grayson

On May 21 the Museum held a reception to welcome its new exhibit, the paintings of Andrew Jackson Grayson. Following the reception was a program presented by Andrew Hoyem of Arion Press, which published Grayson's work.

Grayson's paintings of western birds rival those of John James Audubon, although he never gained Audubon's fame. At the time of his death in 1869 he was the most accomplished bird painter in the United States. His paintings, done between 1854 and his death, were never published because of the expense of reproducing his watercolors, and lay in relative obscurity in the University of California's Bancroft Library at Berkeley until their publication in 1986.

Grayson's 156 paintings are showcased in *Birds of the Pacific Slope*, where they are reproduced at the original large size. Arion Press printed 400 copies of the plates and a biography, which sells for \$4,500. Many of the birds were never before painted and some were unknown to western science. Unlike Audubon, who relied heavily on stuffed birds, Grayson painted his birds in the wild, allowing him to avoid Audubon's sometimes stilted poses. Grayson's birds were shown acting naturally - nesting, eating and hunting.

The exhibit originated at the Napa Valley museum and is sponsored by the California Council for the Humanities and the California Exhibition Resources Alliance. It is traveling throughout California and will be at our museum through July 15.

Grayson was born in Louisiana in 1818 to a pioneer family. He was interested in wildlife and started sketching as a boy. But when he went to college, his father forbade him to study art. After school he married Frances and had a son, Edward, and in 1846 migrated with his family to California. He was always a talented writer and wrote about his travels. His writing ability would serve him well in later years.

Grayson and his family settled in Yerba Buena, later called San Francisco, where he opened the Pioneer Bookstore. He also invested in real estate and thrived, becoming a millionaire. A town in Stanislaus County was named for him (it is near Westley). But in an economic downturn he lost much of his fortune and was left only prosperous.

About this time Grayson saw a copy of Audubon's *Birds of America*. He still enjoyed naturalist activities, and when he saw that Audubon had painted only birds east of the Missouri River, he seemed to have found "his proper channel" and decided to paint the birds of the Pacific Slope.

Grayson started painting in 1854. In 1856 he published his first magazine article. He then offered his services as a naturalist to the ten-year-old Smithsonian Institution.

In 1857, working for the Smithsonian, Grayson and his family moved to Mexico for a year. Unfortunately, his early paintings were lost in a shipwreck. He painted many more while in Mexico, using living birds for models, catching them in lifelike poses. He carefully recorded

descriptions, measurements and behaviors, and took samples of plants from an area where he'd found a bird so he could accurately paint them in later.

Grayson made two more trips to Mexico, and spent the summer of 1859 in the Napa Valley. He painted the valley quail, later to become California's state bird, and a lithograph of this painting was his only work published during his lifetime. The color original no longer exists.

During the next ten years Grayson and his wife spent time in Mazatlan, sometimes working for the Smithsonian, collecting specimens and painting birds. He visited some remote islands southeast of Mazatlan and there found birds western science had not seen. He approached the Smithsonian about publishing his paintings but between his inability to show his sometime sponsor samples of his work and a devastating fire at the institution, they couldn't help him. He decided to look elsewhere and asked the Mexican Emperor Maximilian for help, and although the Mexican Academy of Sciences agreed to publish his work, political instability in Mexico resulting in Maximilian's execution meant that work never commenced.

In 1867 Grayson visited the remote islands with his son, but it was an ill-fated trip. They were shipwrecked and stranded on an island. In the week that elapsed before they were rescued, Grayson managed to collect all the birds on the island. But that small success was followed by the

murder of his son when they returned to port.

Grayson had contracted yellow fever on his first visit to the islands, and had continuing ill health. Still, he managed to paint nearly 70 paintings from those trips. He made one more visit to the islands in May of 1869 but he came home ill and died in August of yellow fever.

His wife, Frances, had been his willing partner during all his adventures, and after his death she tried hard to get his paintings published. However, it was too expensive. She remarried and her new wealthy husband planned to publish the paintings, but he lost his vineyard, and thus his wealth, to disease and plans for publication ceased.

So in 1879 Mrs. Grayson gave the paintings to the University of California at Berkeley and asked that they be preserved. Twenty years later she gave Grayson's notes to the library. There they remained, little known or studied, until Arion Press published the works in 1986. The Smithsonian still exhibits some bird specimens sent by Grayson, and the British Museum also possesses some of his work. The original paintings, still held by the Bancroft Library, are not readily available for viewing because of their delicacy. They have been exhibited twice, once at the Oakland Museum and once at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Our local exhibit, consisting of full-sized plates from the Arion publication, is your best chance to see the work of this dedicated naturalist.

We're Looking for a Few Good Memories

Cardinal Store #13 - Plumas Food Market - Del Pero's - Safeway on Center Street - Safeway on 5th and E - Market Basket - Twin Elk's Market - Purity Store on Plumas Street - Purity Store at 3rd & F - Purity Store on Colusa Avenue - West Side Market - Zoller's Store - Lucky - Witt's Market - Smith Package Market - California Market - Vic's - Yuba Grocery - Sutter Super Market - King's Market - Midway Markets - Greene's - Sunny Behr Market - Warren's Market - Red & White Market - Gilley's - Wentz - Marysville Wholesale Grocery - Open Air Greek Market

Do you remember when the frozen food section was limited to corn, peas and strawberries and the entire selection was tucked away in a corner of the ice cream case? Do you remember when canned dog food was limited to two brands and canned cat food wasn't available? Do you remember buying pasta or wine in bulk? Do you remember fishing a pickle out of a barrel? Do you remember buying fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits at the neighborhood market? Do you remember sawdust on the floor of the butcher shop and the sight of nearly every child who wandered within range of the butcher's eye walking away from the meat counter with a hot dog clutched in his or her hands?

If any of this stirs some memories, we'd like to hear from you. In the past 150 years our community has seen scores of stores come and go. We'd like to record some of the memories you have of working in or trading with these stores.

The stores listed above are

all grocery stores from the area. We are also interested in other kinds of stores that did business in the community. A project we have been considering for some time is to attempt to map out the businesses in Yuba City along Plumas Street, and in earlier times 2nd Street, over a period of years to see if we can come up with a chronology of an ebb and flow of businesses over the years. Ultimately, we'd like to record similar "snapshots" of the commercial areas in all the communities in Sutter County.

As with most of our projects, we can't accomplish much without your help. We've already been lucky enough to do an interview with Warren Hall, a long-time grocer in our area, and his interview will appear in a future issue of the Bulletin. So, if you've worked in the grocery business, bought groceries, or have some information about previous incarnations of business districts in our communities and have some stories to share, please let us know.

SUMMER DAYS

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Bancroft
 Birds
 Celia
 Cheever
 Coats
 Ettl
 Garmire
 Grayson
 Gurjit
 Kristen

Leo
 Melissa
 Michel
 Pennington
 Potluck
 Rolfe
 Spencer
 Switzerland
 Teegarden
 Warren



Coming Events

July

- 14 Audubon of the West exhibit closes
- 16 **Potluck Picnic in the Park**
Howard Harter Park (behind the museum)
Social time 5:30, dinner 6:00
Program: Pennington – The Man and the Town
Dorothy Redhair Coats, Presenter
- 18 Children's Summer Program
1:30 p.m. at the museum
Call for information

August

Keep cool!

September

New exhibit opens featuring the art photography
of Tim Moen

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