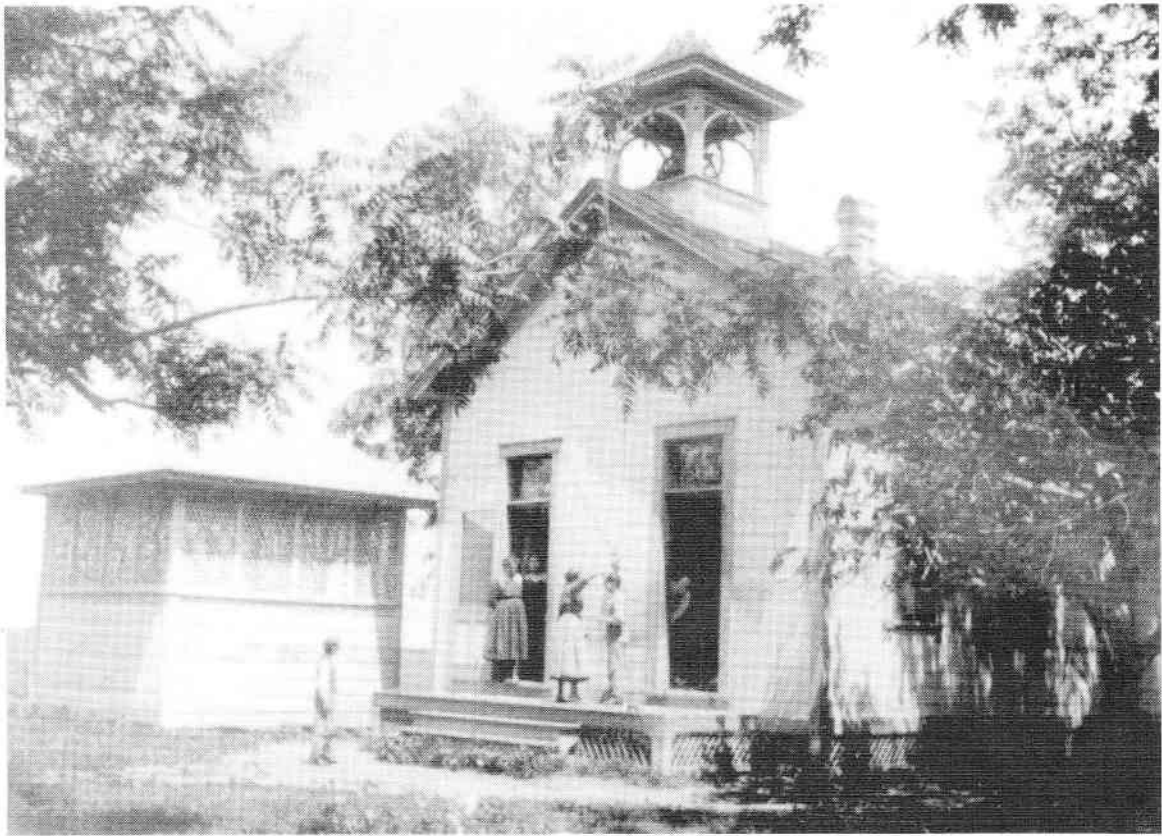




Vol. XLV No. 1

Yuba City, California

January 2003



Cottonwood School
1888-1920



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*The year the director joined the Board.

The **Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Historical Society in Yuba City, California. Payment of annual membership dues provides you with a subscription to the **Bulletin** and the Museum's **Muse News** 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
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Organizations/Clubs	\$ 30
Family	\$ 35
Business/Sponsor	\$ 100
Corporate/Benefactor	\$1000

President's Message

To kick off 2003, the Sutter County Museum will host the Historical Society's January meeting. This is a special meeting as we will learn about the changes that have taken place at the museum in the past year. The Agricultural Wing is completed and we are pleased that Julie Stark will be our guest speaker, presenting the artifacts and displays that are in the addition. Even if you have visited the new Ag Wing I urge you to attend the meeting - the "private tour" will shed new light on the wing's contents. And if you have not visited the museum lately, you are in for a special treat. As usual at our January meeting, the Historical Society will provide dessert after the program.

Our Spring meeting in Meridian will be an important one as we will elect members of the Board of Directors for the coming two years and they in turn will elect officers for the same term. We will also approve a budget for 2003-2004 and approve a resolution concerning the Historical Preservation Register. The resolution will be printed in the April bulletin so everyone will have a chance to review the proposal before the meeting.

The 2003 Bus Trip Around the Buttes and the Hikes in the Buttes dates are announced in this issue of the Bulletin. Please help advertise these fund raising events. Last year the bus trip sold out and we ended up with a waiting list. However, the Buttes Hikes are competing with other organizations' hiking events and we did not have so many attendees. The Directors ask that you help in advertising this event.

Our October meeting in Nicolaus was well-attended and a great success. We were greeted by members of the Hermann Sons Lodge; they served an excellent meal and have invited us back next year. Don Burtis presented a very interesting program on the early school districts of southeastern Sutter County. Our thanks to Don for his continued support of the Historical Society.

In closing, I would like to thank our Bulletin editors, Phyllis and Sharyl, for the great job that they continue to do. My thanks also to those who contribute articles to the Bulletin. Our bulletin is the mainstay of our operation and is very popular with our members.

My continued thanks to our Directors who keep the Historical Society moving in a positive and forward direction.

John Reische
President

Director's Report

We look forward to the new year, which holds some intriguing exhibits and programs for our museum audience. We can look back at the old year with a sense of accomplishment at the completion of several long-term projects. The permanent exhibits in the new agricultural history wing are complete but for a few details. The new patio is currently being landscaped as the last step before the long-awaited opening. Patio pavers are still available until all of them have been sold.

The first exhibit of 2003, called *Little Farm of Yesterday*, is a treasure from the Museum's own collection. Approximately two-thirds of the collection is in storage and is rotated into the Museum when needed. This wonderful miniature farm was created in the 1950s by retired Pleasant Grove farmer Edward Glenn. His father John Polk Glenn came across the plains to California as a child in the 1850s. Eventually he established a ranch at Pleasant Grove. Drawing from his childhood memories of life on the ranch, Edward Glenn handcrafted from wood each piece of machinery, each structure and each animal that would have been part of an early-day farm. The model farm shows us how farming was carried out in an era prior to mechanization and today's technology. It is also a charming example of primitive folk art. You can view it in the main gallery from mid-January through February.

In March, we will once again be treated to the creative imaginations of Yuba City High School art students as they present the exhibit *Hungry for Art*, which will feature the many facets of food in art. Late spring and summer exhibits will be comprised of recent acquisitions that the Museum has received over the past several years. Some wonderful and exciting donations have been made to the Museum, and, because not all of them fit immediately into an exhibit theme, we would like to share them with you. We think you will be as interested and amazed as we are at the variety of objects, all helping to tell the story of Sutter County in some way, which are given to the Museum.

A new traveling exhibit will come our way in October and November. It is *California Native Plants*, a colorful and dramatic collection of photography of our state and regional natives. Watch for an interesting program to accompany this exhibit. There may even be a few additional surprise exhibits during 2003. We will keep you updated on those.

Be sure to look for the pink *Love's Messenger* flyer in this issue and return it to the Museum so your favorite loved ones can receive a delivery of a beautiful Valentine gift bag on February 14. The proceeds benefit the Museum's educational programs. If you haven't returned your Museum and Historical Society membership envelope yet, be sure to do so before you miss an issue of *Muse News* or *The Bulletin*. Have a great year enjoying the benefits of belonging to your Museum!

Julie Stark
Director

Memorials

In Memory of **Barbara Parkison Cartago**
Ida J. Philpott

In Memory of **Violet DeGroot**
Milton & Jacqueline DeGroot

In Memory of **Lee DeWitt**
Jim & Eleanor Clark

In Memory of **Dan R. Dillon**
Jane Boone

In Memory of **James Gilpatric**
Norma & Clyde Harter
Norman & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **Josephine L. Hansen**
Marie E. Fuller

In Memory of **Ken T. Hansen**
Marie E. Fuller

In Memory of **Leonard Hanson**
M/M Robert Masera

In Memory of **H. T. "Ted" Herr**
Ray Anderson
Mrs. Harold Brown
Marge DeLong
Jennifer Giampaoli
Allen & Kathe Herr
George & Sally Herr
Janice & Danny Mosley
Mr. & Mrs. Duane Pangle
Norman & Loadel Piner
Cynthia Struckmeyer
Ten, Haken, Hinz & Carlos
Accountancy Corporation
Jane & Walter Ullrey

In Memory of **Roger Hoon**
R. James Staas

In Memory of **Patricia Koeppel**
Dewey Gruening

In Memory of **Donald D. Lee**
Helen Heenan
Tom & John Heenan
Joe & Margaret Serger

In Memory of **Edward LePine**
Jane Boone

In Memory of **Joe E. Netto, Sr.**
Bob & Sandra Fremd

In Memory of **John Panecaldo**
Tom & John Heenan

In Memory of **Mrs. Pfeffer**
Dean Palmer

In Memory of **Harold Quigg**
Audrey Breeching
Connie Cary
Mr. & Mrs. John M. Christian
Jim & Eleanor Clark
Dorothy Ettl
Frank & Irene Flores
Dewey Gruening
Bruce & Gini Harter
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Evangeline Hodges
Frank & Donna Peacock
Personal Insurance Federation of
California
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Norman & Loadel Piner
John & Dorothea Reische
Lou Ann Richards
Tae Sano
Randy & Shirley Schnabel
Troy & Sandy Simester
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Smith
Richard & Elaine Tarke
Darla Tovar

Memorials

In Memory of **Vinson Vanderford, Jr.**

Bruce & Gini Harter
M/M E. H. Lonon
M/M Ronald Rudge

In Memory of **Danetta Washam**

Joni Adams
Christy Carlos
Norma Garrison
Dewey Gruening
Ida Philpott
John & Dorothea Reische
Julie Stark

In Memory of **Greg Wright**

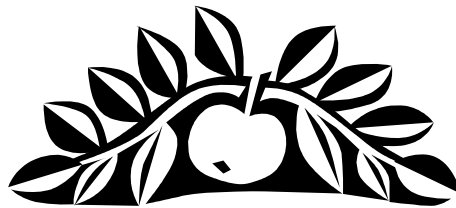
R. James Staas

In Honor of **Vera Fairlee Sears** on her
100th Birthday

Jim & Eleanor Clark

In Honor of **Robert & Dorothy Coats** on
their Marriage

Jim & Eleanor Clark
Norman & Loadel Piner



Jacob A. Onstott

On December 3, 2002 the tankhouse of the Onstott House at 2078 Colusa Highway was bulldozed into a pile of rubble. It was one of two brick tankhouses known to exist in California.

As a tribute to the Onstott House and family, we offer a biography of its builder, Jacob A. Onstott. Research for this article was provided by the Sutter County Memorial Museum and by Don Burtis.

On September 9, 1910, Jacob Arbow Onstott died at his home near Yuba City. He left behind his wife of 35 years, the former Rebecca Sliger of Gridley, and six children - sons Glen, Frederick and Hobert, and daughters Maude Onstott, Lulu Walton and Ethel McDornagh. A seventh child, Mamie, died at 16 years old. Mr. Onstott was also survived by two grandchildren, his brothers, John P. of Sutter County and William of Zanesville, Ohio, and a sister, Margaret Lyons of San Jose.

Among the pallbearers at Jacob's funeral were names familiar to us all: B. F. Walton, C. R. Boyd, J. C. Gray, and C. B. Harter. These names give some indication of who ranked among Jacob's closest friends.

Jacob Onstott was born in Zanesville, Ohio, on May 30, 1835, the son of Henry and Hannah (Fuerl) Onstott, natives of Pennsylvania. Feeling a need to explore the West, he sailed from New York to San Francisco with his cousin, William, arriving in 1854. He made his way to Marysville,

then on to the gold fields at Downieville. It is said he made and lost three fortunes, although it was never clear how much money he actually made.

In the next eleven or so years Jacob mined for gold and also tried his hand at other business efforts. At one time he bought cattle and horses, but lost them in a flood. He started a teaming business, running from Marysville to Downieville, but in 1864 or 1865 he was ready to settle down to ranching, and he bought 160 acres near Yuba City. He started raising grain but switched to growing Thompson Seedless grapes shortly after their development in 1872. He was involved in the early raisin industry with his brother John and was also one of the early growers of prunes in Sutter County.

On March 18, 1875, Jacob married Rebecca Sligar. Mrs. Onstott was a native of Missouri, and came to California across the plains with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Sligar, as a small child. Jacob was well-off and able to build his wife a large home.

The Onstott House is historically and architecturally significant and has been showcased in publications, including *The Survivors* by Janet R. Sullivan and Mary-Jane Zall. The large house with its tall windows, heavy bracketing and elegant frieze-work, and the front portico topped by a small balustraded balcony, is a lovely example of the Italianate style, often referred to as "wedding cake," popular for country living in the 1870s and 1880s.

Jacob added to his holdings until he owned 2,400 acres. In addition to

his Sutter County ranch, he owned several ranches in Butte County: the Sliger Ranch of 400 acres; the Dr. Horton Ranch of 160 acres; and the River Ranch on the Feather River, 400 acres. He also had interests other than ranching. At the time of his death he was a stockholder and director of the Farmers Co-Union Bank and interested in the Sutter Publishing Company.

Jacob's obituary praises him as a highly-esteemed rancher, citizen and neighbor, "a man of integrity, of generous impulses and kind acts" (Sutter County Farmer). According to the History of Butte County, Jacob was considered one of the most successful farmers in the Sacramento Valley at the time of his death.

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January Meeting

We have a very special program planned for **Tuesday, January 14, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sutter County Memorial Museum, 1333 Butte House Road.** The Museum's Agricultural Wing is finished and filled with Sutter County artifacts and exhibits depicting the history of Sutter County's most important asset, agriculture. Museum Curator Julie Stark will conduct us on a tour of the Ag Wing's treasures, and we'll have the opportunity to look at each item closely and ask questions.

The Historical Society will provide its famed desserts for all attendees - there is no cost for this meeting and no reservations are required. This is a great opportunity to bring your friends and family who are not familiar with the museum, as well as those who have visited plenty of times but will enjoy an in-depth look at the new wing.

Hike in the Sutter Buttes

The Sutter Buttes are privately owned, and gaining entrance for a hike is not easily done! The Historical Society's hike is **Saturday, March 22**, starting from the museum 9:00 a.m. and returning by 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. This is your chance for a special hiking tour on the Dean Ranch with an expert guide provided by the Middle Mountain Foundation. The group is limited to 40 hikers and costs \$25 per person. Hikers must bring their own water and lunch. Please wear hiking shoes and be prepared for a splendid time.

For reservations, please complete the registration form inserted in this issue of the Bulletin and send it, along with your check for \$25 per person, to the Sutter County Historical Society, P. O. Box 1004, Yuba City, CA 95992-1004. Reservations must be made by March 17.

Love's Messenger

Remember that special someone with a Love's Messenger gift bag from your museum! These lovely bags contain champagne or sparkling cider, two glasses, truffles, and several gifts for your loved one. For \$25 your gift is delivered right to your Valentine's door, and appropriately, on Valentine's Day. Museum volunteers will deliver anywhere in Sutter County and Marysville. This issue of the Bulletin includes an insert flyer about the museum's February fundraiser - please fill it out and send it back to the museum right away so you'll know your sweetheart won't be overlooked on Cupid's special day.

April Meeting

It's not too early to think about the Spring meeting - once again we'll meet in Meridian at the Veterans' Hall. The date is **Saturday, April 12** for a buffet luncheon. We have a busy agenda planned - the bi-annual election of members of the Board of Directors, the approval of the 2003-04 budget, consideration of a resolution establishing a Historical Preservation Register, and presentation of the Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest awards to Sutter County fourth and fifth graders.

Bus Trip Around the Buttes

Our ever-popular bus trip around the Sutter Buttes, with expert narration by local historian Don Burtis, will be **Saturday, March 29, 2003**. The trip is \$10 per person and early reservations are a MUST - the trip is very popular and the bus always fills early! Riders will meet at the Museum at 8:45 and start the trip at 9:00, arriving back at the museum about 1:00. Dress casually and take drinking water and any snacks you may want. The bus makes one rest stop at Noyes Cemetery.

For reservations, please complete the registration form inserted in this issue of the Bulletin and send it, along with your check for \$10 per person, to the Sutter County Historical Society, P. O. Box 1004, Yuba City, CA 95992-1004. Reservations must be made by March 21.

All this in addition to our program, which as we go to press is about the history of Sutter County musicians, bands and orchestras. If you can share anything on this topic please call Bruce Harter at 674-5882 or John Reische at 674-8106.

2001 Christmas Ornaments Discounted

If you missed last year's Christmas ornament, it's not too late to add to your collection! The large glass ornament displays a picture of the Meridian Ferry by a Northern California artist, drawn from a photo taken in 1901. Ornaments originally sold for \$8.00, but now can be yours for only \$6.50. You may also purchase a display stand for \$2.50. You can buy your lovely ornament at the museum or call Dorothy Ettl at 673-3412.



EARLY COMMON SCHOOLS OF SOUTHEAST SUTTER COUNTY

by
Don Burtis

I define southeast Sutter County as that portion of the county lying within the area bounded by the Bear River on the north, the Feather River and Placer County on the east, the Sacramento River and Yolo County on the southwest, and Sacramento County on the south.

Sutter was one of the original twenty-seven counties created in 1850 when California became a state.

When Placer County was formed from portions of Sutter and Sacramento counties on April 25, 1851, Auburn, which was the county seat of Sutter County, was named its county seat. The Sutter County seat was then moved to Vernon, later renamed Verona.

The Funding of the Early Schools

Records show that a number of the early common schools were funded by subscriptions and donations made by members of the area, rather than by district tax money; however, provisions for school support were established by the framers of the California Constitution in 1849. The constitution provided that the proceeds from the sale of land granted by the U.S. to California for the support of schools, and from the sale of estates of people who died without a will or heir, plus interest earned from other funds, were to

be used to support common schools throughout the state.

In the history of southeast Sutter County I have identified 17 elementary schools and three high school districts that have existed. Currently there is one high school and three elementary schools serving the entire area.

This treatise is about the several elementary school districts that existed in southeast Sutter County. I have included some bits and pieces of information that will be of interest and give you some insight about how the various schools were formed as well as what the communities were like. I've also written about a few of the people who played a role in this history. Some of the senior members who read this may even recognize a name or two.

Another day I plan to submit an article about the three high school districts that have played a part in this area's history.

Bear River School

The year 2002 marks the 150th anniversary of the first public or common school in Sutter County. Ordinarily this might be cause for a celebration of sort, but few people know anything about this early school are in a great minority. In addition, the school is gone, the community of Kempton's Crossing is gone and I know of no evidence

available to confirm its prior existence except for the bits of information contained in histories of Sutter County and the writings of a few historians. A few early county maps recorded the location.

The very first public school, established in Sutter County in 1852, was located at Kempton's Crossing on the Bear River. The actual location of this school was just a few miles from Wheatland. It was attended by students from both sides of the stream.

Sutter County was divided into five political townships and this school was in the Bear River Township. This was the beginning of the Bear River School District which essentially covered the entire township. The land within the school boundaries was later officially recognized as Bear River School District with the school at Kempton's Crossing identified as the Bear River School. It was in May, 1894 that the name Bear River School District ceased to exist, when Bear River became part of Fairview School District.

Kempton's Crossing was first called Robinson's Crossing, since a man by that name settled there in 1849. He left in 1850 and a man named Low took the place. The term "crossing" identifies this particular location as a place where travelers could get across the stream more safely than at some other places. In 1852, H. H. Flagg and Nathan Kempton settled there. Kempton established a hotel and the place changed its name. A very crude bridge was constructed in 1850. A better constructed bridge was built in 1853, but it was

destroyed by floods a few years later and had to be repaired. This place was a main crossing point between Nicolaus and Wheatland. By 1852, this settlement had increased in population and there were a few businesses that had been established, including the hotel, a store, a blacksmith shop and of course the school. I have found no information that describes this first school house, but I imagine it was in a wooden house of some type that served the purpose. In 1855, a brick school house was erected that was large enough to accommodate fifty scholars.

Arthur H. Hewitt was a teacher at Bear River School in 1878-80. He also was principal in Yuba City in 1883-84. He later became a very prominent attorney in Yuba City.

The last recorded teacher at Bear River was Jennie Donovan in 1890-91. Although the school district did not end until 1894, the lack of any assigned teachers to the school indicate that any students in the area very likely attended Fairview School during this time.

Nicolaus School

The second public school established in Sutter County was at Nicolaus in the Nicolaus Township in 1853. School was first held in a little house on Phil E. Drescher's place, and was removed to the "miner's" store in 1854. This was a building erected in 1850, north of Nicolaus, by the Thrift Brothers, and kept as a store that year. The lower floor was used as a school room and the upper one afterwards as a hall by the Masons and

Oddfellows. In 1856, the school was removed again to Nicolaus where in 1863 a new school house was built.

The town of Nicolaus lies on the east side of the Feather River about one and one-half miles below the mouth of the Bear River. Nicolaus Allgeier was the first settler in the township, in 1842, and the second in Sutter County, after Sutter's establishment at Hock Farm. Allgeier had been a trapper for the Hudson's Bay Company and left that company to work for John Sutter. The road to Hock Farm required crossing the river at Nicolaus and Sutter desired someone stationed at this point with a ferry to assist in the ferrying of cattle, etc. across the river. He made a deal with Allgeier to be this person. He deeded him a tract one square mile in consideration of the labor he had performed, and of the services he should render in the future, all valued at four hundred dollars. Allgeier built himself a hut of poles covered with tule grass and dirt. A primitive ferry boat was constructed in 1843, which the Indians rowed across the river.

The town of Nicolaus was made the county seat shortly after the First Court met in session at a location called Oro. Oro was located at the mouth of the Bear River where it enters the Feather River. It had no proper building for the Court to conduct its business and they immediately moved to Nicolaus where they remained for awhile. Nicolaus as the second county seat was in reality the first location where the county held court and conducted the government business of the county.

Vernon School

The next school to be established in the south Sutter County was Vernon School in 1857. It was located in Vernon Township, near the mouth of the Feather River where it enters the Sacramento.

The Vernon school was in the hotel in the beginning and later moved to a former bowling alley. A prominent resident by the name of David Abdill and others built the first school house in the Vernon district. The school house was also used for religious meetings.

David Abdill obtained government land in this area after the Sutter grant was confirmed by the United States. This was land not owned by Sutter. He built a home in Vernon and was one of the leaders in getting a school started.

The Township of Vernon could mainly be called swamp and overflow land, because at this early time when the rivers were high enough they overflowed their banks. Levees had not been constructed to control the rivers. The surrounding lowland area became a swamp and for the most part it was not taken up by individuals at this time or settled on. The highest ground was in general found next to the river and most settlers who stayed had land claims along the river.

Captain James Savage in 1848 was on the coast of Chile, procuring a cargo of mahogany to carry to New York, when he heard of the California gold excitement. He immediately brought his vessel and cargo here and anchored at the mouth of the Feather, unloaded his cargo, and commenced the construction of a hotel, using the

mahogany for the framework. He paid \$25 per day for labor in its construction, and when finished had a hotel 75 x 45 feet in dimensions, three stories high, and built of very costly material. The upper floor was fitted for a Masonic Hall, but no lodge was ever organized there. A few buildings of canvas were erected but were soon replaced by frame structures.

The town of Vernon was situated on the east bank of the Sacramento River. In reality it was the pioneer town of Sutter County, having its origin in April 1849 when three men, Bates, Crosby and Simmons, purchased a strip of land three miles along the Sacramento and Feather rivers, and extending back one mile. They laid out the town, one mile square at the junction of the rivers, designed for country residences and villas that should accompany a city such as they planned. John Sutter owned one-fourth of the lots.

Thinking the town would become a huge success, lots sold rapidly and at a high price, some bringing \$1,000 each.

A post office established there in 1849 was also an attraction since miners had great difficulty in sending and receiving mail.

In August 1849, the town consisted of one hotel, several boarding houses, stores, saloons and gambling houses, a bowling alley, blacksmith shops, butcher shops, laundries, a post office and more.

During this "boom" period, many people thought this city was destined to be the head of navigation for the river. The first vessels that came up the river were

schooners and sloops that were fine as long as the water was high enough.

In summer 1849 the river was so low that vessels ran aground 15 miles below Vernon. The winter of 1849-50 was very rainy and the river raised enough to allow steamers to travel up to Nye's Ranch, the present city of Marysville.

This was the beginning of the town's struggle for existence. E. O. Crosby, one of the original purchasers of the land from John Sutter, was a member of the Senate in the session of 1850-51 and succeeded in having the county seat located at Vernon, but it was removed to Nicolaus the next year. Court sessions were held at the hotel, which was also used as a jail for the only prisoner confined there. He was held by a chain fastened to his leg. The chain passed through a hole in the partition and fastened on the other side of the wall.

The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1868.

The last teacher of this one-teacher school at Vernon was Mrs. Edith Bryant Finch during the 1942-43 school year after which it closed. Some other teachers in the 1930s and early 40s included Jewell Wiseman, Katherine Hewitt and Dorothy Larson.

Nicolaus School No. 2

The next new school district in south Sutter County may come as a surprise. This is information that stopped being mentioned and was eventually forgotten. It appears it just wasn't important enough to remember and wasn't handed down.

This district was created in 1857 and was given the name Nicolaus No. 2. Not a very creative name but nonetheless it served the purpose of identifying this new district.

I found no records to indicate exactly where school was kept in this new Nicolaus No. 2 district but would guess that it was in an existing building or home that was available in the area. I have found no records indicating who any of the teachers were. I would guess that among the reasons for creating this new district could have been a large enrollment in the Nicolaus No. 1 school or that the distance children were having to travel to get to school was too far.

Nicolaus School District No. 2 lasted for eight years until August 1864. A reason has not been discovered but perhaps a drop in enrollment caused the district to close, resulting in rejoining Nicolaus No. 1 and No. 2 into a single Nicolaus School District.

Illinois School

The next district in this area was formed as Illinois District No. 3 in 1861. This was the third district in the Nicolaus Township, and was formed from part of the Nicolaus District.

Some newspaper articles provide a bit of information about the school. "In December 1881, T. J. Mulvany closed his school in Illinois district last Fri after a successful term of 5 months, on account of the pupils not attending because of muddy roads."

In July , 1895 it was reported that "*The School Building In Illinois*

District Was Destroyed By Fire. Last Saturday night, between nine and ten o'clock, the school building in Illinois District, about three miles below Nicolaus was destroyed by fire. The building was well furnished with desks and school apparatus and had an excellent library. It had also recently been repainted, and school would have commenced last Monday, with Shelby Strange of this place as teacher. The loss will be in the neighborhood of \$1000, with insurance at \$600. It will be rebuilt at once. Tramps sleeping in the building is supposed to have been the cause of the fire."

In December 1895 it was reported, "The new school house in Illinois district has been completed and is ready for the furniture."

T. J. Mulvaney taught school at Browns, Fairview, Illinois and Lee between 1876 and 1881. He was native to the Nicolaus area.

The last session of this district was the 1924-25 session during which the teacher was Mrs. Josephine P. Gooch.

Marcum and Illinois school districts combined into the Marcum Illinois District and Mrs. Gooch continued as teacher in the new district during the 1925-26 school year.

Fairview School

Fairview District was created in 1862 out of a portion of the Nicolaus and Illinois districts.

The following shows how districts combine and a name of the district is changed sometimes by one of the names being dropped.

Reported in May 1894: "The school districts of Fairview and Bear River have been made into one school district to be called Fairview School district."

Records from August, 1910 show that Fairview did not have the required attendance to continue as a public school.

The school did struggle along with this low enrollment, always on the borderline of being able to keep the school in session until October of 1917, when the district was declared lapsed and it was annexed at that time to Brown School.

In August, 1919 it was announced that the old Fairview School House was to be sold. This action was authorized by the Board of Supervisors and they instructed Supervisor G. H. Trevathan to dispose of the same, since the school had been consolidated with Brown School District. It was further explained that Fairview was one of the oldest districts in the county but owing to the change of settlement of the population and other districts it had been decided to close the district.

Bethel School

I have never heard any other person say they have known of this next district.

Bethel School District was established in 1863. The Board of Supervisors Minutes of May 5, 1863 recorded, "In the Matter of the petition of Citizens for the establishment of a new School District... This matter now coming on to be heard and its appearing to the satisfaction of the Board that the Establishment of a new School

District is necessary, it is therefore ordered... that it be known as Bethel School District."

The Board of Supervisors records give the date of the approval of the district and also identify the boundaries, but do not indicate that it was created out of any other specific existing district. I have found no other information regarding this district anywhere in the old newspapers or in the records of the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools office.

This is a good place to provide some information regarding the formation of a new school district. The County Board of Supervisors receives a petition of the interested citizens of an area of the county stating their desire to have a new school district established. This information has been recorded in the minutes of the Board since it was established in 1855. Whenever a district has reason to be declared lapsed (closed) and a determination made as to where the school's area will be annexed or included in the boundaries of a nearby district, it must be so approved by the Board of Supervisors.

I am still searching for official records regarding the establishment of those schools that were formed before 1855. These early schools have had information about them published in some of the early history books about Sutter County such as Thompson and West History of Sutter County (1879). There also have been a few memories recorded of early day county residents about the schools they attended.

Brown School

Browns School District was created in 1863 out of a portion of Bear River District.

The earliest teacher I have been able to confirm in Browns School was J. H. Ray during 1867-1868. He taught for several more years in the county and by 1876, had become an attorney with an office located in the County Court House in Yuba City.

Browns and Fairview school districts were created out of the original Bear River District. When they were all in session, these schools were in close proximity to each other according to today's standards and for good reason. During the winter when rains would fall and creeks would rise children could still travel to school without having to cross a flooded area. One school could not have served all the area. A levee system was not constructed until about 1914 to control the waters of Bear River, Coon Creek, or Yankee Slough.

In 1913, the Browns District Trustees called for a bond election. The Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to sell the bonds against the district. The bonds were for the sum of \$2,500 and for \$250 each, bearing an interest rate of 6 percent per annum. The purpose of the bond was to raise funds to build a new school and make improvements on the school. The bond passed.

A contract was awarded to C. N. Marders of Marysville for \$2,100. He began work immediately so it could be completed for the fall term.

The original building was torn down and a new building was

constructed which included a bell tower. In 1925 a classroom, an office and restrooms were added. In December, 1971 a new Browns School was almost finished when a fire destroyed the old building and bell tower. The bell was recovered in three large pieces which were repaired and put on display near the entrance to the school. Later, someone stole the bell.

Browns School District has the distinction of being the only early school in southeast Sutter County to remain in session for these many years with its original name.

I acquired the 130th anniversary book for Browns Elementary School several years ago. In the book was a picture of Browns School students in 1911. One student was Ida Arfsten, probably about grade 7 or 8.



Browns School students in 1911
Back - Ned Arfsten, Ida Arfsten, Ed Gallagher
Middle - Jenny Arfsten, Agnes Gallagher, Lloyd Hudson
Front - Unk., Charles Gallagher, Belle Hudson

Ida's name changed to Farley and when I started teaching eighth grade in Yuba Elementary School in Yuba City in 1948, she was teaching 7th grade across the hall. I have since found that Ida Farley taught at Marcum starting in 1921, Nicolaus in 1924, Yuba City in 1926, Lee School from 1931 to 1936, and Yuba City Elementary from 1936 to 1957.

I never knew she had taught TEN years in single teacher schools in south Sutter County. She was a very competent teacher. I never thought of her as teaching before I was born. She was one of the most youthful and energetic of the older teachers I was privileged to teach with and have as a mentor.

American School

The American District was established in May, 1865, formed from a part of the Vernon Township.

The only reference to this district I found was in the records of the Board of Supervisors. It was not in session or even in existence in 1867 or there would be some reference to it in the newspapers or Superintendent of Schools Records. It obviously lasted for a couple of years at most.

Auburn School

Auburn School District was established in August 1865 and was located at the small town of Pleasant Grove. Thompson & West Sutter County (1879) states the school house was built in 1864. This is either wrong or they anticipated the need for a school and built one before the district was formed. This school burned in 1874 and the trustees, working with the

Grangers, built the next school a little south of the old site. Like most other early schools it was used by different religious groups to hold services.

A deed dated April 29, 1875 indicates the Trustees of Auburn School District and the south Sutter Grange acquired a piece of land from Thomas J. Sharp.

All of the land on which this town is situated was settled in 1861 by S. A. Ingraham, who built a blacksmith shop. He sold the property to Chas. Bishop in 1865, who kept a store and saloon. George Ellis also built a blacksmith shop.

Until 1866, the locality was known as Gouge Eye, but that same year a post office was established and the community was given the name of Pleasant Grove.

In 1879 it was reported that the town consisted of one store, one saloon, one hotel, one boarding house, two blacksmith shops, one shoemaker shop, one physician, one school house and hall, and in the immediate vicinity about six dwelling houses.

Johnson School

Johnson School District was established by the Board of Supervisors in 1866 when the citizens of the Bear River District petitioned for a new district.

This district was obviously not in session or even in existence in Sutter County in 1867 as there are no references to it in the newspapers or Superintendent of Schools Records.

The boundaries of the Johnson School District place the

school in what appears to be Placer County at this time. The only plausible explanation for the Sutter County Board of Supervisors approving the establishment of a school in Placer County is that school districts do not always conform to county boundary lines. An example is Knights School District in south Sutter County just north of Knights Landing. It was a part of the Sutter County school system until the citizens of that area petitioned to have their district become a part of Woodland High School District, which is in Yolo County. Also a part of Pleasant Grove District presently includes land located in Placer County.

Lee School

Lee School District was established in 1868 and was formed from Nicolaus and Vernon School Districts. This action was taken by the Board when they approved the petition of Wm. C. Hodge and others for a new school district.

The new school district was defined as all that portion of Nicolaus School District lying south of the south line of the land of David H. Redfield, or "the extension of line to the eastern and western limits of said District contained in the northern tier of sections of Vernon District. Said district to be called Lee School District."

I have no information regarding where the school was first located but property was acquired in the name of the district from David Mahoney by deed dated December 17, 1875. I assume the school was then located on this property from that time.

David Mahoney owned 706 acres in the area that became the Lee School District. He was a farmer and stock raiser born 1827 in Ireland. He came to the U.S. in 1839 and across the plains to California in '49. After mining he settled near Nicolaus. He was the first Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, elected to that office on September 5, 1855. He resigned after about two months and the office was filled by the appointment of C. E. Wilcoxon, who was the first teacher in Yuba City when a district was established there. Mr. Mahoney served many years as a school trustee and was also twice elected as a county supervisor.

In 1853, the State legislature made county assessors ex-officio county school superintendents and they served until 1855 when the legislature passed a law that each county in the State was required to elect a county superintendent of schools.

The first teacher in the Lee School was R. C. Duffy in 1868-69. The school was last in session in 1938-39 with Edith Finch teaching. The next year the district was annexed to Marcum Illinois District.

How District Boundaries Changed

Action was sometimes taken by the Board to satisfy the need of citizens, resulting in changes to the school district boundaries. The following is an example of such action that took place at a Board meeting on February 5, 1868.

"In the matter of the petition of C. W. A. Arens and others, in relation to the boundary lines between Nicolaus and Lee School

Districts, it was ordered that the estate of Nicolaus Algier, Watt Sallentine, Peter Peters and Klaus Peters be set off from the Lee School District and attached to the Nicolaus School District."

Marcum School

Marcum School District was established in 1869. Board records do not state where the school area came from!!

A description of this new district is one of the easier ones to verify on a map: "It is ordered by the Board that a new school District be and the same is hereby established bounded as follows: Beginning at the north east corner of township 12 north range 4 east, running thence three miles west, thence three miles south, thence three miles east and thence three miles north to the place of beginning, and that said district be known and called 'Marcum School District.' "

Illinois and Marcum Districts joined together in 1925 and formed a union school district called Marcum Illinois. Mrs. Josephine P. Gooch was the first teacher.

A Sutter County newspaper dated June 16, 1905 indicated that these Marcum School students had been promoted from the seventh to the eighth grade for the following year: Percy Graves, Ruth Thornton, Mildred Morehead, Stella Graves.

The following promotions were in a news item dated June 14, 1912. Mrs. Christina Graves, Teacher; Seventh to Eighth - Wendell Jopson, Margaret Thornton; Sixth to Seventh - Elmer C. Smith, Leslie C. Jopson.

Eagle School

Eagle School District was formed in 1870 from a portion of Auburn District. Eagle School served its students well through the years until enrollment decreased so that it was reasonable to consider joining with Auburn and Cottonwood schools to form one district. Meetings to discuss this proposition were taking place in 1915.

Some interesting articles regarding Eagle School appeared in the Sutter County Newspaper. "On December 14, 1888, it was announced that Eagle school had closed for the Fall term. It was further announced that the school will open again on the first of March."

This supports the idea that student travel to school in the rainy winter months was not always easy or even possible when the various creeks would rise and roads were muddy.

"On March 13, 1891, it was announced that Miss Annie Fleming began teaching last Monday in the Eagle School, which now begins the Spring term."

This is like the previous article inasmuch as the spring term begins in March. I would guess the bridges hadn't been built or the roads improved much by this time.

On December 29, 1893 an article proclaims that Eagle School granted two diplomas of graduation, to Cornelia Purinton and Willie Sankey.

Willow Pond School

In 1873 Willow Pond School District was formed from parts of Nicolaus, Lee and Central school

districts, but not in my definition of southeast Sutter County. Part of both the Nicolaus and Lee districts and all of Central District were on the west side of the Feather River.

Cottonwood School

Cottonwood School District was established in May, 1888, and was formed out of territory in the districts of Illinois and Auburn.

Smaller schools in rural sections of the county sometimes had a problem hiring teachers to work in their schools. An article printed on October 5, 1888 states, "Cottonwood and Lee Schools are still without teachers." This was the school's first year in session and the records show that Nellie Myles was the first teacher at this school. The school was last in session during the 1919-20 school year with Mary Gallagher as the teacher.

This one-room school was located on the Coppin Ranch on what is now Pacific Avenue across

the road from the Algeo Ranch. After the school was closed, the Algeo family purchased the old school house and moved it across the road to their ranch. Along with some members of the Coppin family, the Algeos also attended this school. Oba Algeo was one of the teachers in the school and in the 1890s she and her pupils earned money from entertainments and purchased a bell. The old school house could not withstand the stresses of time and the elements and eventually simply collapsed on the ground, helped by the earthquake felt in this area in the 1970s. My understanding is that the bell is still in existence since it was removed by the Algeos before the earthquake and is in safekeeping.

On June 21, 1895 it was reported that Cottonwood School was closing and there would be an entertainment program at the school. Miss Oba Algeo was the teacher.



Cottonwood School - George Algeo is barefoot boy at left

On May 29, 1896 an article told that a picnic was scheduled by the Cottonwood School at Cottonwood Grove, four miles northwest of Pleasant Grove on June 9th, 1896.

George F. Algeo was a student at the Cottonwood School, attending through the ninth grade. Like many of the students his age, he had to leave the area to attend high school. He graduated with top honors from Chico High School in June, 1913. He attended Chico Normal School for two years and received his teaching credential. He was principal-teacher at Auburn School 1915-18; served in U. S. Army in World War I; was principal-teacher at Pleasant Grove School 1928-31; and was elected as Sutter County Superintendent of Schools in 1931, serving until 1942. Starting in 1951 he served as principal of Park Avenue School and then as principal of Bridge Street School, both in Yuba City. He retired in 1962. I have a perfect attendance certificate signed by and received from George F. Algeo as County Superintendent when I was in the third grade.

Pleasant Grove School

Pleasant Grove District was created in 1920 by the consolidation of the Auburn, Cottonwood and Eagle school districts. The Auburn School located in Pleasant Grove and other school buildings were used until a new building was completed.

On June 16, 1922, a bond issue, submitted to the voters in the three school districts that had combined, failed to pass.

Irene S. Pickler and Alexine Kimball were the teachers in the Pleasant Grove School for the 1920-21 school year, the first year of this new school district.

The following article was in the paper in June, 1922.

"Will Have One School With Two Teachers; Trustees of Pleasant Grove Union District To Lease a Building For Coming Term"

"At a recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the new consolidated Pleasant Grove School District it was deemed advisable to run the present three schools of Auburn, Eagle and Cottonwood as one and employ two teachers. The district was organized but the bonds to construct a new building failed to secure the necessary two-thirds vote and nothing will be done in the way of buildings, etc., this year. It is probable that some arrangements for the transportation of the pupils during the winter season will be made. The present school houses will not be moved but an effort made to lease some building in a central location for the purpose of holding the consolidated schools until permanent arrangements can be made in the future.

"The decision of the trustees was made largely on account of the scarcity of teachers and to give the children the benefits of a graded school and more conveniences and special courses not possible in a one teacher school. The shortage of teachers is becoming serious and very likely this coming term will find many of the country schools vacant for awhile on account of not being able to obtain good teachers."

It wasn't until May 8, 1925, that the newspapers announced a bond election to build a new school facility for the Pleasant Grove School had passed.

The following article dated January 8, 1926 tells about the new Pleasant Grove school building.

"The fine new \$15,000 school building of the Pleasant Grove Union School District is now ready for occupancy and the pupils and teachers will move next Monday. This event has long been looked forward to as the old building was in a bad condition and not at all adequate for the needs of the district. For years the district has been working toward the time when a new school building would be built and now that this has been accomplished, the people are to be congratulated.

"The building is of pleasing architecture with two large classrooms and a commodious assembly room which can also be used as a class room. In the assembly hall there is a stage with adjacent ante-rooms. There are convenient cloak rooms, halls, lavatories, etc., with heat in all the rooms from a furnace and everything up-to-date and convenient in every particular. With the means at hand the trustees and the contractor have accomplished much and deserve credit. During the holidays there was a public assemblage in the building with programs, etc., and the patrons of the district given an opportunity to inspect the new building. They were much pleased with the same."

An article dated May 21, 1926 tells of the dedication of Pleasant Grove School.

"Dedication of Pleasant Grove School; Large Assemblage Attend Evening Exercises Last Saturday Evening

"More than four hundred persons were present at the dedication of the Pleasant Grove Union grammar school last Saturday evening. Mayor E. E. Roberts of Reno, Nev., candidate for U. S. Senator from Nevada, and a former resident of that section, gave the dedicatory address.

"The program began with the salute to the flag and was followed by the singing of 'America' by the audience. School Superintendent Mrs. Minnie M. Gray...outlined the general school program for the county and the improvements to be introduced. Mrs. Helen E. Stevenson, Music Supervisor of the county, led in the community singing and later spoke on...her work in the rural schools. Mayor E. E. Roberts in his dedicatory address presented the ground upon which the new building stands to the district in the name of his father and mother, the late Mr. and Mrs. William Roberts, pioneer residents of that section. He also announced five gifts of \$10 each to the five most deserving pupils of the school. These scholarships are to be presented each year.

"A luncheon...was served by the P. T. A. of the district under the direction of Mrs. Mabel Glenn. This was followed by old time dances, the music being furnished by Mr. and Mrs. Geo. McWilliam."

Puzzle Page

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Auburn	Fairview	Johnson	Oba	schools
Browns	Gouge Eye	Kempton	Onstott	tankhouse
bus trip	hike	Lee	ornament	Vernon
Central	Illinois	Marcum	preservation	Willow Pond
Cottonwood	Jacob	Nicolaus	Rebecca	Zanesville



Coming Events

January

- 14 Dessert Meeting
7:00 p.m. at the Museum
Program: Tour of the new Agricultural Wing
Tour guide: Julie Stark, Museum Director/Curator

Little Farm of Yesterday opens at the Museum

February

- Little Farm of Yesterday* continues at the Museum
14 Love's Messenger gift bags delivered

March

- 22 Hike in the Sutter Buttes
29 Bus Trip Around the Buttes

April

- 12 Annual Luncheon, Meridian Veterans' Hall
11:30 a.m. Social, 12:00 luncheon
Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Awards
Election of Directors
Program: Sutter County musicians, bands and orchestras