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Yuba City, California

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\*The year the director joined the Board.

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The 2005 dues are payable as of January 1, 2005. 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
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## President's Message

Elaine Tarke has resigned as a member of the board of directors, a position she has held since 1985. Elaine was president of the Historical Society in 1990, and served two terms as vice president prior to that. We want to thank her for her dedication over the years.

We also have a change in officers. Dorothy Ettl is stepping down as treasurer after serving since 2001. Dorothy will continue to serve as a member of the board of directors. Thank you, Dorothy, for all your hard work.

Please join us for the annual Octoberfest luncheon at the Hermann Sons Hall in Nicolaus. Kit Burton will present a program on the restoration of the Smartsville Catholic Church. Greg Glosser has once again offered to open the historic Senator Chandler house to members for a tour after the luncheon. Please check the insert in this bulletin for details.

And finally, we would like as many members as possible to attend the Yuba City Planning Commission meeting on **Wednesday, September 22, at 7:00 p.m.** when they discuss the Harter specific plan. The city's environmental impact report states that the Harter family and their homes are unimportant to the history of Sutter County and we need a crowd to show we disagree. You may call Bob Mackensen, 530-673-1191, with any questions.

Tom Crowhurst  
President



## Correction/Addendum

In the last issue of the Bulletin, we erroneously attributed the finances for the 1983 to the Sutter County Historical Society. This first addition was financed by the Memorial Museum Trust. We regret the error.

Also, we failed to name the architects for the museum. The architectural work was done by Forrest Duranceau and Donald Gillett of the firm of Duranceau and Gillett.

## Director's Report

Join in the museum's full fall schedule with several outstanding programs and activities for everyone. The marvelous *Ansel Adams: Inspiration and Influence* exhibit continues through October 3. This is a truly remarkable collection of photographs that we feel very privileged to be able to share with the community.

Join us in honoring the museum's devoted volunteers at the Volunteer Appreciation Tea on Tuesday, October 12 at 10:00 a.m. These wonderful women and men are the backbone of the museum and make possible all of the many programs, fundraisers and daily activities. The museum benefits in every way from the energy generated by these special people.

Plan on taking a look at the new fall exhibit, *Toying Around*. Children's toys of the past, culled from the museum's collection, reflect the joys of childhood over the last 125 years. *Toying Around* opens in mid-October and remains through November 28.

A very special program takes place on Tuesday, November 9 at 6:30 p.m. when internationally known artist and poet Frank La Pena presents a slide talk about his new book *Dream Songs and Ceremony, Reflections on Traditional California Indian Dance*. This stunning volume, just published by Heyday Press, combines La Pena's vibrant paintings with personal history and commentary. Honoring the ceremonial traditions of his Wintun ancestors, he has been active in the revival and preservation of those native arts through the Maidu Dancers and Traditionalists, and through his art and his work. La Pena is a professor emeritus of art and ethnic studies at California State University, Sacramento. The book will be available for purchase and signing for \$25 plus tax.

We hope you will join in the many activities planned for the holiday season at the museum. Help the volunteer elves make ornaments for the big tree on Thursday, November 4 and Wednesday, November 17, both days at 10:00 a.m. The museum needs your help on Thursday, December 2 for Decoration Day to dress the museum in fresh greens for the annual Christmas gala fundraiser, *Trees & Traditions* on Saturday, December 4 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for *Trees & Traditions* are available from any Museum Commissioner or at the museum. The annual Christmas Open House and Children's Program comes around on Sunday, December 19 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., featuring Christmas stories, John Carter's wonderful music, and festive goodies. Remember that the Museum Store is waiting for you to discover its unique gifts for everyone on your list.

Join us in January for a photography exhibit about Shanghai Bend's past, present and future. This exhibit was postponed from its earlier scheduled date in October.

As always, I invite you to fully participate in the many diverse activities your museum offers you.

Julie Stark  
Director

## Memorials

In Memory of **William Andreason**  
Mr. & Mrs. William Butler  
Connie Cary

In Memory of **John Brownlee**  
Gene & Babs Lonon

In Memory of **Lew Calhoun**  
Kenneth & Vivian Calhoun

In Memory of **Frank Cook**  
Perry Mosburg and Family

In Memory of **Robert Delgado**  
Dewey and Barbara Gruening

In Memory of **Mrs. Ralph Greene**  
Jane Roberts

In Memory of **Major Hollan Jones**  
Helen Heenan

In Memory of **Marie Grazer Kingston**  
Carolyn Oswald

In Memory of **Honora Anita Laney**  
Mike & Helene Andrews  
Judith Boyd  
Audrey Bryan  
Michael and Teri Burroughs  
Connie Cary  
Patricia Cetko  
Dewey and Barbara Gruening  
Coburn Haskell  
Dorothy Jang  
Dino and Susanna Lekos  
Gene & Babs Lonon  
Robert and Betty Lou Storm  
David and Ellen Wheeler

In Memory of **Clyde McRunnels**  
Howard and Ruth Anthony

In Memory of **Ayako Nakamura**  
Frank Howard, Virginia Filter &  
Family

In Memory of **Alfred Perrin**  
Kenneth Calhoun

In Memory of **Carl E. Pratt**  
Helen Heenan and Family

In Memory of **Frank Ramsay**  
Dub McFarland & Julie Stark

In Memory of **Jean Rideout**  
Gene & Babs Lonon

In Memory of **Joseph King Roberts**  
William & Ethel Carter  
Mrs. Jean Gustin  
David and Kate Grishaw-Jones  
Rose Nygaard

In Memory of **Shirley Robinson**  
Bogue Country Club

In Memory of **Mathew Smith**  
Dub McFarland

In Memory of **Mildred Taylor**  
Dewey and Barbara Gruening

In Memory of **Della Wanek**  
Sharyl Simmons  
Julie Stark

In Honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
Gordon and Carol Jean Bordsen  
Tom & Marnee Crowhurst

Outright Gift  
Rose Wood

# Uncle Dickie Reminisces

by  
Richard Piatt

*The following reminisces of Richard Ford Piatt, Uncle Dickie (1823-1913), great-great-great-uncle to Sutter County Museum Commissioner Greg Glosser, were written in pencil in an old cloth notebook of lined paper. Greg remembers this old book, in disrepair, being read at the dining room table when he was growing up.*

*Richard and Noah Noble Piatt, Greg's great-great grandfather (1828-1903), were the sons of James Andrew and Jerima Ford Piatt of the Illinois town of Monticello in Piatt County. The Piatt family still there to this day.*

*The original spelling of the document is retained. In this issue we print part one of the diary.*

## Introduction by Greg Glosser

In the spring of 1849, a group of 49ers left Monticello, Piatt County. The original party consisted of Richard Piatt, the author of these sojourns; his uncle, Bill Rea; George Matsler; and Henry Sadorus. They crested the Sierra on August 3, 1849. The story of the trip from Monticello until the reminisces resume on page 42, on the day before Christmas 1849, seems to have been lost as well as the pages and journal after page 133.

However, it can be gleaned from the remaining pages that the group was not idle during these nearly four months in California, for they bought a city lot in Sacramento, started working a claim at a place called Dry Creek, had already been up to or near the forks, and visited present-day Downieville where they met Captain Downey, his sailors, and, it seems, a Scotchman who had made his fortune and was, for some reason, leaving and telling the group of his luck and the location of his strike.

From the north fork of the Yuba River, they seem to have ended up, by the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, in Hangtown, present-day Placerville, with ox teams, mules, some cattle, and a wagon full of lumber.

Within these reminisces, Richard's brother, Noah Noble Piatt, arrived in California and later with his wife, Hannah Retta Phillips Piatt, settled on what is now known as the Bryden Ranch on Honcut Creek, where Fruitland Road crosses over it. An 1871 map of Yuba County shows the locations of the Piatt and Bryden houses. On August 17, 1860 my great grand-mother, Kate, was born on the ranch to Noah and Hannah.

On February 5, 1868, Noah and Hannah's son of 5½ years, John, died of what was believed to be pneumonia, and on March 9<sup>th</sup>, Hannah passed away from the same

ailment. They are buried on the ranch above the site of the old Piatt home in what is now known as the Bryden cemetery on cemetery hill.

The Yuba County map showing the location of the Piatt home was followed by later maps showing a school house on the same site. The school was called Buckeye School or sometimes the Bryden School House.

There is a story handed down locally in the Honcut, Loma Rica area, that following the deaths of Noah's and Hannah's son, John's dog stayed on the boy's burial site until the dog also died. The dog was then buried within the same brick burial compound.

In the summer of 1868, after Hannah's death, Noah left the ranch and took his remaining children and all their belongings to San Francisco. He shipped all their belongings on a vessel that was to round the Horn and was never heard from again. Noah and his children, Mattie, Clara, Kate, and Willie, returned to Piatt County, Illinois, by way of the Isthmus of Panama. On the voyage, Noah took along a nanny goat so the youngest child, Willie, could have milk.

A short time after returning to Illinois, he married James Bryden's sister; hence the Bryden tie-in with the Piatt family history and confusion since Noah went on to have a second family.

Noah and the immediate family never returned to the ranch. They lived in Piatt County for some years and then moved to the area around Hamilton in Eastern Kansas. Kate grew up in Kansas and in 1884 married Edwin Thrall. They ranched and raised purebred Galloway cattle and in the 1890s had the largest herd of registered Galloway cattle in the world.

It should be noted here that Richard Piatt registered his brand, the backward R and P. This brand, one of the oldest registered in California, was, according to Bob Bryden, who was the last Bryden to live on the ranch and who now lives in Modesto, used by all the Piatts and Brydens. Bob Bryden suspects there may still be fence posts and trees marked with the R and P brand to this day.

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We left Hangtown [Placerville] early in the morning. It was a beautiful day and having no load to haul we made good speed to Clark's and turned the cattle out to graze. Christmas morning we set out to look for the oxen. Matsler took the only gun we had and followed down the creek. I started out over the low hills following a path that led along a short distance from the creek. A short distance ahead I saw a catamount creeping up to the path and watching me like a cat does a mouse

and it was plain enough that his intention was to catch me. I picked up a couple of stones and advanced to within 30 feet of him, then seeing he was preparing to spring at me, I threw and missed but struck close to his face throwing sand in his eyes. I threw again. This time the stone fell short but bounced over his head. Then he turned to look at the stone and I rushed at him with a yell and he trotted off toward the creek where he met Matsler and waylaid him and Matsler shot him.

He had a large body but was very poor and doubtless very hungry. I think I acted very imprudent. The beast might have killed me. I should have stopped when I saw him, and gone some other way. But at that time I thought nothing of it. I have not been as careful to avoid danger in busings [business] matters as I might have been.

The day after Christmas Matsler went back to the mines and I remained to look after the cattle. We had been boarding with Mr. Clark at \$1.00 a meal and \$1.00 for the privilege of sleeping in the house on the floor and furnished our own blankets and some nights the house was full and the floor was crowded with miners going to and returning from the mines and as a matter of course I got lice on me and when I found them on my clothes it made me sick to think of them. They were the first I ever saw. I had no change of clothes and I was at a loss what to do. Then I thought I'd drown the nasty things. Accordingly I went to the creek, stripped off all my clothes, sunk them under water, put stones on them to hold them down and left them long enough to drown anything as I thought. Then I wrung out my clothes as dry as could and put them on and went on after my cattle. The day was warm and pleasant and my clothes dried on me, but the next day I was taken sick. Had an awful cold and some fever. I remained a weakling. A young man from our camp came along and persuaded me to accompany him to camp. My bill was \$52 and as I was only there ten days, it was outrageous even for the days of '49.

I was really too sick to travel but my young friend, Peter Henry, carried my blankets and helped along. I got to the cabin that night and had to keep my bed most of the time until the 15<sup>th</sup> of February when the weather became warm and pleasant and I got able to work. My partners made nothing all the time I was sick. They prospected but didn't know where to dig and didn't dig deep enough. The mines were rich and held out good for years, but we were confident our fortunes were awaiting us on the Yuba and we were impatient to get there so about the 20<sup>th</sup> of February we got up the teams and set out for Sacramento where we arrived three days later, and camped on our lot and unloaded some lumber which we had brought from the mountains to build on the lot. But, finding there was an excitement about the mines on the Yuba and fearing someone would discover the mine that the Scotch man had given Uncle Bill, we decided to sell our teams and make haste. I sold the teams next day. The team for which I had paid \$300 I sold to a man from Rose Bar for \$1,000 taking his note although a total stranger, but he paid it all the same. There was one odd ox that is one whose mate had died. We kept him to take along for beef. We made a saddle for him and bought two horses. We also recovered the mule that got away from the night I camped alone on the Yuba. Then bought provisions and loaded the four animals, including the ox, and set out for the old camp on Oregon Bar. There were no bridges in those days. The streams were high and we had to swim our animals by the side of the canoe



and take our goods over in the same. The road was bad. When we got into mountains it came on to rain and we laid by one day at Dry Creek and Matsler killed a deer. We jerked the meat to take with us and we were ten days on the road. On the way up, we were joined by two sailors with heavy packs on their backs. One had a rocker that would weigh 50 pounds in addition to his blankets. They kept up with us as we were all on foot so we got acquainted and helped them by putting part of their load on our animals and in this way they became part of our company. They were good workers and took them in as partners for the season.

After we got to the bar, we found the snow too deep to go farther with the animals. We slaughtered Billy the ox, sold a part to miners at 40[?] cents per lb. That night the Indians stole one quarter. The balance we used next day. Sadorus took the animals and went back after another load of provisions while Uncle Bill and Matsler and the sailors Tom and Pearce set out on foot loaded with tools, blankets, and provisions. All they could carry for the North Fork of the Yuba. I remained to keep camp and do what mining I could with a pan. I panned out from ten to sixteen dollars a day while they were gone. They were gone a week. Uncle Bill and Matsler and Tom returned and reported that they had found the mine all right just as the old Scotchman had told Uncle Bill and they had left Pearce on the claim to take care of it. The snow was 20 feet deep part of the way but a crust formed at night so hard that it would bare up a mans weight during forenoon. On their

way down they all three came near drowning. The river was very high and in attempting to cross just above the Bar in a canoe it capsized and it was a wonder to me that they got out alive. The current was very swift. Uncle Bill and Matsler swam out. Uncle Bill nearly gone when Matsler who had got ashore came to his assistance. Tom couldn't swim but got hold of the canoe and held on until the current swept the canoe under the limb of a tree. He held onto the limb until the boys came to his assistance. The canoe went over the rapids and was lost.

They had to walk down to Foster's Bar three miles below to cross the river then walk back up to camp. After resting a day and Sadorus got back with a load, it was decided that Uncle Bill should remain and I return with Matsler and Tom to the mine. Accordingly, we fixt out packs taking about 50 lbs provisions each including blankets and tools and started. For a few miles the trail was fairly good but as we ascended the mountain, the snow got deeper until at night where we camped it was fully 6 feet deep. Some one who went up earlier had set a dry pine on fire. It had burned down to the ground and melted around for some 8 or 10 feet and the roots were still burning. We got down into this hole in the snow and had a good warmed room and had a good night's rest.

Next morning we got an early start. The crust on the snow was strong enough that walking was easy. Our trail lay along the summit of the dividing ridge between the North and Middle Yubas through a thick forest of tall pines. About noon we came to a large hollow log which was occupied as

a store room and residence by a party who had discovered riches digging on the river opposite during the fall before the snow had come, and was able to bring supplies thus far on pack mules and here they established a depot from which they hauled supplies on hand sleds down the mountain to Goodyear Bar on the Yuba. The snow had melted away about the log but it had been more than 20 feet deep early in the winter for at that time there was a mule hanging 20 feet from the ground. It had been brought in on the snow and tied to a tree top where it perished. The snow melted and left it hanging by the halter.

From here we had a difficult trail down the steep mountain over the snow. Altho there was a beaten path it was steep. At Goodyear's Bar we had to cross the river. A tall pine that had grown near the water had been cut down. It reached onto the bar opposite. The current was very swift and against the log with such force as to bend it downstream then the water would run under and the tree would spring back. To fall off was death and we knew it, but Matsler and Tom were men of steady nerve. They took their loads over then Matsler came back after mine and offered to carry me over on his back but I took corage and walked the log. If it had been alone I don't think I would have run the risk.

From Goodyears Bar to the Forks [now Downieville] was 4 miles. The north [trail] ran along the steep bank of the river, sometimes at the water's edge and again up over steep rocky bluffs where a miss step might hurl you down a hundred feet into the raging

torant. Several mules were lost in that way later on.

About sunset we got to the end of our journey and so ended the hardest days work of my life and from the effects of which I will never fully recover. Those [??] were caused by that day's travel. For several days my legs were swollen badly and I was so sore and lame I could hardly walk about camp. There were about 150 men on the Bar when we arrived and gambling had already began in quantities of gold was changing hands.

Captain Downy with his sailors and Kanakas [Hawaiians] of whome I have made mention as camp at a spring with Uncle Bill the night Scotch came in to camp with a load of gold in Oct 49. The morning that Uncle Bill turned back, Downy and I went down on to the river and discovered very [good?] mines at the forks [Downieville] and sent back fixed up for the winter and some few remained all winter. They endured great privation but had accumulated several thousand dollars each before we got there. The best ground was being worked by three sailors. They were taking out from 10 to 15 pounds per day. Our claims were situated a half mile up the north fork on a low bar that was under water so we had to wait until the river fell before we could dig onto our best ground. We leveled down a place for our camp and moved on to the claim. Then for several weeks we done but little else than prospect tho we made several hundred dollars at that.

One morning in May we were all idle. Uncle Bill and his sailors down at the forks watching the games and

Matsler, Sedorus and me here in camp. I proposed that we build an oven. I was tired of flapjacks. We had been doing all our cooking in a fry pan. The boys agreed and went to work. Sadorus to cutting stick for platform, I to leveling the place and Matsler to setting clay. He went up the bank above the slate and upon digging a few feet came to gravel and by noon we had an oven well under way. Then Uncle Bill came and looking at the gravel said, by darn boys that's pay dirt and took handful to the river and washed it and got at least five dollars in coarse gold. Sadorus got the rocker set handy by and he and Uncle Bill kept the rocker going. Matsler kept on digging. I finished the oven and when supertime came we had cleaned up 14 ounces and had this covered with diggings. The next day we took out 28 ounces and never made less than 14 ozs any day we worked the claim, but as we worked back into the bank it got harder and in those days we had no good tools for mining. There was a company whose ground joined ours below. It was called the Pitsburg company. Wm. H. Parks was manager and we agreed with them to dig a canal and turn the stream of water to mine the river bed. From our ground the stream made a pond it was not a difficult matter to cut a race through and by building dam cause the water to run through the race. We supposed the whole bed of the stream was rich which was not the case, for in many places, the stream had changed its channel after the deposit was made. This was the case with the claim below ours. They found but little gold in the chanel and sold for a trifle and left with out prospecting the bank which was very

rich. In fact, they had been camped for months on rich ground. Thousands of dollars lay within 4 feet of the surface under their tent. We found a part of our ground very rich but the water came in through the dam and side of the base so that it was impossible to work the bed 20 ft down.

I remember that I took out \$2,000 in one pan of dirt or gravel I should say. We took out \$40,000 that season and the next year we put in a flume at great expense, but done well.

Working in the water and being wet all day disagreed with me and sometimes I was sick and finding I could not share of the work I hired a man to work in my place paying him ten dollars a day and for a while I worked by myself in the bank and made enough to pay the man and board and only working a few hours at a time. One day three strapping big men came to the mine. One had a load of gold, the other two men carrying rifles and all had pistols. They wanted to purchase the mine, but we would not sell. Then they offered me \$5,000 for my interest. Then they bought the claim below. Capt. Downy advised me to sell and go with him and I had a minde to do so. But the 4<sup>th</sup> of July came and that was a great day at the forks. The Miners Saloon keeper and gamblers and all got together on the Bar and had a meeting and christened the camp Downyville. Then Downy christened it with whiskey. Nearly everybody drank and a great many got drunk and Capt. Downy very much so. At this time, Downyville was a whiskey place. The reputation it had acquired for rich mines had spread and men were attracted from other districts. Hotels and stores and saloons

were built in short order. Lawyers and Drs came, a meat market, a blacksmith, and all the requirements of a mining camp. Beef had been \$6.00 came down to 75 cts, flour 50 cts, barley 5 cts and things at corresponding rates. Judge Gallaway had been elected alcaldia and held court and issued subpoenas for Cut Eye Foster, Whiskey Jack and Pottatoe [?]Jack, and One-Eyed Peat, etc. We all had nick names and we were known only by them. Our camp was known as Uncle Bill's Camp and we were Henry & George & Dick. Uncle Bill was 55 years old and was respected by all who met him and we, his partners, not only respected but loved him.

Dan Spangler came to camp in July. He was a nephew of Dr. Bill Rea and coming from Illinois we allowed him to live with us and work a part of our claim. He made \$1600 in a few weeks then he wanted to go below and finde easier work and my health would not permit me to work in the water as we were then working the river bed and had to hire a man to take my place. Tom Rea, also a nephew to Uncle Bill, and a big strong man and a worker, he is now a butcher of San Jose. He wanted a situation so I agreed to pay him \$10.00 per day. I think his wages were paid at the end of the season.



Kate Piatt, three years old, daughter of Noah and Hannah Piatt, born on Bryden Ranch in Honcut in 1860.

*(Photo provided by Greg Glosser)*

## THE GRAVEYARD AT BUTTE MOUNTAIN

A history of the Sutter Cemetery and the area surrounding it

by

Don Burtis

The cemetery at Sutter is the largest in Sutter County and has grown considerably since I was a boy growing up in the town of Sutter in the 1930s and early 40s. Whenever I walk through the old section of the cemetery I see the names of people who I knew as a youth. I feel fortunate to have known a number of those who were children of the early pioneers of this area. I wish I had been more interested in local history then and had asked them for answers to many questions I have now. A few of the names on the tombstones that reach out to me include Epperson, Clements, Wynecoop, Wadsworth, Moore, Dean, Girdner, Haynes, Meyer, Tarke, Stohlman, Hawley, McLean, Thomas, Pease, McVey, Lemenager, Thompson, DeWitt, Summy, McPherrin, and more. Most were here before Sutter City was created.

### Early Graves

Early records state that, in 1849, Edward Thurman and a partner, the earliest acknowledged white settlers in this area, built a cabin near where Pass Road begins and raised cattle. This was on property later owned by George E. Brittan. Other pioneers came into the area, laid claim to the land and developed farms and ranches. In this era before cemeteries were established, some people were buried on the ranches. It's not unlikely that a burial could take place in an unclaimed

area that appeared appropriate for a burial ground. It is likely that there were a number of squatters who settled on the land temporarily. The isolated location and lack of formal cemeteries meant that, if necessary, people were buried on these sites. There was no opposition to burying people there.

Imagine a group of people from the South Butte area gathered around an open grave on high ground on the south side of Butte House Road in a grove of beautiful large oak trees, to pay their last respects to the dearly departed. A wooden cross would be placed at the head of the grave to identify the deceased. This scene might describe the earliest burials in the graveyard.

Evidence indicates there were a number of graves in what was the northwest corner of the graveyard that are thought to have preceded those on record. They had been marked with wooden crosses which did not last through the years. Original records of the earliest burials here also disappeared. Early records available at this time have been reconstructed by cemetery personnel mainly from the information on the tombstones.

The tombstone for S. Moody, located in the old section of the cemetery, gives the dates 1812-1896. Also etched beneath his name is that of his wife, Ellen R. Moody, with the dates 1825-1857. Above her name is "In

Memoriam." Burial in 1857 would make Mrs. Moody's grave the oldest one in the cemetery, but she is not buried here. One of her descendants told the cemetery staff that she is buried in a grave near Timbuctoo, in Yuba County. This appears to be a case where the family wanted to memorialize the wife on her husband's stone after his burial even though she was buried elsewhere.

The oldest stone marker in the old graveyard at Butte Mountain is for Joseph Kindall. A large monument was erected with his name engraved on one side. Kindall died October 11, 1860 at age 40, after being injured when a wheel of a wagon pulled by oxen caught him next to a gate post, crushing him. He was going to the J. A. Onstott ranch to get a load of brick to finish the fireplace in his new home. His widow later married Kindall's business partner, Moore Getty, and they lived in the home that Kindall built. The home has to be among the oldest standing homes in Sutter County. The Kindall grave marker was used by the new family and both Moore Getty's and Anne Getty's names are on it. Thomas Jefferson Moore later lived in the house with his family, and his daughter Esther Moore, who married Howard Cull, also lived there. Kindall was the grandfather of Roland Hawley, better known as "Pop" Hawley when I was a youth.

It's easy to locate the older section of the original graveyard. Driving north on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue off Butte House Road, look to the west and see the tallest tombstones in the cemetery. You can also look for the very large oak trees that still stand within and beside

this section. I believe this entire area was covered with many oak trees and that the early residents cut most of them down to sell the wood or clear the land for farming. Thus there are not many oaks outside the old graveyard area.

### **Butte School**

The first schoolhouse that served this South Butte area was located on the south side of Butte House Road near this small graveyard. The school was called Butte School because it was in the Butte School District, created in 1856.<sup>1</sup> It's apparent that the school and the graveyard came into existence very close to the same time and in the same area on this land that had only been claimed by squatters. Not only was this an ideal area to serve as a burial ground, it was also considered to be an ideal location for a schoolhouse, as it was somewhat central to the families with children who wanted a school established.

Two early church groups used the schoolhouse to hold religious services: the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. It seems logical that the schoolhouse, serving as a church, would have a graveyard located nearby which was common back east where many of these early residents of the area came from. The schoolhouse served as a church for a number of years as neither church group constructed its own building until much later.

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<sup>1</sup> George Brittan was honored when the name of Butte School was later changed to Brittan School and Brittan District.

## Early Cemetery Names

In 1875 John Pennington, Sutter County Surveyor, was instructed to make a map of the cemetery. He labeled it "Map Of The Cemetery At Brittan School." Early newspapers in Sutter County, starting in Yuba City in 1867, give several other names for the cemetery. In April of 1876, Judge Garr was buried at the Brittan School House Burying ground. In August 1888, a grass fire was reported in the South Butte Cemetery. In December 1888, Wm. Robinson, a pioneer resident, was buried in the Sutter City Cemetery.

All of those names were used, but South Butte Cemetery was the accepted and most often used name until the Sutter Cemetery District was formed in 1926. Since then the official name has been the Sutter Cemetery.

## Ownership

The land on which the graveyard was located was not legally owned by anyone until it was settled by W. H. McPherrin, who came from Illinois to California with a wagon train in 1859 at the age of 18 to seek his fortune. He mined and also worked for wages in Sutter County. About 1862, he acquired some land in Sutter County in the area known as South Butte (so named because it was south of the Buttes). It is believed he purchased the 160 acres where he settled from a squatter. He did not really have a legal title to the land until he received his land patent, however; after a settler had applied for the patent and was living on and improving the land, it was acknowledged to be his land.

After the Gold Rush of 1849 and California's admission to the Union in 1850, much of the land was claimed by squatters rights. Possession generally meant it was yours if you could keep it. Title to land meant that someone who claimed it was not only occupying the land, but was also improving it. Some squatters simply lived in an area for a while and then either sold their claim or just left it. Many settlers put up markers or fences to identify their land claim. The United States Congress passed a Homestead Act in 1862 which provided a process for settlers to secure homestead patents for land they claimed. A settler was to live on the homestead for a minimum of five years while improving the property. Then for a minimal fee, the government issued a patent to the settler, giving him legal title to the property which he could sell or leave to his heirs.

In 1864, McPherrin, at age 23, married Naomi Stevens, a daughter of John Freeman Stevens. Stevens had claimed a piece of land that was just south of the McPherrin claim. A well-known Sutter resident named Ray Frye presently owns much of the original Stevens homestead, located on the north side of South Butte Road just east of Sutter. A number of descendants of McPherrin presently live in this area.

The land Mr. McPherrin homesteaded was described as the east half of the northeast quarter of Section 9 and the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 10 in Township 15 North Range Two East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian. Both the graveyard and the schoolhouse were within the

boundaries of his homestead, and it can be truthfully said, "He was the owner of the graveyard at Butte Mountains which included the property where the school was also located."<sup>2</sup>

This circumstance of the graveyard being located on private property came to the attention of the Board of Supervisors and they decided it should become public property. In 1871 the Board ordered "that Thos. D. Boyd, J. T. Pennington and W. F. Frego, heretofore appointed a Committee of Commissioners to appraise the value of the land to be condemned and taken possession of for a grave yard at the Butte Mountains and they are hereby ordered to proceed without delay to make such appraisal and report their proceedings to this Board immediately."<sup>3</sup>

On Saturday, March 11, 1871, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors received a report from surveyor John Pennington that the graveyard at Butte Mountains had been appraised and a value set on the land including the cemetery located on the farm of Wm. McPherrin. The appraisal found the tract or parcel of land to be worth the sum of twenty-five dollars per acre, and there were three and twenty-five hundredths of an acre. The Board ordered that the report be adopted. So Mr. W. H. McPherrin, who was

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<sup>2</sup> Several of the early Sutter County schools were built on property that was never deeded to the school districts but was designated for school use by the owner for as long as it was needed.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Sutter County Board of Supervisors, February 7, 1871

present, received \$81.25 for the graveyard at Butte Mountains and it became public property, owned by the county. It became known afterward as South Butte Cemetery.

This action also placed the schoolhouse, which was within the boundaries of the condemned graveyard, on Sutter County property.

A record search for this property at the Sutter County Recorders Office found no record of this transaction. The evidence of the order to condemn the original graveyard property is in the Board of Supervisors minutes. The newspaper report also provides a record that describes how the county gained possession. What I'm saying is the county has no deed or record of deed as proof it owns the original plot of the present cemetery. They do however have possession which would make me believe they are not very worried about someone else claiming it.

The first trustees for the cemetery after the county became the owner included William McPherrin, William Wadsworth Sr., John Stevens, and George M. Saye. All were early pioneers in this area. Saye had homesteaded property along the south side of South Butte Road. Wadsworth had a ranch along the south side of Franklin Road not far east of the present Acacia Street.

### **Butte House Road**

The Marysville-Colusa Road became known as Butte House Road because "the Butte House" was erected as a stage station in 1854 on the south side of the road a short distance east



of the graveyard. The stagecoach traveled the road from Yuba City to Colusa, and passed by the graveyard, through the Butte Pass, by West Butte, across Butte Slough, was ferried across the Sacramento River at Kent (a few miles north of Meridian) and on to Colusa. The Butte House was torn down in 1895. Approaching the cemetery from the east, there is a horse trough on the south side of the road before it jogs northwest. It sort of commemorates the Butte House and indicates the general location of the stage station. A short way beyond the Butte House going west was the armory where a group called the Butte Mountain Rangers met and trained. This military group, made up of local ranchers, was formed during the Civil War to protect the interests of the Union in this area. The organization only lasted a few years. Pioneers Thomas Dean, Eli Davis and William Wadsworth each served a term as the commander of the group. All are buried at Sutter Cemetery. The armory was sold in 1867 and the proceeds given to education.

Butte House Road was the most important of the early roads going west from Marysville and Yuba City to Colusa and points on west from there. It is believed that the road followed an early trail that was used by the Native Americans in their travels from the Feather River area to the Buttes long before the coming of the settlers to the area. It does not follow any of the section lines the government survey laid down after California became a territory. Rather, it followed the highest ground that would not become

badly flooded whenever the rivers overflowed. Most roads in the area are on section lines and run in an east-west or north-south direction between the homestead claims of the settlers.

The cemetery was in the northern portion of the McPherrin farm on the south side of Butte House Road, which divided the farm in two. Think of yourself traveling west on Butte House Road approaching Sutter. Just before you reach the present cemetery, the road makes a quick northerly turn around a large oak tree and then straightens out, passing along the south side of the cemetery to junction with Acacia.

In 1856, starting from the present Methodist Church in Sutter, one would travel to the graveyard by going north to Pass Road and then in a southeasterly direction to the graveyard or the schoolhouse. Remember that Sutter City wasn't created until 1887, and until that time the surrounding area was all private farmland and there were few roads to travel on.

In 1871, the Butte House Road did not straighten out after the northerly turn, but continued on a diagonal in a northwesterly direction and joined the county road just before it joined Pass Road to go through the Buttes. The Pennington map of the original graveyard is in the shape of a trapezoid showing the top (north side) of the map as a diagonal line representing the northwesterly direction of the road (see Lot 18 on map). Both the graveyard and the schoolhouse were on the south side of this road through the McPherrin farm.

### Changes in the Property

In 1881, the Brittan schoolhouse at the South Butte Cemetery was moved to a two-acre plot located at the beginning of Pass Road on the north side. It was felt that this new location would be more convenient for the majority of the students it served in the South Butte area. A number of the older people of today will recall this location as the home of Leo Wadsworth, who was the principal of Sutter Union High School for a number of years. The property was later split into two one-acre parcels and sold. The county purchased the eastern lot for a corporation yard and the other has remained a private residence.

In 1882 persons desiring lots in the cemetery could apply to George E. Brittan to obtain them at \$10 each. He was appointed by the Supervisors to sell lots on behalf of the county. Each early lot had enough space for eight adult graves.

The original plat of Sutter City came into being as a "boom town" in 1887 after about 160 acres (a quarter section) was purchased from George Summy by the Sutter County Land Improvement and Reclamation Company, formed by P. D. Gardemeyer, who is credited with starting Sutter City. The town was laid out in blocks and streets and lots and put on the market. There were several more additions soon made to the original town. One of these was the McPherrin Addition to the north of the original plat. Over two hundred acres of land were purchased from W. H. McPherrin by E. F. Felt of San Francisco, who was one of the

financiers and members of the syndicate that started Sutter City. This new land was later called the "College Park Addition" because there were plans to have a college located in this part of the town, although that never came to pass. This addition included the South Butte Cemetery and was also laid out in blocks and streets.

These lots were sold to individuals, some who lived in the area and many who lived in Sacramento, Santa Rosa, the Bay Area and other locations. Many of these new owners bought the property on speculation that it would increase in value and they would enjoy a big profit. During their lifetime this never happened, but had they lived until now their profit would have been bountiful. The Board of Supervisors decided to increase the size of the cemetery several years after the turn of the century to accommodate an increasing number of burials and land close by the existing cemetery was purchased from the owners.

The original cemetery property was contained in what is identified as block 18 of this new addition. On the east and west sides of the cemetery plot were 13 building lots which were for sale to any buyer. The lots were identified as being in Block 18E or Block 18W. The actual cemetery plot was at this time made rectangular instead of a trapezoid caused by the road crossing the north part at a diagonal. To my knowledge, there is no deed acknowledging this change to the original graveyard plot. I find no record in the Sutter County Records office.

It was in March of 1889 that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors first received a petition asking to vacate a portion of Butte House Road north of the South Butte Cemetery and laying out a county road south of the cemetery, connecting on the west to Acacia Street. J. A. Onstott, E. M. Thomas and J. T. Pennington were appointed viewers. On May 13, 1889, the Board of Supervisors granted the petition. The street on the south side of the cemetery had been named Ward Avenue, but now was renamed Butte House Road.

In 1891, Julius Lessing purchased a large part of the land surrounding the cemetery in the new addition. The deed contained a legal description of the original cemetery which was excluded from the land being sold. It was exactly the size of the land that was earlier condemned. Both Lessing and McPherrin intended to make a good profit selling lots.

At the time of this purchase, Mr. McPherrin had added significantly to his property and the addition included his original homestead and extended to Acacia, the western boundary to the addition. He also owned the area west of Acacia where Sutter Union High School is located. The school district purchased the property for the new high school from four of his grandchildren.

A number of single lots sold were never used for homes. These lots have been acquired by the cemetery over the years so there is no private property within the present cemetery boundaries. Some of the larger land

acquisitions to the cemetery are named below.

In 1919 the west half of Block 12 was purchased from O. J. and Hilda Borsen. In 1928 Hilda Borsen sold 33 lots she owned in Blocks 11 and 12. Charles Summy, who owned most of the property to the west of the cemetery in Block 18 and Block 21 and on the north in Block 34 sold it in 1961. The largest addition made to the district was 77.23 acres (part of the Robert & Elsie Stohlman estate sold by Neva Stohlman Bohannan) acquired in 1986 and located to the northeast of the developed cemetery grounds. It is currently growing alfalfa (see map).

Over time, the original graveyard plot of 3.38 acres has turned into a cemetery of approximately 114 acres.

The Sutter Cemetery District was formed in 1926 and includes a large part of Sutter County including Yuba City. The cemetery at Yuba City was becoming pretty well filled up, and was also land-locked with no vacant property available adjacent to the cemetery. An answer was for the Yuba City area to become part of the Sutter Cemetery District. The district has served the area well and has continued to make improvements.

From "A History of South Butte and Sutter City," unpublished manuscripts by Don Burtis

Shows original route of Butte House Road by the cemetery

MAP DRAWN BY DON BURTIS 1994

77.23 acres acquired in 1986 borders on Malott Rd. on east side





### **McPherrin Monument**

The man who owned the cemetery purchased a lot for his family which is located in the original graveyard area. He and his wife are buried there along with a number of his descendents including his son, his eldest grandson, great grandsons and the spouses of each. Mr. McPherrin has the distinction of being buried on his homestead, which is not something that happened to many others. *(Photo by Don Burtis)*

### **Map of Sutter Cemetery (facing page)**

This map shows the present land area of the Sutter Cemetery as it relates to a portion of the College Park Addition to Sutter City.

# Coming Events

## October

- 3 *Ansel Adams: Inspiration and Influence* exhibit ends at the Museum
- 12 Volunteer Appreciation Tea, Museum, 10:00 a.m.
- 16 Historical Society October Luncheon  
Hermann Sons Hall, Nicolaus  
Social time 11:30 a.m., lunch 12:00 noon  
Program: Kit Burton, Renovation of the Smartsville Catholic Church
- mid *Toying Around* exhibit opens at the Museum

## November

- 9 *Dream Songs and Ceremony*, a presentation by artist and poet  
Frank La Pena, 6:30 p.m. at the Museum
- 4 Ornament Workshop, 10:00 a.m. at the Museum
- 17 Ornament Workshop, 10:00 a.m. at the Museum
- 28 *Toying Around* exhibit closes at the Museum

## December

- 2 Decoration Day at the Museum
- 4 *Trees and Traditions*, 5:00 p.m. at the Museum
- 19 Christmas Children's Program, 2:00 p.m. at the Museum

## January

- 11 Historical Society dessert meeting, 7:00 p.m. at the Museum