

Vol. XLV No. 2

Yuba City, California

April 2003



**Ca 1880 to February 26, 2003**

*(Photo credit: Kristin Childs)*



**February 27, 2003**

*(Photo credit: Hubert Smith)*

**Jacob Onstott House**



**OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY**

John Reische, President

Constance Cary, Secretary

Audrey Breeding, Vice President

Dorothy Ettl, Treasurer

**DIRECTORS**

Bonnie Ayers-2001\*

Helen Heenan-1996

Audrey Breeding-1997

Bob Mackensen-2002

Constance Cary-1987

Steve Perry-1994

Tom Crowhurst-1997

Margaret Pursch-2002

Bud Doty-2002

John Reische-2000

Dorothy Ettl-2000

Randolph Schnabel-1957

Bruce Harter-1991

Phyllis Smith-2000

Elaine Tarke-1985

\*The year the director joined the Board.

The **Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Historical Society in Yuba City, California. Editors are Sharyl Simmons and Phyllis Smith. Payment of annual membership dues provides you with a subscription to the **Bulletin** and the Museum's **Muse News** and membership in both the Society and the Museum.

The 2003 dues are payable as of January 1, 2003. Mail your check to the Community Memorial Museum at P. O. Box 1555, Yuba City, 95992-1555.

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

## President's Message

Sutter County has lost another of its most historic homes! I was shocked on February 27 to learn that the Jacob Onstott house had been bulldozed during the night and that all that was left was a pile of broken lumber. Driving down there immediately, I was saddened by the sight of what had been a majestic home of one of Sutter County's early pioneers and developer of Sutter County agriculture.

How do you deal with a situation like this when there had been a lot of talk and assurances that the house would be preserved in some fashion? Much effort had been put forth to make some arrangement with the property owner to save the home and the general feeling was that this would be done. So, the Onstott house has been bulldozed, what can we do now to ensure that future losses of Sutter County's historical heritage will not occur?

At a special meeting of the SCHS Directors on March 4th it was agreed the Society should present a letter to the Sutter County Board of Supervisors at their meeting that evening requesting the Board take the necessary action to enact a Sutter County Historic Preservation Ordinance. This letter (reprinted in this issue of the Bulletin, page 6) was presented and well received by the Board and the public in attendance. The next step is to place this request on the Board agenda; from there the Supervisors will take action for further consideration. The Chair of the Board has suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed, with representation from SCHS, to prepare an ordinance. Phyllis Smith and I are taking the necessary steps to accomplish this. An ordinance will protect significant historical, archaeological and cultural sites in Sutter County. I am proud of the history of Sutter County and the people who pioneered our development. We need to protect our heritage from developers who have no interest in our past.

I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting in Meridian on April 12. Supervisor Dan Silva will be speaking about the history of Sutter County levee systems and flood control. We will also be giving awards to the winners of the 2003 Judith Barr Fairbanks essay contest. This is always a rewarding time to the members of the Society.

I had planned on my third State of the Society message but the Onstott demolition demanded my attention and message to you. However, the Society remains in excellent condition and all projects are moving in a positive way.

With the election of Directors at the Annual Meeting and a change of officers, this will be my last message to you. It has been a pleasure serving as your President and I look forward to remaining on the board as a director. My heartfelt thanks to the members of the society, to the Directors, to the Museum staff, and all others who have made my term as President so rewarding.

John V. Reische  
President

## Director's Report

Spring is always a busy time at the Museum, and this year is no exception. During April, visitors can enjoy the *Hungry for Art* exhibit, featuring art in various media by students from the Yuba City High School Art Department. Many of the works will have a definite culinary bent. The exhibit will remain through April.

In late May, the Museum will exhibit artifacts which have been recently donated. Often our visitors don't get to see the newer donations before they are stored, awaiting an appropriate time to be rotated out into the gallery to help tell a particular story from area history. At least two-thirds of the Museum's collection is in storage at any one time. Items are stored in climate and light controlled rooms on site and housed in archival quality acid-free boxes and tissue. The exhibit *Recent Acquisitions* will give visitors an opportunity to enjoy the wide variety of artifacts that are donated to the Museum. Among others, these include a child's Studebaker wagon, a blue and white china dinner plate from the doomed ship *Lusitania*, a porcelain doll with kid leather eyebrows, 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs, and several pieces of century-old clothing. *Recent Acquisitions* will go up in late May and remain through the summer.

Remember to support the Museum's fundraising event *Wear & Remembrance*, a Vintage Apparel Fair, on April 26 and 27 at Franklin Hall at Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds. Similar in operation to an antique show, two dozen dealers sell vintage clothes for women and men, accessories, jewelry and textiles. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$5 or \$4 with a bright pink coupon from the Museum. Food and desserts are available at the event.

The Spring Vacation Children's Program is Wednesday, April 16 at 10:00 a.m. It features Mike Bennett of the Yuba-Sutter Indian Education Center. He will bring a 14-foot tule reed boat to the Museum, similar to the type used by local Maidu Indians. He will describe the unique volunteer project that led to the creation of the boat. Admission is free, and no reservation is necessary.

Here's hoping to see you at your museum this spring and summer.

Julie Stark  
Director



This issue of the bulletin is dedicated to the memory of **Evelyn Quigg**, long-time Museum volunteer and Historical Society Board of Directors member.

## Memorials

In memory of **Dorothea Bremer**  
M/M Eugene Lonon

In memory of **Norman H. Bruggman**  
Ida J. Philpott

In memory of **Iola Covington**  
Bogue Country Club

In memory of **Betty Curtis**  
Bob & Katie Bryant

In memory of **Odie Dillard**  
Dewey & Barbara Gruening

In memory of **Thomas Gage**  
Howie & Betty Schmidl

In memory of **Dorothy D. King**  
Katie & Bob Bryant  
Gerald & Carmen Frye  
Howard & Bobbie Hardie  
Larry & Min Harris  
David & Gina Tarke

In memory of **Margaret Madden**  
Phyllis & Warren Sorenson

In memory of **Joe Nemanic**  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel

In memory of **Edwin Norvell**  
Dewey & Barbara Gruening

In memory of **Evelyn Quigg**  
Lorna L. Albertson  
Audrey Breeding  
Connie Cary  
Adona Chesney  
John & Elizabeth Christian  
Gene & Joan Erfle  
Dorothy Ettl  
Dewey & Barbara Gruening  
Robert & Susan Hickey  
Ann & Andros Karperos

In memory of **Evelyn Quigg** (cont'd)  
Ralph & Charlotte Martin  
Ansel & Mary Miller  
Karen Louise Park  
Frank & Donna Peacock  
John & Dorothea Reische  
John & Mary Ritter  
Tae Sano  
Sharyl Simmons  
Phyllis Smith  
Darla Tovar  
Utah Friends of the Family

In memory of **Harold Quigg**  
Darrell and Leticia Stewart

In memory of **Harold & Evelyn Quigg**  
Ken & Linda Doglio  
Cecil & Diane Frost  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel

In memory of **Warren Reed**  
Sam & Becky Anderson

In memory of **Alice Strachan**  
M/M Eugene Lonon

In memory of **Vinson Vanderford, Jr.**  
M/M Bryan Fairlee

As a Christmas gift in the names of  
**Leonard & Mary Henson**  
Buster & Harriet Foster

A gift to the Museum  
Yuba City Women's Club



## April Meeting

Once again our April meeting will be held in the Meridian Veterans Hall, with a tri-tip buffet luncheon, on **April 12**. Our speaker will be County Supervisor Dan Silva, talking about the history of Sutter County levees. As we do every April, we'll host the winners of the annual Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest, fourth and fifth graders who have written about the journey to California in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, we have a busy business agenda - we'll elect the Board of Directors, approve the 2003 operating budget, and vote on a Statement of Purpose for the Society's historical preservation effort (see page 5 of this bulletin).

Our social time starts at 11:30 a.m., with the luncheon at noon and our business meeting and program at 1:00 p.m. Lunch is \$12 per person and must be paid in advance. Please complete and mail the insert in this bulletin by **April 9**. For information, call Dorothy Ettl at 673-3412; John Reische at 674-8106; or the Museum at 822-7141.

## Wear and Remembrance

A must for all elegant ladies and gents! The museum's thirteenth annual Vintage Apparel Fair is **April 26 and 27** at Franklin Hall, Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds. Doors are open from 10 am to 5 pm Saturday, and 11 am to 4 pm Sunday.

Items available at Wear and Remembrance include collectible clothing, jewelry, textiles and accessories for ladies and gentlemen. Kaffe T Latta is catering this year, with desserts available for sale by the museum.

Admission is \$5 for adults, but you can save a dollar with a pink coupon, available from the museum. Children may enter for \$3.

## July Picnic in the Park

It's not too early to mark your calendar for our July picnic! Our annual potluck will be in the Howard Harter Park, behind the museum, on Tuesday, **July 15**. You all know what a splendid meal we enjoy! More details will be available in the July bulletin.

The Sutter County Historical Society is taking formal and positive action to preserve historical buildings and sites in Sutter County. The Society is developing a register of historical sites to assist in the preservation of important buildings. It is important that the Society be on record stating its purpose regarding historical preservation. The following draft Statement of Purpose will be presented for membership approval at the annual meeting on April 12, 2003 in Meridian. If you have comments, questions or suggestions prior to the meeting, please feel free to call Phyllis Smith, Preservation Committee Chair, at 671-3261.

## **SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION REGISTER**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Sutter County Historical Society establishes the Historic Site Preservation Register for the purpose of identifying and documenting buildings and sites within the County of Sutter that are worthy of preservation for historic purposes.

Buildings and sites placed in the Register have historical value because of their age; their importance in the establishment or development of the County of Sutter; or the importance of the person or people who designed, built, lived in, or owned them.

The Register will be used to inform the governing boards of the County of Sutter and the City of Yuba City about what buildings or sites have historical value and should be preserved and not demolished, moved or inappropriately altered.

The investigation required by the Society to determine if a building or site belongs on the Register can be used to request listing from the State of California or the United States for any building or site deemed to have appropriate historical significance.

The Register will be maintained by the Society. If buildings or sites are determined to have lost their historical significance or are no longer viable buildings, they will be deleted. If new buildings or sites are identified as having historical significance, they will be added.

## Letter to the Board of Supervisors

*[This is the letter read at the Board of Supervisors meeting on March 4, 2003.]*

March 4, 2003

To: Sutter County Board of Supervisor  
From: Sutter County Historical Society

Re: Sutter County Historic Preservation Ordinance

The blatant destruction of the Jacob Onstott house has resulted in a county-wide surge of indignation and rage. We have received many telephone calls asking, "How did this happen? Why didn't the County prevent this? What can we do to stop this from happening to other historic resources?"

One of the goals of the SCHS is to establish a Historic Preservation Register in an effort to identify and preserve significant historic resources in Sutter County. The general public of this county is very interested in having some legal means to ensure that preservation be a priority in future development of property under Sutter County jurisdiction.

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors has historically shown interest in restoration and preservation. The restoration of the County Hall of Records, now used as the Supervisors' meeting building, is a commendable act which brings pride to the County. The Supervisors' continued support toward the Sutter County Memorial Museum is another example of preserving our historic past. At the request of the Supervisors, the Sutter County Historical Society was asked to take on the task of restoring the historic Hock Farm doors on Garden Highway. They have supported the Society's effort in this project.

In view of the destruction of the Onstott house and with the urbanization and commercial development of Sutter County properties it appears that the only way to protect and preserve our historic heritage is to have in force a Sutter County Historic Preservation ordinance.

The Sutter County Historical Society formally requests that the Board of Supervisors take the necessary steps to enact such an ordinance. The Society offers its services, in any way desired, to develop such an ordinance and to help identify significant historic resources in Sutter County.

Respectfully submitted:

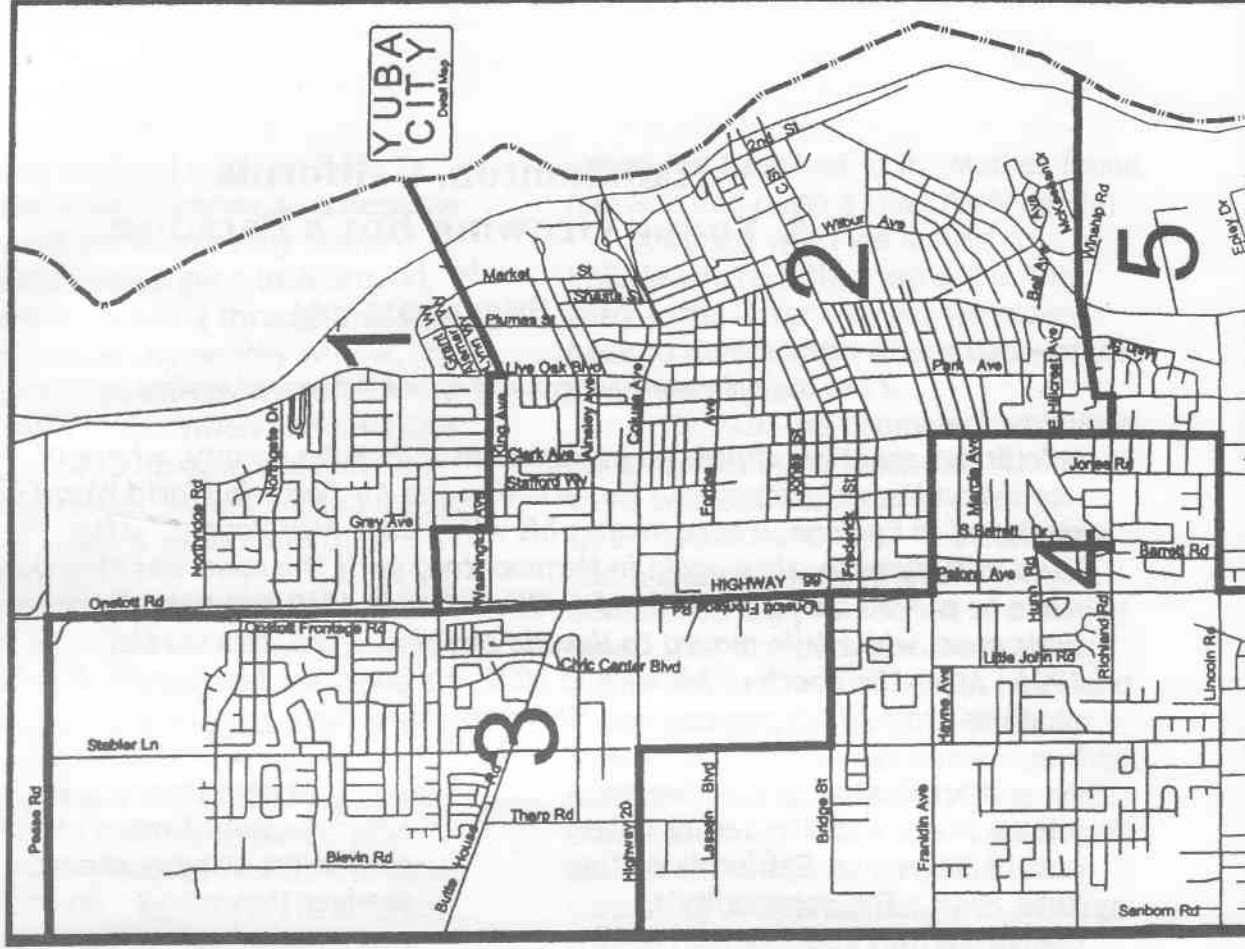
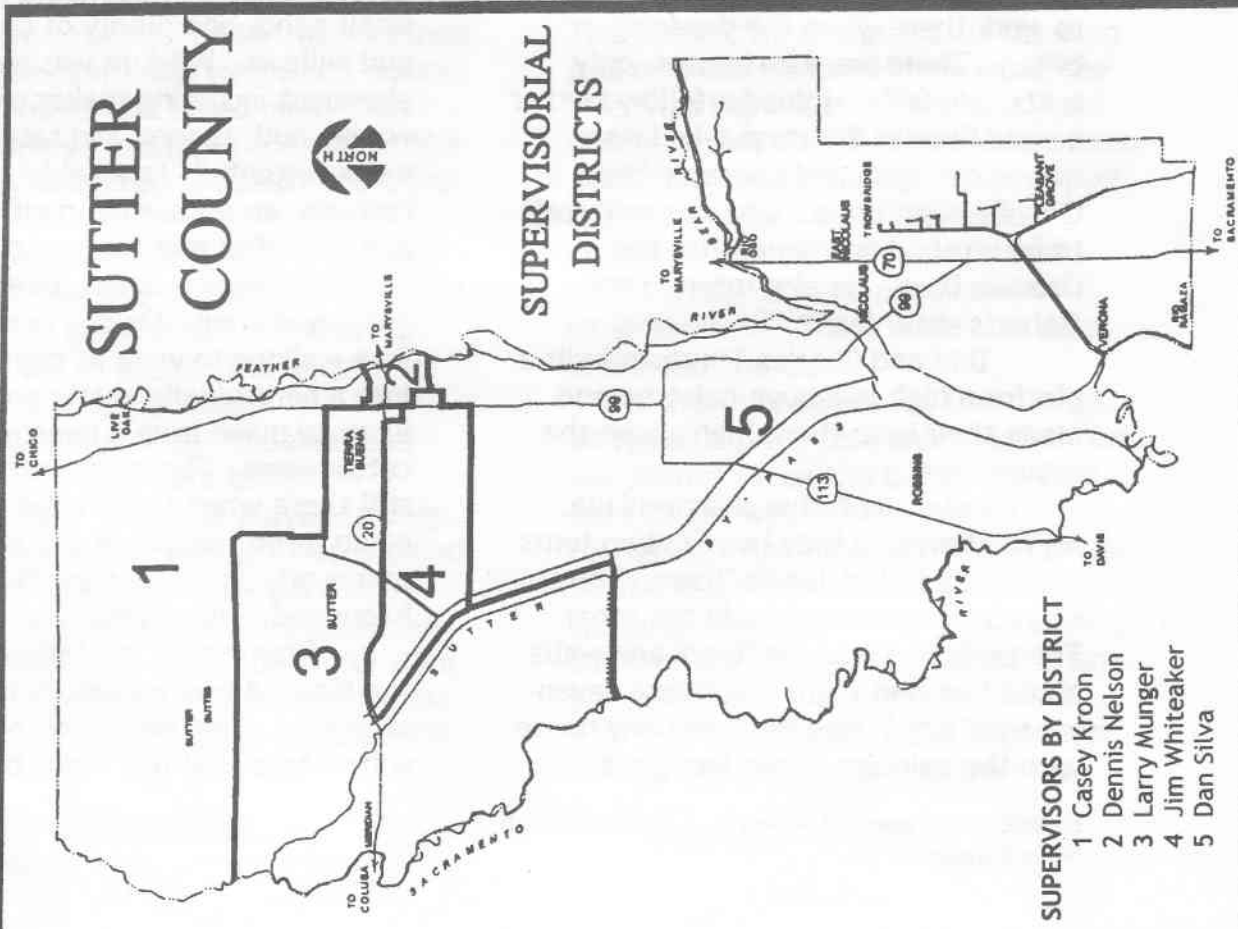
JOHN V. REISCHE  
President

PHYLLIS SMITH  
Chair, Historic Preservation Project



## Write Your Supervisor!

We encourage all Sutter County Historical Society Members (and their friends!) to write their supervisor to ask for the enactment of a local Historical Preservation Ordinance. Below is a map of Sutter County Supervisorial Districts so you can find your own representative. Inserted in this issue of the bulletin is a sample letter. While you can sign and mail the letter as it is, **your letter will have a greater impact if you rewrite it and make it your own.** Don't delay - the Board of Supervisors needs to know TODAY that you care about preserving our historical resources!



# Hammonton, California

## A Young Growing Boy's Paradise

by  
Milo Briggs, 1917-1994

*A true story of a young boy growing up in a fishing and hunting paradise.*

*Milo Briggs spent his childhood at Hammonton in Yuba County, where his father worked on the gold dredgers. He served in the Air Force in World War II and was stationed in England, where he met his wife, Olive May Vought. After the war they lived in Marysville, then again in Hammonton, until the town was closed in 1958, when he moved his family to Linda. Olive died in 1960 and their daughter lived with their aunt, while Milo moved to Nevada and remarried, to Alda Hall. He died in June 1994. After the death of his wife in 2002, his daughter Pat Patrick of Yuba City received some of his possessions. This unfinished story was found among the items.*

Hammonton, a gold dredge mining town, was situated 12 miles east of Marysville, California on the Yuba River. The community's population was approximately 110 families when the nine dredgers were under full operation.

My father, Ira Briggs, first went to work there when the dredging began. There were no houses, only tents. My father joined a fellow worker named Charles Thurman who later owned dredgers and operated them in Oroville, California. He later sold rock to be crushed for cement for the Oroville Dam. He also married my father's sister Sue.

Dad and Charles Thurman built a platform high in a huge oak tree and made their beds there high above the mosquitoes.

Later my father married Lula, my mother, and they lived in two tents in an area called Jungle Town. They slept in one and cooked in the other. The tents had wooden floors and walls about two feet high. Later as a seven-year-old boy I lived in a company house with the oak tree in the backyard.

At that time it was approximately 2 miles or more for the men to get to work according to which dredger they worked on and where it was situated across the river bottom sand bars. The men had to walk to work day shift, afternoon shift and graveyard shift. The terrain was full of small ponds and plenty of cottonwood and willows. Wildlife was very abundant including snakes of all kinds - water, bull, racers, and rattlers. There were cottontail, jack rabbits, skunk, raccoon, an occasional panther, cattle and hogs that had gone wild. There were also ducks, doves, deer, wild goats and quail. On one occasion a man walking to work at night stumbled into a herd of wild cattle and was very lucky to make it up a nearby cottonwood. The next morning he was still there when the dredge master came by on horseback and drove the cattle off. From all reports it happened quite often.

I remember my father telling of the time he was walking home one afternoon when he passed by a large willow tree that had limbs broken down

where they covered quite an area around the tree. Hearing a rattlesnake sounding off his warning my father stopped and took a good look around, seeing a track leading through the sand and going under the nearby willow. He set his lunch bucket down and took off looking for a limb. When he found one he went back to his lunch bucket only to find the rattler wound around it. He managed to get it away from the bucket and killed it. Carrying it on the stick he proceeded homeward. On getting to the main trail he met Mr. Kendall who managed the livestock, barns, wagons and buggies, etc. He also was surprised at the size of it. Stretching it out and measuring it with Mr. Kendall's tape it measured just over 6 feet. It had 18 rattles and some had broken off. No one in Hammonton had ever seen one that large or long.

One afternoon my mother, Lula Briggs, started into the cook tent when a rattler sounded his warning. She found him coiled up under their kitchen table. He didn't last long when mother got the shovel and killed him. They hung clothes on nails on the walls. She said they often found lizards under the clothes.

Everyone living in Jungle Town had dogs - apparently mean ones. Most people had gardens but the wild pigs loved to eat in them. The dogs kept the pigs and cattle away.

My oldest sister (Elberta) and brother (Derwin) were born in Hammonton. Dad next moved to Biggs, California on the Feather River and had a dairy herd there. I was born there. During our stay on the dairy farm they kept a metal tub on the porch for skim milk for hog feed. One day before the hogs were fed my brother (approx. 2½

years) fell headfirst in it. Mother found him and had quite a time reviving him

During WW I we moved to Vallejo where father worked in the Navy yard. After the war we moved back to Hammonton where dad worked as an electrician.

By 1920 the company had built a lot of homes in Hammonton. There were two bedroom and two-story, three bedroom homes. The company had a store where you could buy just about anything you needed in a mining town. The company also built a large office building, retort house, hotel and living quarters in a large building for single men. There was a machine shop, blacksmith shop, carpentry shop and electrical shop. They also built a small church and a very large school consisting of approximately eight large rooms. There was a furnace in the cellar for warmth.

The first dredgers were built of wood and only dug some 50-odd feet. The ponds they left gradually filled up and only had water in them when the river was high. Later they built steel dredgers that dug 72 feet and left deep ponds full of catfish, perch, carp, pike, and large mouth bass. Some ponds connected to the river and salmon would come into the ponds and up small streams. There were also shad, steelhead and trout.

We used to borrow the dairyman's pitch fork and would throw the salmon up on the bank. We sure used to get wet. There was no refrigerator then so mother would take what she wanted and then us kids would go door to door and give it away. Some of the salmon were longer than we were tall.

The dairyman had a large barn for hay and milking and also a milk

house. He had a Model T pickup and also a much larger truck. He used the large truck to deliver milk. A kid would ride the running board on each side and run and deliver milk in bottles to all the homes. The company built their own icehouse. A man would deliver ice every day in a horse drawn cart. Us kids sure loved to get a piece of ice especially when it was 100 degrees or more. I believe all the kids in Hammonton at one time worked for Joe Mier, a man from Switzerland. Later Mr. Mier took over the ice route as the company shut down the icehouse. Mr. Mier would go to Marysville about noon and play cards at one of the card houses, then pick up ice and return to Hammonton in time to milk, etc.

The town's buildings also had indoor plumbing and a sewer, which drained into a land-locked pond. That pond raised a lot of large carp and catfish.

Us kids would ride to town with Mr. Mier and have an ice cream or if we were flush a sundae or banana split. We would see a show and ride back with him. That was summer time. One day sitting in the back of the pickup waiting for Mr. Mier, us kids were discussing the size of some of the fish we had caught. That area of town in which we were parked was called skid row. Chinese, colored folks, Indians from India and others lived there. An older Chinese overheard us talking and asked several questions including what we would charge if we brought him a large carp. He said he would buy all we brought.

Our father made a toggle 12 feet or so with a steel rod on the end where the toggle fit. There was a rubber band that released the toggle when a fish struck. The toggle was on a heavy

line by itself and the stick was on a line by itself. This made it easy to land a salmon, but we used it to catch carp at the sewer outlet. Some of the carp were 3 feet long. Anyhow to shorten the story we would catch several a day and take to town with Mr. Mier. We covered them with wet jacking, etc. Sure enough, the Chinese were there with other folks and bought all our fish. Some of the larger ones brought as much as a dollar, a good price for 1928. I saved a lot of my money and along with the money I made picking wild blackberries and selling them, I managed to buy bicycle parts until I had enough to make a bicycle - one spoke at a time.

By the end of summer we didn't have many carp left. My brother and I would go after catfish with a cane pole and a barley sack. Many's the time we came home with a quarter of a sack. Boy, talk about getting tired of shinning and cleaning fish. Mother would fry all of them, as they would spoil otherwise. After cooking them, she would put them in the icebox and if we got hungry we would just take a fish. I learned to eat them like an ear of corn and never had a bone. I never realized it at the time, but the fish sure helped on the grocery bill as it was during the Depression.

The banks around the ponds on the dirt side were generally six to 20 feet high. We would put a small hook in and catch a sunfish or perch (small) then change the hook and put the perch on and catch a large mouth bass up to four lbs. Later years some went to six pounds. The water was so clear and deep you could watch the fish take the perch. A few years later a fellow by the name of Gerald Smith who worked with my father introduced me

to casting with a reel and plugs or lures. Boy did that change everything. I managed to get a pole and reel. If I remember right I bought line from Sears. It was a Black King 20 pound test flat line. I had my problems at first and swam a lot to recover lures I hung up in trees. But I gradually got the hang of it and did real well as time went by. My father built me a flat can with a sliding top that would fit in the rear pocket of my bib overalls to carry my plugs and lures. I walked many miles over rock piles trying different ponds, but it sure paid off.

I remember one time when I first started casting I had so many backlashes I couldn't cast far. So I would cast as far as I could towards the center of the pond and just let my plug float there until I stripped off the line and rewound it. The only thing was that when I pulled the plug about four feet everything happened. I had a hard strike and a fight on my hands. Finally landed him and boy talk about a beauty. I figured he was six lbs. if he was an ounce. It was the largest Black Bass I had ever caught. I heard a car coming so took a quick look. We had a gentleman living in Hammonton; he was the game warden. I understand he received a dollar a year, so everyone called him a dollar-a-year man instead of a warden. Anyway, he parked some distance away, but I couldn't get home without passing him. I hid my pole and equipment and then picked California poppies in a bucket until I had enough to hide the fish. When I walked by him he wanted to know for whom the flowers were for. I told him for my mother's birthday. He said that is a nice boy. If he had only known. When I walked by the electric shop, I went in and Dad weighed it, nearly seven lbs.,

so my guess was pretty correct. My father had to smile when I told him about the flowers but then I got grounded for a week. Needless to say I enjoyed many years of wonderful fishing. As I got older I could afford better equipment.

When I wasn't quite 18 I wanted to build a boat. My father and I talked it over for some time and came up with a kayak shaped boat with 1/8" plywood all screwed on with brass screws and glue. Sure made a beautiful boat. It was 40 inches wide and 12 feet long. Three of us swimming couldn't tip it over. I could carry it with one hand. Sure made fishing a lot better and I caught more fish in less time. Later it was swell for getting to better places to hunt ducks, putting out decoys and recovering ducks that were killed.

Sunfish or perch were certainly plentiful. Sometimes I took 30 to 40 home for dinner. Later on we had Blue gills, a beautiful fish. When I finally obtained a fly rod the fun really began.



Milo Briggs, ca 1937

April 2003

# The Bread Box

by  
Patsy (Kay) Thompson

*Patsy was born and raised in Meridian, the great granddaughter of Abraham Mitchell. Mitchell was the owner of the 20 acres sold to John Fouts who divided it into lots forming the town of Meridian.*

*Patsy graduated from Meridian Grammar School and Sutter High School before attending and graduating from the University of California at Berkeley.*

*Her interest in Sutter County history started at a young age as her mother (Glenna Reische Kay) was an avid collector and student of local history. She has been a member of the Sutter County Historical Society for many year, has been a speaker at the annual children's program at the Museum and has donated many historical items to the Museum's collection.*

*This story was sent in response to a request in a News Bulletin for "good memories" about stores in Sutter County. The event really happened to the author when she was a small child, at Zoller's Grocery Store in Meridian.*

This summer morning in Meridian was like many others - it was almost cool for a couple of hours and then it began to heat up. My mother was ready for her daily trek to the grocery store, the gossip center of Meridian. I liked to go along because George, the grocery man, always gave me a treat. But, as soon as my treat was gone, I became restless and bored. Gossip was not really my thing at that age.

I wandered outside looking for something to do or someone to talk with. It was then I saw the bread box and an idea came to me. If I climbed into the bread box and hid, maybe my mother would miss me. She would come looking for me and maybe, just maybe, we could go home sooner.

Now for those of you who aren't familiar with the bread boxes

in front of rural grocery stores, here's your chance to learn something new. The bread delivery trucks came through our town very early in the morning - about 4:00 a.m. Of course, George wasn't up yet so the bread was placed in a large wooden box outside the store. When George opened the store, he took the bread out of the box and put it on the bread shelves inside.

Making sure no one was watching me, I lifted the lid of the bread box and climbed in. I carefully dropped the lid and settled down to wait. The box had the nice smell of fresh bread so I felt very cozy in that dark space.

I could hear cars and trucks going by on the road beside the store. Some stopped and people got out; I could hear their voices as they greeted each other. Then I

could hear the door of the store open and close as people entered the store. Now their voices became muted and I couldn't hear the words they said.

I became aware that I was beginning to get hot, hotter, too hot. And, the air in the box felt close. My mother hadn't come looking for me. I wanted out!

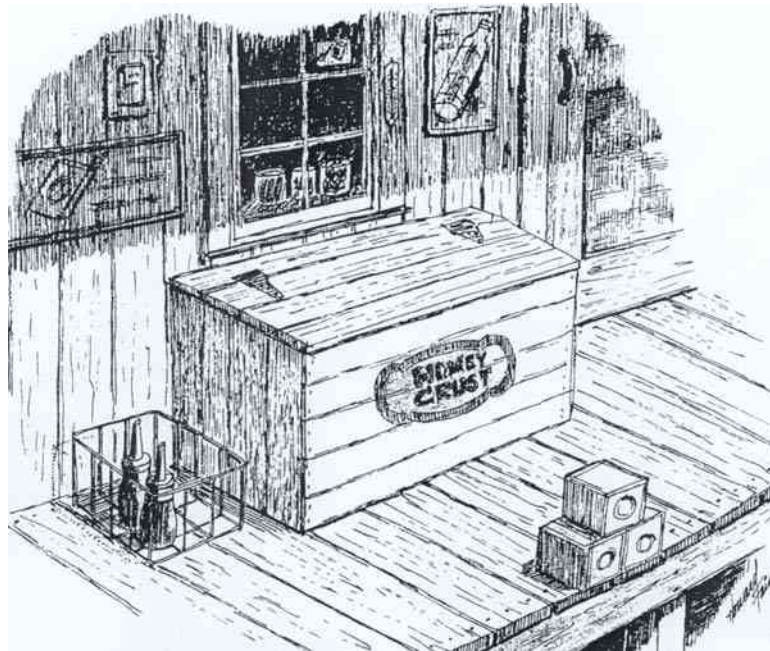
I tried to lift the lid, but it wouldn't lift. The latch on the box had fallen and I couldn't get out. I began to yell and bang on the box.

Maybe someone would hear me. Someone did! He lifted the lid of the box and asked what I was doing in there. Without answering, I crawled out of the box and ran into the store.

To my disbelief, my mother was still standing at the counter talking. She hadn't even missed me!

"Are you ready to go home and help me pick some string beans for dinner?" she asked.

Boy, was I!



## Are Your Dues Due?

If you haven't yet paid your dues for 2003, now's the time! We wouldn't want you to miss out on any of our upcoming bulletins or scheduled events. Dues information is printed on the inside cover of the bulletin.

# CROSSING THE PLAINS

by

George Harter

Marysville, Cal, 1865

Revised in 1902 by George Harter

## A DESCRIPTION OF A TRIP FROM CASS COUNTY MICHIGAN TO MARYSVILLE, CALIFORNIA IN 1864.

In the spring of 1864, I rented my farm and had my sale on the 2nd day of April. The following week I, with Isaac R. Banta of Preble County, Ohio, started south through Indiana for the purpose of purchasing mules for the overland trip. I purchased one span at Elkhart County, Indiana and sent them back to Lewis Harter and Robert Wiley to work them to a wagon I had built for the trip and meet us at Omaha, Nebraska, together with my wife and two children, Jay P, 5 years old, and Ardelle, 3.

My family went by railroad to Grinnell, Iowa, as far as the railroad was then built, then staged over 200 miles of Omaha and arrived there the first week in May.

Mr. Banta and I went to Louisville, Kentucky and bought mules that we wanted and shipped down the Ohio river to Cairo then up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers to Glasgo as far as the boat could go in the low state of water then in the river. We landed our stock and rode and drove 200 miles to Omaha.

We found our company all there camped 2 miles out in the country where there was plenty of fine feed for our stock. We had shipped one wagon and all our goods by railroad. They were delayed somewhere and we were detained here between five and six weeks and got most all except the

wagon, which belonged to Lewis Harter. It was getting late in the season so he bought a wagon and we loaded up and started on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of June with four mules to each wagon. Mr. Wiley had found suitable company and acquaintances from Cass County Michigan, and had gone on so it left us four grown persons and two children in our mess, also a dog that had been lost and left at the ferry between Council Bluff and Omaha. He was a noble watch dog as we learned later as we traveled through the Indian countries. He was an exception among many dogs that started but most of them never got through on that long journey.

Our camp life here became rather monotonous so we found a few days work in the neighborhood helping plant corn. We then concluded to try building Central Pacific Railroad which had just commenced grading on the west bank of the Missouri River. Each of us men shoveled a day and felt proud that we helped build a railroad but concluded to forgo any further honors but leave all that to more aspiring ones.

I had thirty bushels of wheat chopped to feed on the road where grass was scarce. That with provisions for four months and clothing and bedding made up our load. The emigration that year was very heavy and nearly all had gone on before. We



started along expecting to overtake some company. The weather was warm and dry and the roads very good. The second night we camped on the flats of Elkhorn Creek on very tall grass. Close around our wagons we picketed our animals with ropes forty feet long. These ropes are tied to iron stakes 18 inches long driven in the ground with rings in the top end. Here the mosquitoes were so plentiful and ferocious they covered the mules as with a blanket.

By midnight, the mules got so excited they were likely to get loose and leave us so we hitched up and started. As long as we were among these pests, we made night drives, starting about sun down and drove all night and camped the first suitable place in the morning.

We traveled this way 150 miles to Loopford River. This stream is near half a mile wide. We had to ferry a narrow channel then ford the rest of the way through dangerous quick sand. We got through all right but heavy loaded wagons generally had trouble.

Here we saw for the first Pawne Indians. They came in to the emigrant camps begging for bread. My wife bought a pair of moccasins from a squaw for 25ct. They were dressed in usual Indian style, which is a breach-clout and a tanned Buffalo skin over the shoulders.

Here we overtook two families by the name of Buell and Daniels. They had horse teams and we concluded to travel together and try and overtake a horse train that was several days ahead. We still made some night drives.

Our road lay on the north side of Plat (sic) River and up this valley in many places is very rich and fine country but lacks entirely for timber.

There is a little cottonwood of an inferior growth on the immediate banks of the river which is all the timber in sight for hundreds of miles.

Two hundred and sixty-three miles brought us opposite Fort Kerney which is on the opposite side of the river. Here we saw the grave of Mrs. Linsey from Niles, Michigan. She was in a wagon and the horse got frightened and ran away throwing her out, hurting her so she died in a few days.

She was owner of a train of five wagons and outfit, which was all sold out here and the train broken up.

Along here were the most beautiful wild flowers I ever saw.

This PM it rained hard which softened the road very much. To here the roads were very fine, smooth, hard and level. Next day we traveled and overtook a train and traveled one day with them. Passed a grave inscribed on head board "Killed by accidental discharge of his own gun." Next morning it began to rain and continued so we lay by two days.

During this time we called a meeting and elected John Spaulding Captain of the train. This was necessary to manage stopping and starting and various matters to expedite travel.

Third day part of us pulled out and drove twelve miles and passed the first grave inscribed on head board "Killed by Indians." The date of this was six weeks previous. Along here we improved the opportunity of securing some wood for fuel and swinging it under our wagons or cutting it all into chips and putting it inside.

Our guide book said no more wood for a number of days. We had an emigrant stove which is a great saving of wood over camp fire. It is made of

sheetiron 12 by 12 inches square and 2 feet long with two holes on top for cooking and an oven below. This stove with one joint of pipe answers every purpose for cooking and baking with an incredible small amount of wood. We could set it in the wagon and bake bread as we were going on. Tonight we camped on a beautiful plain on the bank of the Plat River. Here we lay over Sunday and the remainder of our train came up Monday morning. This is the 4th of July but we had to pursue our journey. In a few miles we came to the first hills which were sandy and hard pulling for several miles. We stopped at noon as usual. As we were hitched and ready to start, there came a severe storm of wind and rain and soon followed a pelting hail storm straight in our face so we had to jump out and catch our teams to keep them from upsetting the wagons. We kept circling around with the wind and when it quit raining we were headed right to continue our journey.

This we called our 4th day of July celebration.

This PM we had a great deal of water and mud and at night camped at Pawne Springs. Here were a number of beautiful springs of cool water. The second time we found good water since we left Omaha. This was the greatest hardship for me on the whole trip and the only time in my life that I craved for whiskey. The Plat River is so much alkili (sic) the more you drink the thirstier you are. Next day had fine roads. Camped on the banks of the river.

Here we first discovered alkili on the ground forming quite a crust in spots. Nights were cool with heavy dews. Here is the junction of North and South Plat Rivers.

The Plat is a very swift but wide and shallow running stream. It is always muddy but lately more so because of the melting snow in the mountains. The river bottoms here extending far back on both sides to the mountains.

Next day drove fourteen miles. Three miles heavy sand hill roads. On these hills were a band of thirty or forty Sioux Indians. They came to the road to trade dressed skins and moccasins for something to eat. They were of both sexes and all ages. All the men and boys had their bows and a quiver full of arrows strapped on their backs. Some on horse back followed us into camp but left as soon as supper was over. Next night camped on Buffalow (sic) Creek. Next night camped near the river and had a heavy rain in the evening. Next day in some places for miles along side of the road for a few feet wide there stood a thick growth of flower about two feet high bearing full of variegated purple flowers about the size of half a dollar. It looked as though they had been placed there to break the monotony and cheer the weary traveler on his way. Camped again on the bank of the Plat on a fine plain. Next day Sunday lay by. After dinner Lewis Harter and myself took our guns, waded the river two feet deep and half a mile wide and started into the bluffs for a hunt.

The hills here are high and rugged.

On reaching the top we found a level table-land as far as the eye could see with but little growth except cactus or prickley pears which covers the ground in places.

We had not gone far when we saw an antelope. In following him we startled an Elk but he was soon out of

sight. There were plenty of antelopes and we could hardly decide which to follow. In rambling we came on a slight raise and saw three antelopes grazing quite a distance away. Soon two started towards us. We chose a spot and lay down flat; Lew rested his gun on me. Presently one ran off. The other came on quietly grazing until within fifty yards and lay down broadside to me. Lew fired and hit him in the hind quarter. He jumped and ran quite lame and soon lay down again. He gave him another shot which killed him. I cut his head off and we picked the long old hair off which came out in large handfuls. After taking out the entrails and cutting off the legs, we swung it on a gun between us and started for our camp and were in sight of it at sundown.

We struck the head of a ravine which we thought would lead us to the river opposite our camp and we could reach there soon after dark. We wound around and over rocks and steep descents and at last came where the water, when there was any, passed through the mountains. It is a narrow passage through a soft rock apparently worn by the water to the depths of some fifty to eighty feet. By looking up we could see a few stars and the moonlight. At some places it appeared not more than fifteen or twenty feet across the top and so narrow where we were, for rods, that two persons cannot pass conveniently.

We traveled on and on expecting soon to come to the river. The moon went down and the antelope grew very heavy. We rested and traveled again and after a long time came to the river.

Here we were fighting a swarm of mosquitoes not knowing whether to go up or down the river to come to our camp. After a while we discovered

what we thought was a camp-fire probably on our side of the river. We started and discussed and doubted whether it was a star or a light. After a long walk, we came opposite what we thought might be our camp. After taking a good rest and planning that Lew should take the lead, as he was a good swimmer and if he fell in deep water I could pull him back with the gun. We started straight for the light sometimes midwaist deep in water but kept on slowly. After becoming satisfied it was our camp we fired two pistol shots which brought an answer from the guards. They had raised a lantern high as they could above a wagon to signal us. When we reached shore we were met by many of the people of the train who were alarmed fearing we had been captured or lost as we learned afterwards others had been in that region of country. The Captain had arranged that next morning all the men should start out with one days rations in search for us, but we disappointed them when we brought them an Antelope which was the first game brought in by any hunters, except sage hens and jack-rabbits.

It was now after twelve o'clock.

There were two butchers in the train and next morning they soon skinned and divided among the different companies and after breakfast all agreed it was delicious, but well earned. Monday we again struck sand hills and came in sight of Chimney Rock which is forty miles away, but apparently not over five miles. Distance is very deceiving here to the eye.

We passed today ancient castles. They are high perpendicular soft rocks forming columns and spires and presenting the general appearance of

ancient ruins. Tonight we camped near a large cattle train going to Idaho. We got all the milk we wanted by milking it ourselves which we did very willingly. We had a delicious supper of milk and mush and for breakfast mush<sup>1</sup> and milk. We carried a can of milk and in the evening it had churned some butter. This eve a man in the train was thrown from his mule knocking out some teeth and bruising him considerable. Next day we passed Chimney Rock, Court-house and Scotts Bluff. These all are on the opposite side of the river. Chimney Rock is circular shaped of perhaps sixty feet in diameter at the base and tapering a ways then carrying its size to the top which is said to have been two hundred feet high but of late part of the top fell off. Court-house rock is a large square perpendicular rock flat on top with a cupola on top in the center. Scotts Bluff is a small mountain in a level plain as the other two just described. Camped at Spring Creek. Good water but little grass. Here we crossed the line between Nebraska and Idaho.

Next day at noon we stopped near the river and drove our stock on an island to graze. Suddenly we saw an Indian coming full run on a pony holding out a letter which was a signal of a message to us. It was a letter from the U.S. Upper Plat Indian Agent warning all emigrants to be on their guard as there are hostile Indians in the vicinity.

We gave the Indian some bread and he went on to the next train behind.

We drove up to the agency and stopped for the night. We were told by the U.S. Agent, Mr. Lores (who was formerly from Eaton, Ohio and well acquainted about there) that all we had heard was true and much more. He

strongly advised us to remain here for safety until matters became more settled and until trains came up in sufficient strength to defend themselves. Next morning our train sent a letter of warning by an Indian to a train still farther back but alas too late. The night before, the villains had come upon them and killed one man wounding another and running off with their mules.

This was nearly on the same ground where we had camped the night before. There were at this time at this agency over one hundred wigwams built of tanned Buffalow skin varying from ten to twenty feet in diameter and tapering to a point at the top. There were here about five hundred Indians of all ages and among them near two hundred warriors. These Indians were friendly and had collected here fore two causes. First--for safety from the Minnesota Sioux who are a part of their own tribe but had broken out in hostility against the whites. Second--to attend a sun dance they were about to hold. The agent told us that as long as we stayed here we need fear nothing from the Minnesotas. He had Indians as spies out all day and all night watching the enemy and if they should come upon us every warrior would turn out and defend us and themselves.

Their wigwams were arranged in a large half circle on a large level open plain of land and in this circle they trained and maneuvered for two days. All warriors and good horsemen mounted on ponies paraded and loped and ran most furiously around. Man and ponies painted war style and would up with a sham battle with bow and arrow and rifles.

They had arranged some of their own party out in the low hills and as far

as they were seen coming in, the war whoop was given and a furious dash was made to meet them, and they were followed into the hills out of sight. Next day they raised a pole in the center of the ground with many ceremonies, where they erected a shade or tent made of branches of trees, under which the sun dance commenced on Sunday evening and to continue for two days and nights without cessation under this tent. They had a large skin half tanned and dried stretched and placed on sticks driven in the ground standing about a foot high around which old men with a stick in each hand as many as could sit on the ground in reach were pounding this skin and singing in utter confusion and whooping and hollering. The squaws standing around signing and screeching all together making the most hideous noise I ever heard. All this was done in as solemn a manner as you ever saw a funeral service performed.

To us emigrants it was as amusing as it was strange, but I don't think any one attempted any disrespect to their worship. Another ceremony under this tent was several big vigorous and athletic bucks who were competing for the chieftainship of the tribe and to test their grit and endurance, on each shoulder blade there was a pinch of skin taken up and a knife pierced thru it, through which a thong of Buffalo skin was passed, by which a dried Buffalo head was suspended reaching nearly to the ground. With this they danced and jumped and suspended reaching nearly to the ground. With this they danced and jumped and raced around and the one who held out longest was the victor and chosen Chief.

These Sioux are a very large and robust tribe of Indians.

There is a white man here who is married to a squaw and has several children. He is employed by the agent as an interpreter and bookkeeper and he is a good scholar.

The Indians will all beg and some will steal. They stand around at meal time watching and looking very wishful and ready to take anything that may be offered to them.

This is on a large bottom land on Plat River with plenty of grass and fine water. We got plenty of milk by milking cows in the cattle trains, also buttermilk which as a real treat. We lay here from Thursday PM until Tuesday morning. We started out in a train of over a hundred wagons and some loose stock. We traveled and camped together two days and nights. It is very tedious and difficult getting along where there are so many together. The second day we passed a dead Indian disposed of in their usual way. The body is wrapped in a blanket. A scaffold is built of forked poles in the ground six or eight feet high. Poles and branches are placed across on which the "good" Indian is placed and sometimes this is arranged in a low tree. By his side is placed a bow and arrow and underneath a pony is killed for him to ride in the happy land. All this the squaws do and all the ordinary drudgery of life is hers. After the game is killed and brought in she takes charge of it. Finds her wood which is carried on her back frequently a long distance. She dresses all the skins and makes all the moccasins and does all the moving which they do so much of.

*From the editors: We will continue printing this narrative throughout the year.*

## Sutter County Historical Society Financial Report February 14, 2003

Checking Account Balance 03/14/02 \$12,820.31

INCOME	
Interest	10.11
Memorial Fund	1,920.00
Memorial Building Fund	345.00
Gifts	20.00
Membership Dues	3,420.15
Ornaments	91.00
April 2002 Luncheon	768.00
October 2002 Luncheon	858.00
April 2002 Bus Trip	170.00
March 2003 Bus Trip	460.00
March 2003 Buttes Hike	975.00
Bulletins Sold	110.00
Raffles	756.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>9,903.26</b>

EXPENSES	
Bulletin-Mailing	638.00
Bulletin-Printing/Misc.	2,229.65
Preservation Committee	14.56
Treasurer Expenses	28.06
Dues	50.00
Insurance	360.00
Stationery	478.87
Patio Paver	100.00
2002 Bus Trip Refunds	30.00
April 2002 Luncheon	1,069.24
Judith Barr Fairbanks Awards	90.00
July 2002 Picnic	51.54
October 2002 Luncheon	762.50
January 2003 Meeting	13.12
Transfer to Money Market	8,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>13,915.54</b>

Checking Account Balance 2/14/03	<b>\$8,808.03</b>
Edward Jones Accounts	
Certificate of Deposit	15,091.63
Money Market Account	3,149.07
Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Account	9,239.07
Total assets at Edward Jones	<b>\$27,479.77</b>

**SCHS Total Net Worth \$37,178.19**

## Sutter County Historical Society

	Budget Proposed Budget 2002-03	Actual Expenditures 2002-03	Proposed Budget 2003-04
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<b>Income</b>			
Memorials	\$ 1,400.00	\$ 1,920.00	\$ 1,500.00
Memorial Building Fund	\$ 150.00	\$ 345.00	\$ 300.00
Gifts	\$ 100.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 50.00
Membership Dues	\$ 3,200.00	\$ 3,420.15	\$ 3,400.00
Interest on checking account	\$ 20.00	\$ 10.11	\$ 10.00
Bulletins sold	\$ 100.00	\$ 110.00	\$ 100.00
Buttes Hike	\$ 500.00	\$ 975.00	\$ 750.00
Buttes Bus Trip	\$ 500.00	\$ 630.00	\$ 500.00
April Luncheon	\$ 960.00	\$ 768.00	\$ 900.00
October Luncheon	\$ 800.00	\$ 858.00	\$ 800.00
Raffles	\$ 500.00	\$ 756.00	\$ 600.00
Christmas Ornaments Sold	\$ 500.00	\$ 91.00	\$ 100.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 8,730.00</b>	<b>\$ 9,903.26</b>	<b>\$ 9,010.00</b>

<b>Expenses</b>			
Bulletin Postage	\$ 500.00	\$ 638.00	\$ 700.00
Bulletin - Printing	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 2,229.65	\$ 2,300.00
Officers' Expenses	\$ 150.00	\$ 28.06	\$ 100.00
Dues & Fees	\$ 60.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
Meeting Expenses	\$ 100.00	\$ 64.66	\$ 100.00
Membership Cards	\$ 100.00	\$ 360.00	\$ 360.00
Liability Insurance	\$ 350.00	\$ 1,069.24	\$ 1,000.00
April Luncheon	\$ 960.00	\$ 762.50	\$ 800.00
Stationery	\$ 300.00	\$ 478.87	\$ 100.00
Preservation Project	\$ 100.00	\$ 14.56	\$ 100.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 220.00	\$ 220.00	\$ 220.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 5,645.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,915.54</b>	<b>\$ 5,510.00</b>
Move to Building Fund	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 3,500.00

# Spring



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

ACQUISITIONS  
BREADBOX  
BUDGET  
DERWIN  
DREDGER

ELBERTA  
FAIRBANKS  
FLOOD  
HAMMONTON  
HARTER

HUNGRY  
JACOB  
LEVEE  
LUSITANIA  
MERIDIAN

MILO  
ONSTOTT  
PRESERVATION  
PURPOSE  
REGISTER

REMEMBRANCE  
SUPERVISOR  
TULEBOAT  
VETERANS  
ZOLLER'S



# Coming Events

## April

*Hungry for Art* exhibit opens at the Museum

### 12 Annual Meeting

West Sutter Veterans Building, 4th & Bridge Streets, Meridian  
11:30 social, 12:00 luncheon, 1:00 business meeting & program  
Program: History of Sutter County Levees  
Speaker: County Supervisor Dan Silva

### 16 Spring Vacation Children's Program

Museum, 10:00  
Yuba-Sutter Indian Education Center

### 26-27 Wear and Remembrance Vintage Apparel Fair

Franklin Hall, Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds  
10:00 - 5:00 Saturday, 11:00 - 4:00 Sunday

## May

*Hungry for Art* exhibit continues at the Museum  
*Recent Acquisitions* exhibit opens at the Museum

## June

*Recent Acquisitions* exhibit continues at the Museum