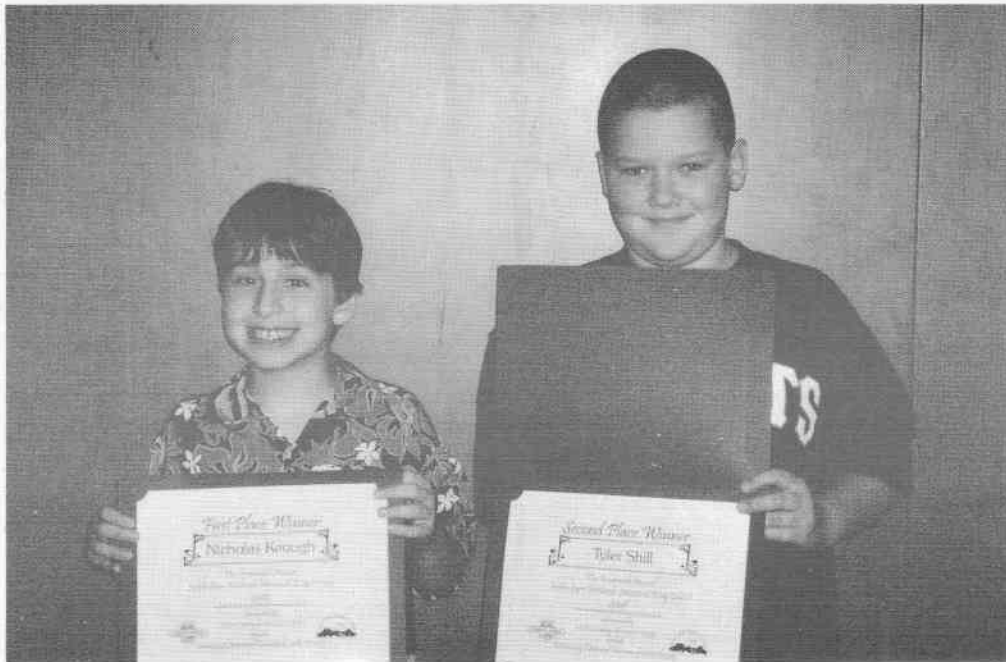


Vol. XLVIII No. 3

Yuba City, California

July 2006



### Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest Award Winners

Nicholas Keough & Tyler Shill

Jaycee Carter not pictured

*(photo by Sharyl Simmons)*



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John Reische-2000

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Helen Heenan-1996

Phyllis Smith-2000

Bill Stenquist-2004

\*The year the director joined the Board.

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

The 2006 dues are payable as of January 1, 2006. Mail your check to the Community Memorial Museum at P. O. Box 1555, Yuba City, 95992-1555. 530-822-7141

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

## President's Message

The Sutter County Historical Society has lost two valued supporters this year. Tom Crowhurst was our immediate past president and had been a member of our Board of Directors since 1997. Richard Tarke, along with his wife, Elaine, have been strong supporters of the Society for many years. We extend our condolences to their families and friends, and we will miss them at our functions.

This year's summer picnic will be on Tuesday, July 25 in the Howard Harter Memorial Park behind the museum. Bring your favorite potluck dish to share - the Society will provide drinks and paper goods. Join us as we learn about life at Camp Far West, the nineteenth century military outpost, from Bill Knorr. Camp Far West is Mr. Knorr's passion and it's been that way since the 1950s. He will bring a wagon and a tent with all the fixin's. See ya there!

Audrey Breeding  
President

## Picnic in the Park Program

*Excerpted from the Appeal-Democrat, March 8, 2005 by Harold Krueger*

When it comes to Camp Far West, the 19<sup>th</sup> century military outpost, Bill Knorr may know more than anybody. "I have the tents. I've got the wagon. I've got the cannon. I've got the cooking stuff they used. I've got the 30-star flag," he said.

Knorr wanted to know as much as he could about the soldiers at Camp Far West: How they lived, what they did and what happened to the camp after it was abandoned.

The military post was established in September 1849 on a small plateau of high ground, strategically placed to safeguard the travel routes to the local gold mines, according to a 1965 article in Pioneer Forts of the Far West.

The gold mines proved to be quite a lure to the troops. One captain and 27 enlisted men caught gold fever and deserted, the 1965 story said. Other troops quickly followed.

Knorr's fascination with Camp Far West led him to collect all sorts of items, including tents, uniforms, wagons, swords and a pistol.

## Director's Report

This summer at the Museum is a time of refurbishing with new carpet and tile, the completion of the new wing, with exhibits in the planning stages, and moving into the storage addition. There is a lot to do, and some of it will not be evident immediately. It is an exciting time of growth and renewal for our institution.

Be sure to purchase your tickets for the *Sister Swing and Antique Autos* event on Sunday, August 13 in the evening. Tickets are \$15. This popular event features viewing of restored vintage automobiles, the sensational Big Band era music of *Sister Swing*, and wine and hors d'oeuvres on the patio.

Look for the next traveling exhibit in September. *At Work, California Labor and Art* will bring art representing the voice of labor in California from some of our best artists, spanning the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wonderful art grew out of the labor movements. Learn about this remarkable partnership, as you admire the stunning works of art.

I would like to pass along some easy and effective ideas about how to be a preservationist, borrowed from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Forum. Don't worry; you don't need to know the difference between a balustrade and a façade. These examples show easy ways you can help support preservation everyday.

- Show your children where you went to school or where you got married.
- Shop in an historic commercial district, and admire the architectural details.
- Visit a place where history was made or a history museum.
- Eat at a restaurant in an historic building and tell the owner or host if you like the atmosphere.
- Attend a live performance or movie at an historic theater, or attend services in an historic church.
- Walk around an historic residential neighborhood.
- Join an organization dedicated to historic preservation. Become a member of the National Trust (visit [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)) or find out about groups in your area.
- Stay in an historic hotel or at an historic bed and breakfast.

If you are feeling really ambitious, try these additional steps.

- Buy an historic house and rehabilitate it.
- Reuse an old building in the downtown for your business or organization.
- Say "no" to sprawl development that would undermine the vitality of your community.
- Let your officials know that old buildings are important to your community.
- Encourage an ethic of stewardship and high quality rehabilitation work in your community. No vinyl siding!
- Volunteer with organizations where preservation makes a difference: the planning commission, development review board, downtown organization, or regional planning commission. Kudos to all of you dedicated volunteers who helped with the Historic Structures Survey for our area!

Julie Stark, Director

# **Historical Society News**

## **Picnic in the Park**

Tuesday, July 25, at 5:30 p.m. will be our annual Potluck Picnic in the Park, in the Howard Harter Memorial Park (behind the Museum). The program will be Camp Far West History with Bill Knorr and his collection. The Historical Society provides drinks and paper goods - and you provide the rest of the meal. This is a general public meeting - all are welcome!!!

## **Sister Swing and Vintage Autos**

On Sunday, August 13, the Museum will once again host a concert by Sister Swing, three lovely ladies who perform Big Band era music. The event will also include a free exhibit of vintage autos. The autos will be on view from 6:00 p.m.; the concert will start at 7:00 p.m. Concert tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at the Museum or from any Commission member. Refreshments will be served.

## **Historical Society Supports Museum Storage**

The Historical Society contributed funding to the new storage facility behind the Museum. We are very excited to have played an important part in helping the Museum increase its space for storing its collection.

## **Historical Property Survey**

Thanks to many volunteers, the Historical Society is making good progress on our survey of Sutter County historical properties. With the firm of Galvin Preservation and Associates, the Society spent hundreds of hours working on the survey. Some of the tasks we've done include driving through areas or walking through neighborhoods, writing descriptions and taking photographs of historic buildings. Currently we are transcribing those notes into a standard format. Because of limited funds, we have had to narrow our survey to approximately 300 properties, and we have focused on those with special appeal or those that appear to be in the path of development.

## Memorials

### In Memory of **Patti Benatar**

Jay Alexander  
Carol Andrews  
Michael & Helene Andrews  
Ashley's Plumbing, Heating &  
Air Conditioning  
Gayle & Bob Barkhouse  
Alban & Mary Lou Byer  
Ken & Betty Cenedella  
Roger C. Chandler  
Willis and Elaine Chase  
Ann Chesini  
Dr. & Mrs. Edwin Chew  
Jeff & Susan Citron  
Ann E. Conant  
Jim & Laura Goble  
Clinton & Ginger Harris  
Norma Harris  
Eric & Teresa Hellberg  
Johnnie H. Houser  
Robert & Kathryn Islip  
Bob & Lee Jones  
Bill & Annette Menchini  
James & Candy Miller  
Monday Bridge Club  
Dennis & Patsy Nelson  
Joyce Panecaldo  
Catherine Pangle  
Clarence & Marilyn Pfeffer  
Merlyn K. Rudge  
Edith & Frankie Sandgren  
Lester & Bobbie Sandgren  
Leonard & Phyllis Schaer  
Bob Baldev Singh  
Robert & Pam Stark  
Richard & Elizabeth von Geldern  
Margo Watson  
Ray & Anne Webster  
Tom & Jolyne Williams

### In Memory of **Hallene Warren Bruce**

Arnold & Murleen Schneiter

### In Memory of **Della Circe**

Ruth & Howard Anthony  
Eugene & Marilyn Lonon

### In Memory of **Tom Crowhurst**

Mike & Helene Andrews  
Bonnie Ayers  
Audrey Breeding  
Connie Cary  
Don & Joan Cochran  
Bud & Joan Doty  
Dewey & Barbara Gruening  
Eugene & Marilyn Lonon  
Norm & Loadel Piner  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel  
Phyllis Smith

### In Memory of **Sally Dover**

Robert & Dorothy Coats

### In Memory of **Agnes Davis Fizer**

Anita Neubecker, Carrie & Irwin  
Davis

### In Memory of **Bob and Agnes Fizer**

Mr. & Mrs. Bryan Fairlee

### In Memory of **William E. Forderhase**

Ruth & Howard Anthony  
Robert & Dorothy Coats  
Eugene & Marilyn Lonon  
Norm & Loadel Piner

### In Memory of **Marilyn Herboth**

Robert & Dorothy Coats

### In Memory of **Jessie Jeffries**

Stan & Jeanette Christopherson

### In Memory of **Bruce Jenkins**

Robert & Dorothy Coats

### In Memory of **Taru Mann**

Robert & Dorothy Coats

In Memory of **Jerry W. McCrory**  
Marie E. Fuller

In Memory of **Elsie Byer Mitchell**  
Robert & Dorothy Coats

In Memory of **Merle Norene**  
Bob & Katie Bryant

In Memory of **Laura Putman**  
Audrey Breeding

In Memory of **John Saunders**  
Robert & Dorothy Coats

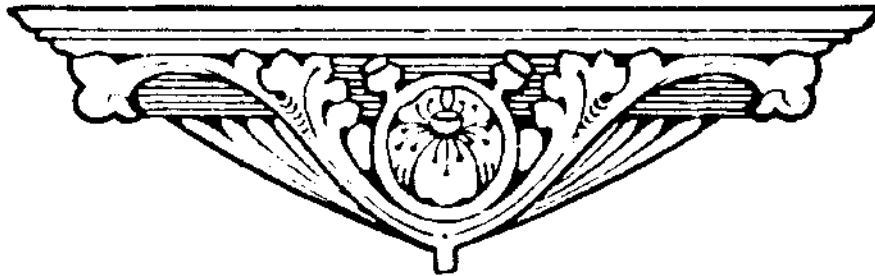
In Memory of **Neal Siller**  
Ruth & Howard Anthony  
Jim Staas

In Memory of **James Taresh**  
Richard & Elaine Tarke

In Memory of **Ernest Wilder**  
Michael & Helene Andrews

In Memory of **Jeanette Wilkinson**  
Randy & Shirley Schnabel

Gift from **Richard Boyd**



### **Where Does Your Contribution Go?**

The preceding list of contributions contains gifts to both the Community Memorial Museum and the Sutter County History Society.

Currently, all donations to the Historical Society are going into the General Fund. These monies were exhausted during the construction phase of the Agricultural Wing and we are now repaying the General Fund from donations. Monies from the General Fund are used to pay the Society's annual insurance premium, post office box rental, Bulletin printing and mailing expenses and other operating expenses.

All donations are greatly appreciated and help keep the Historical Society a viable entity in the community.

## Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest Winners – 2006

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

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

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

### Nicholas Keough

Mrs. Paula McBride, Faith Christian School  
First Place

Dear Joel,

I'm far from Boston, Massachusetts. At age 10, I've sailed far, and I am proud of it!

I came to the state known as California because I am going to grow grapes near the base of Los Tres Picos with my family.

I came to California by sea leaving from Boston. It takes 10 months. One danger I experienced was disease. I arrived in San Francisco on June 11, 1849, and took a stagecoach to Sutter's Fort.

Then I took the steamboat that was named "Linda" to the town of Marysville. I looked around the busy, busy, busy town, then ferried across the Feather River to quiet, little Yuba City. While I was visiting with people on the ferry boat, I learned that the river was named by the explorer Luis Arguello when he saw many feathers of wild birds floating on the water. I was really amazed at the sight of a mountain range in the middle of such flat land. I was not sure what to call it, maybe Los Picachos or maybe even the Marysville Buttes. I learned that it was the world's smallest mountain range that was left over from a very active volcano.

I hope it will not rain because I hear that it floods and some people have to go up into the mountains to escape the horrible flooding. When the boat docked, I noticed that there were lots of wild green grapes growing along the banks of the river. Someone told me that was how this city, Yuba City, got its wonderful name. The Spanish word "uba" means grapes.

Guess what! My pa just came back from Sam Brannan's general store. Mr. Brannan sold to my pa one of his parcels of land. Pa says we can plant grapes right away. I'm excited because my pa will teach me how to plow. Life in California is going to be great!

From Your Friend,



**Tyler Shill**

Mrs. Wendy M. Rosell, Pleasant Grove School  
Second Place

Dear Uncle James and Aunt Batista,

After leaving home in Evanston, Illinois, I feel like a completely different person! We arrived in a town called Marysville, California on November 3, ten days ago. Ma would not let me write home to anyone until we were settled down. Anyway, we had quite an adventure on the way here, which I want to tell you about!

The trip wasn't so bad even though I had to listen to Michael, the new baby who was born right as we crossed the Rocky Mountains. Also, being almost 13 with a 7 year-old brother and a newborn baby has its disadvantages. I had to do many chores due to Ma having the baby. But luckily, we traveled with another family. This family was the Dillions who had a 14-year-old son named Samuel. He entertained George and I by playing the harmonica and telling jokes. I also did grow bored of our same old food that we ate that consisted of mainly beans, johnnycake, and cornmeal. Samuel and I also had many interesting things happen to us on the trail. The first was the cattle incident. While everybody was asleep around 12 cattle got loose and ran away! Samuel and I went out to get them, and they were charging so we shot them, which the rest of the wagon train approved of. Also, Indians interfered throughout the trip. There were 6 groups that we met. Two groups were mean, but the other 4 were not. One of the mean groups caused Samuel and I trouble because they kept trying to break into camp. Finally, the worst problem was a wagon train that we came across, the Williams party. They tried to steal some provisions, but we caught them and moved along quickly.

After getting here in Marysville, life has been better. I like the food we eat now more than the stuff we ate on the trail. Ma and Pa also want me to start some kind of job. So we decided that Pa and I are going to open a saloon. Ma will open a schoolhouse too. We also are working nonstop on our homestead. I have met a friend from Yerba Buena and his name is Antonio. He is just like Samuel! Antonio and Pa have both been telling me about Yerba Buena and I have been wanting to go there, too. I think California is a great place. I think it is the right place for our family because there is a lot of money to be made. Also the scenery is relaxing.

I hope you are still having fun at home, too. Now that Cousin Jimmy turned 11, he is a big guy. I also hope that everybody else is happy and doing good and please tell them we miss them! It feels sorrowful knowing I most likely won't see you again! I miss you so much, and don't forget about us, and we won't forget you!

Sincerely yours,  
Johann Gild

Jaycee Carter

Kristine Kasich, Nuestro Elementary School  
Third Place

Dear Aunt Debra,

We got off the ship fifteen days ago. It was very rough. There was not a lot of food so many people died of scurvy. All we had to eat was hard biscuits. Pa had claimed one hundred acres of land two days after we got there.

The first night we got there was pretty scary since there was not a house on the land. All the owls and birds woke me up that night. There were a few coyotes howling.

The next week we were busy with building our house and barn. We were told that the ground was good for farming on. The land Pa claimed is right along the three little buttes. The land that we own has oak trees and a lot of wild flowers. We have seen Golden Poppies, Buttercups and Baby Blue Eyes. Once when I was collecting eggs I saw a deer. I have never seen deer in Europe, have you? Europe does not have a lot of Oak trees like we do here.

I also met John Sutter the other day. He is famous for being the first man to discover gold. I have to say he was not the most friendly man. I found out later that he owned a lot of the land here.

I've been getting up very early to collect the eggs and feed the chickens. Hank, my big brother, helps Pa in the fields, feeds the horses and cleans the stalls.

My oldest brother, Stevey, is a blacksmith now. He's turning 22 in a couple of weeks. He wanted me to tell you that he misses you a lot.

Grace, my little sister, tries to help Ma in the kitchen, but since she is three she just gets in the way. All of us think she is going to look like you.

Pa has taught me to drive the wagon a week ago. Pa is farming rice and wheat. We have four horses, two oxen and five sheep. We also made a place for the chickens we bought. Our chickens have good eggs. They are always fresh. Much fresher than the ones we had in Europe.

Our garden has a lot of watermelons. I heard that we can sell it for 20 dollars a pound. If you had a 10 pound watermelon you would make two hundred dollars on that one watermelon. I think it's incredible!

Ma told me that there are Maidu Indians here. Pa took me to one of their villages. I saw that their homes are a rounder shaper. The Indians said that their houses were made of willow poles and tule reeds. I also saw how they make baskets. They make their baskets out of redbud, roots and grasses.

The buttes are beautiful. I know you will love it here. If you ever want to come here just give us a letter and we will be there to pick you up. We all love you. I hope that I will see you soon.

Love,  
Sarah

# Uncle Phil Building Early Nicolaus

by

Carol Withington of *The Herald*

*The Morning Herald*

*Tuesday, January 9, 1979*

The town of Nicolaus, lying on the east bank of the Feather River, was first settled by Nicolaus Allgeier in 1842. It became the first settlement in the township and was the second in the county, being preceded by one year by John Sutter's establishment of Hock Farm.

Allgeier, who was born in Frieberg, Baden in 1807, came to America around 1830 where he was employed by the Hudson Bay Co. as a trapper. During the ensuing years, Allgeier spent time in the "wilds of British America" and while in the service of Hudson Bay, he came overland to California.

In consideration for his services, Sutter deeded a tract one mile square to Allgeier who soon after constructed a small hut of poles covered with tule grass and dirt. Here he lived for several years until 1847 when he constructed a small adobe house.

In July 1849 Jacob and Frederick Vahle arrived in the area and proceeded to assist Allgeier in the construction of a two-story adobe building which was to be established as a trading post and hotel.

Two months later another gentleman appeared near the tiny settlement and camped for three days. After spending a short time in Sacramento, he returned and accepted the position of cook in the hotel and the name of Philip Drescher was now

added to the growing list of Nicolaus settlers.

Philip E. Drescher was born near Avolsen, Germany June 5, 1819. Here he spent his boyhood years until the age of 18 when he studied surveying in Cassal for three years.

After following this occupation for some time, Drescher left his native land and settled in Palmyra, Missouri in 1844. He later went on to St. Louis where he worked as a sign painter.

In 1848 he volunteered in the regiment of Col. Sterling Price, who was then stationed at Santa Fe., N. M. However, while the detachment was on its way to join the regiment, news was received of the conclusion of peace with Mexico.

The regiment immediately returned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and then on to St. Louis where Drescher was soon after discharged.

By this time the news of the California gold rush had reached the area, so Drescher and four others procured an outfit and commenced their long journey across the plains. They crossed the Missouri River near Savannah on May 1, 1849 and arrived in California three months later.

During the short time he served as cook at the hotel, the settlement of Nicolaus was being laid out in hopes of becoming a city. Drescher began to purchase lots and soon after resumed the occupation of painting. However, the town lots didn't sell as readily as

expected, so Drescher purchased an additional portion and went into farming.

During the 1850s, a court of sessions, which was abolished by the legislature in 1863, was given the power to inquire into criminal offenses by means of a grand jury. On Aug. 4, 1851, the first grand jury was called by this court and among the members listed were E. G. Field, D. Abdill, J. R. Taber and Phil Drescher.

Two years later this same court appointed Drescher to serve the vacancy of county surveyor. In 1854, the same year he married the former Regina Vahle, he was reappointed and continued to serve as county surveyor until 1861.

According to historical research, the first Nicolaus school was held in a little house on the Dreschers' place. However, within a year the school was moved to a miner's store located north of the settlement. Philip Drescher was also listed among the trustees of this school in 1853.

In 1863, Drescher was elected as county surveyor once more and he filled this position until 1867. During this same year, however, Drescher was nominated on the Union ticket for county clerk.

An endorsement appeared in the Aug. 17, 1867 *Sentinel* which stated that Philip E. Drescher "has served faithfully and efficiently as county surveyor and is well acquainted in every part of the county."

It further added that "everyone knows 'Phil,' and to know him is to know an honest man, the noblest work of God."

Ironically, the April 8, 1867

*Sutter County Banner* listed Drescher as a candidate for county surveyor. He failed in his bid for either position, however, losing to J. T. Pennington for the office of the surveyor.

With continuing interest in civic affairs, Drescher also became a member of the State Board of Swamp Land Commissioners. In 1868, however, a law was passed by the Legislature which dispensed with this agency and provided for the formation of levee districts.

Three years later, Drescher was once more elected to serve as county surveyor and he continued to retain this office until 1876. During these years, he became a member of Enterprise Lodge No. 70, F and AM but later transferred his membership to the Nicolaus Lodge in Wheatland.

He was also a member of the Pioneers' Society of Sacramento and in politics supported the Republican platform.

On Nov. 30, 1897, "Uncle Phil," as he became known, died at his home at the age of 78 of Bright's disease.

Although he had been feeble for many years, friends mourned the loss of this man who was "one of the most highly respected citizen of the county."

According to an account in the *Sutter County Farmer*, in every sense of the word, Drescher was a self-made man, and from a material standpoint he was definitely regarded as a success.

A road sign north of Nicolaus still bears the name of Drescher, but countless pages of Sutter County history will forever contain the valuable contributions of "Uncle Phil," one of its earliest settlers.

# Yuba-Sutter's Father of Peach Farming

## A. F. Abbott

by  
Carol Withington

First published in *Daily Independent Herald* dated Tuesday, July 12, 1977

"The future agricultural wealth of California will depend in a great degree upon its fruit and grape culture," stated the Hon. M. M. Estee during the State Fair of 1885. A few years later, the Sacramento Valley was furnishing nine-tenths of all fresh deciduous fruit shipped to eastern markets. The market for canned peaches was soon opened up in Europe, Asia and South America as well.

During these years, soil in Sutter and Yuba counties was described as being "deep and rich, with plenty of subsoil moisture, well drained and needing no irrigation." This soil was particularly adaptable for peaches, which was reported as "comparatively free from curl leaf and blight" in the area. Excelling any other section of California in early peach production, the area was noted as being "ahead of all in quantity and at least equal in quality."

One of the early pioneers who envisioned the potential of a great fruit industry in Sutter County was A. F. Abbott, often referred to historically as the "real father of the industry."

Alexander Franklin Abbott was born near Jamestown, Chautauqua County, New York on August 1, 1829. According to research, his family traced its ancestry back to the Puritans through members who served with honor in the Colonial and Revolutionary wars.

During the ensuing years, Abbott received his education in the New York state school system and later followed farming until 1852 when, at the age of 23, he made the "venturesome" journey to California coming by the Isthmus of Panama route. Although his financial resources were limited, Abbott possessed the valuable assets of ambition, energy and perseverance, traits he maintained throughout his lifetime.

Upon arrival, he first found employment in Marysville but later moved to San Mateo County where he became engaged in farming and stock raising. Six years later, Abbott purchased a tract of 610 acres of land located on the Feather River near Star Bend from General Sutter and thus became an owner of a portion of Hock Farm.

Here, he built a two-story house, a part of which was constructed of lumber brought around Cape Horn in a sailing vessel. During that same year, he married Mary Elizabeth (Twaite) Spinks, a native of London who came to California in 1850. The couple had three children, but only one survived, a daughter, California E. Abbott.

In 1881, Abbott planted some peach pits and two years later, set out nearly 60 acres to fruit trees from which he gathered 200 tons of fruit. During this time, he became associated with Joseph Duke Phillips, who had grown fruit on the Feather River below

Marysville. This association was soon to develop into a "fortunate combination" for their ultimate success was watched closely by California farmers thereafter, stimulating land owners all over the Sacramento Valley to plant orchards

By 1887, the "great" orchard of Abbott and Phillips embraced 425 acres and was to be known at that time as the largest peach orchard in the world.

According to the August 5, 1887 edition of the Sutter County Farmer, the soil of this orchard was described as "very deep, rich loam." Three hundred acres were in peaches with 25 in apricots and the remainder in pears and prunes.

The paper further stated that "in the garden surrounding the Abbott's house was a large orange tree, about ten years old, that had never been hurt by frost." "Everything seems to bear at an early age in this orchard," the paper added, "the flourishing tobacco and cotton plants also lend their testimony in the richness of the soil and the warmth of the climate."

By 1883, the businessmen and farmers of Sutter County were so impressed with the fruit-growing possibilities that the Sutter Canning and Packing Company was organized. Soon after a canning factory was built in Yuba City and the first canned peaches canned were grown and gathered from the Abbott and Phillips orchard.

In 1888, Phillips, always alert for new and desirable varieties, discovered in the orchard a "chance" seedling peach possessing so many "good" qualities that he budded a few trees. From this beginning, growers and nurserymen reportedly secured the

Phillips cling peach. Consequently, the Abbott and Phillips orchard became even more famous.

With continuing foresight, Abbott soon established a packing house and drying plant upon his ranch. Here he conducted his operations upon an extensive scale, shipping fresh and dried fruits to the east in carload lots from a Southern Pacific Railroad spur at the Abbott Station.

He also raised olives and all varieties of deciduous fruits. Abbott's exhibit at the State Fair in 1894 was awarded a gold medal, the first ever given for the "most meritorious display of horticultural products."

A. F. Abbott also acquired large landholdings in neighboring Yuba County and was interested in the Marysville canneries as well. During the ensuing years, he did much to aid in the building of the District No. 1 levee of Sutter County and also served on the Board of Directors of the State Agricultural Society.

He later sold his orchard to a company but still owned the Spangler orchard below its location at the time of his death, which occurred on March 17, 1905 at his Marysville home.

His death followed an illness of several months and as a member of the Corinthian Lodge, No. 9, F. and A.M., he was buried with Masonic honors. Abbott was also a member of the Baptist Church and politically, a staunch Republican, influential within his party.

He left to his family the priceless heritage of an "untarnished name" but to residents of Yuba and Sutter counties, his name will forever remain closely linked to that of California's great fruit-growing industry.

# Letter from Calvin Edwin Reische, Secretary

Reclamation District No. 70  
Meridian, Sutter County, California

*Editor's Note: This letter was found in the Museum's collection and we thought it would make an interesting article for the Bulletin. While many of us are familiar with the levee districts of today, not many of us know how they came about or the early methods of construction. The author, C. E. Reische, grew up in the Meridian area and was intensely involved in the maintenance of the district's levees. His history of the district, written in 1965, makes for interesting reading.*

February, 1965

To the Landowners of Reclamation  
District No. 70:

I have been writing these letters for the Board of Trustees for many years. Since this will be my last year as Secretary, I thought it might be well, as a record for history, to devote this year's letter to giving the story of the reclamation of the Meridian area of Sutter County. My mother was born near Forbestown, Yuba County, and came to Meridian to live about 1871. My father arrived here in 1876, and I was born near Meridian in 1881. Since we know little about what was done before 1870, most of my story will be concerned with what has happened since.

Settlers in this locality began farming in the 1850s, but very soon had the problem of keeping flood waters off their crop land. They first made small levees with shovels. Next the two horse "flip" scraper was used as a levee building tool and continued in use until 1890 when the four horse "Fresno" was brought out. At that time, Swamp Land District No. 70 bought a number of

these new scrapers. Levees along the Sacramento River were then about 5 or 6 feet high with a crown three feet wide. The river levees were built by individual landowners and there was much variation in their height and width. Along Butte Slough, the owners of some 6,000 acres, classed as swampland, had organized Swamp Land District No. 70 for the purpose of building a community levee along Butte Slough to keep out flood waters. By 1890 their levees were probably 8 feet high with a crown width of six feet. Swamp Land District No. 70 was a political sub-division of the State of California just as our present district is. The state law was such that it was not feasible to include river lands, classed *public* land and slough lands, classed *swamp* lands, in the same district. The crops then grown were dry land crops - mostly wheat and barley. Summer irrigation did not come until about 1905. Grain farmers who kept many horses for their field work would send their men and teams to "work out" their levee tax. Many farmers kept their workers the year round - \$30.00 per month and board and lodging. A camp of forty or fifty men with a

cookhouse and Chinese cook for the men, and feed racks for the horses, was set up in September and work on the levees continued until the rains came. Probably a mile of levee was worked on each fall. Swamp Land District No. 70 was organized in the early 1870s and continued until 1905 when the present Reclamation District No. 70 was organized by a special act of the State Legislature.

One of the sidelights of this reclamation work was what came to be known as "Bowman's Dam." A man named Bowman in the 1870s conceived the idea of building a dam or levee across what is now Sutter Bypass about 1/4 mile north of Mawson Bridge. His idea was to reclaim the land on the south side. The dam was built from the No. 70 levee eastward to the high ground sloping from the Buttes. This forced all the flood waters to go down the Sacramento River. This angered the river people. As a result, a group of masked men with guns came up the river by boat to the dam and blew it out. I remember my mother said a relative of hers was in this group.

Although the levees were made larger each year, there were many breaks in wet seasons. Before my time, or even my mother's, the levees often failed to hold. You can see the results today on land now owned by Gene and Harvey Taylor, Ray Burrier, W. J. Hankins and J. E. Smith. There were other early breaks which have been wiped out by subsequent breaks. During the 1880s, District No. 70 grew some fine wheat crops. The 1889-90 season had 40 inches of rain and a series of wet years followed. Rust showed up in the wheat. Barley became the crop. My memory of levee breaks begins with 1890. District No.

70 had one just south of the J. E. Smith residence (washed a house and barn away) and another north of Mawson Bridge centering about where the Tarke gas well now is. Also the big hole (now filled) on the Tomlinson river farm. Between 1890 and 1904 there were eleven breaks in the river levees. Breaks in the Slough levee occurred in 1902 - 1905 - 1907 - all north of Mawson Bridge. Of course most of you remember the 1940 break just south of the C. P. Reische residence. I mentioned the four horse "Fresno" scraper came into use in 1890 and was the standard levee builder for more than twenty years. I drove one for several weeks the fall of 1896. Also the fall of 1909, I was "Boss" of a levee camp. We used teams to build both levees and drainage ditches that fall. As a result of the loss of so many crops from floods, agitation for a larger district including river lands and an additional area to the south, resulted in the formation of the present Reclamation District No. 70.

Swamp Land District No. 70 used warrants to pay its bills just as the present district does. If there was cash with the County Treasurer to pay these warrants, the holder got his money. If not, the warrants were registered by the County Treasurer and paid in the order of their issuance. When registered, these old warrants bore 10% interest. This went along for many years. Then the State Legislature changed the law making 7% the top legal rate. The Sutter County Treasurer, however, continued to pay the 10% after the change in the law. When he found his error in so doing, he resigned and left the county.

One of the first jobs undertaken by the new district in 1905, was to



rebuild the entire length of the Sacramento River levee. Except where the levee was too far from the river, this job was done by a large "clamshell" dredger which took sand from the riverbed to construct a new standard levee. Another early part of the construction program was to build a new back levee to shut out tule flood waters from the east. A smaller "clamshell" dredger dug its way from the river at the Rohleder place to Long Lake and then eastward to the back levee location which extended south from near Long Bridge to the Tisdale ridge. (Later the Tisdale ending was abandoned and a south levee built to the river near Winship School.) This dredger was dismantled when the job was completed. This back levee which marks the division between this district and Reclamation District No. 1660 has now been razed. The last levee to be reconstructed by the new district was the Butte Slough levee. For this job, the district hired a large dragline which enlarged this levee its entire length.

In 1933, the Federal government, through the U. S. Army Engineers and the State through the State Reclamation Board, jointly took over bringing the river levee south of Meridian up to a standard grade and gross section. These governments paid the costs for the levee reconstruction but the District was required to furnish the needed rights of way. A river "clamshell" did this job. In 1938, these same government agencies did a like job north of Meridian on the river, except that a new standard grade and cross section had been adopted. About 1920 the Sutter Bypass was built, the top of the levee being approximately 54 feet above sea level. After the levee break in 1940, the whole west

Bypass levee from Tisdale Weir to the mouth of Butte Slough was raised to a grade and cross section having 58 feet above sea level at the low point in this levee. (Watch out if a levee breaks again.) This job was done at no cost to the local districts. In 1949, the levee south from Meridian to Winship School was brought up to the increased standards. The last two jobs were done with modern equipment - carryalls, bulldozers and draglines.

Although levees go back to the earliest attempts to farm in this part of Sutter County, the idea of reclaiming land from rain and seepage water by drainage, did not get very far until after the present district was organized in 1905. Gasoline powered equipment as practical machines did not come into general use until about 1910 or later. Swamp Land District No. 70 had a pumping plant at the north end of Long Lake (this was the south end of said district) powered by a steam engine. A main drainage canal had been started with horse scrapers. The new district installed a pumping plant in the back levee near the Atwood McKeehan residence, powered at first by gas engines and later by electric motors. When the bypass levees were constructed, this plant had to be moved to its present location on the Sacramento River. Through the years, the old pumping equipment has been discarded and modern pumps and electric motors have been installed. Even when the present district began to dig drainage ditches, machines to construct them were lacking. I remember the first laterals were dug with a trenching machine and the ditches were neither very wide or very deep. Said ditches were not much over three feet wide at the top and were

soon filled by gophers. It was not until the small gasoline powered dragline came along that really effective ditches could be dug. Ever since then, the District's drainage system has gradually improved, although it is not yet as effective as it could be.

In the old days, the only remedy when the river levees were endangered by a caving river bank, was to move the levee back. Efforts were made to divert the river currents from the bank by the use of brush retards which were anchored to the river bank. Such deterrents were only a temporary help, as they did not last long. On a particularly bad caving bank at the Girdner Bend, the District hauled rock from the Buttes and dumped them along the river bank to stop the current wash. This proved permanent and effective. Since then, the Federal and State governments have taken over this bank protective rocking of caving river banks, and thereby has saved this District thousands of dollars.

For well on to twenty years, Reclamation District No. 70 has had no debts and has been on a cash basis. Before this, this was not so. Then when a job was done, there would be no cash to pay the bill, and sometimes these warrants were held for years

before they were in order for payment by the County Treasurer. Since warrants could be used by a landowner to pay his District taxes, regardless of whether the said warrants were in order for payment or note, landowners often bought warrants from holders at a discount and used them to pay their District taxes. Before the Maintenance Fund plan came along, a lump sum assessment was charged against each tract of District land, and after this assessment was approved by the County Board of Supervisors, these assessments were required to pay 7% interest on any unpaid balance. These assessments were usually called in installments. When I took over the collecting for Reclamation District No. 70, the amount of unpaid District warrants was over \$300,000. The holder was able to get 7% on his warrants if he held them long enough. During my 35 years of collecting taxes, I collected well over a million dollars for the District.

You know, we, today, have a lot to thank those old-timers for in their uphill fight for reclamation.

Sincerely,  
C. E. Reische  
Secretary



## Ads Paid Off Cement Trough

by  
Carol Withington

*This article was first published in the Independent Herald on May 28, 1977*

During the summer of 1910, the old wooden watering trough on the site of the old Butte House stage station near the community of Sutter was replaced by a large cement trough. The idea was conceived by J. C. Albertson, Third District Sutter County supervisor who had reportedly "Set the place" in his district in the building of the concrete bridges and culverts, believing in making permanent improvements" whenever possible.

The road district funds were low that year, so the enterprising Albertson suggested to some area businessmen that this would be an excellent opportunity for permanent advertising. The district, therefore, would only have to furnish a few loads of gravel and sand for the trough which would measure six feet in length and a width of three feet of "solid cement."

As Albertson explained to his prospective customers, the front side, ends and the top of the side would contain the advertisements, "The letters of same being in concrete so as to stand out well and be seen readily."

By August, J. C. Albertson had made all the collections for the advertisements, amounting to \$135. According to the Sutter County Farmer (one of the advertisers), after settling all the bills, Albertson had a balance of \$26, which he deposited in the bank to be used in later years to repaint the lettering when they became dim.

The trough was built by Guy McMurtry, a Sutter County Surveyor

whose office was located in Yuba City. The section housing the pump was inscribed with the name of P. J. Williams, and inside the trough was inscription "Built by Guy McMurtry A.D. 1910 for J. C. Albertson supervisor District No. 3, Sutter County."

Names and firms inscribed on the trough included J. W. Mock; Hampton Hardware Co.; Maben "for menswear"; H. M. Harris, Saddler; Sutter Co. Farmer; Farmers Union Bank; and the U. S. Hotel. Also inscribed were R. E. Bevan, Peter Engel and G. W. Hall, all prominent Marysville businessmen.

Richard Edwin Bevan was born on September 16, 1855 in Oneida County, N. Y. His boyhood years were spent in that state where he attended public schools and later the academy. When only 17, Bevan began preparations for a business career as an apprentice to the carriage-maker's trade, and up until 1878, he continued in that profession.

During the month of June of that year, he came to Wheatland and 15 days later was successful in securing a position in carpenter work and railroad construction. He maintained this new trade for three and one-half years when he returned East. By the spring of 1882, however, he arrived once more to Wheatland where he opened a carriage-makers shop.

He later attended the Champion School of Embalming and took up his new line of work. He became part of a firm originally known as Hopkins and

Bevan, later Bevan and Glidden. Following the death of A. P. Barnes of Marysville, Bevan purchased the business and was thereafter advertised in local papers as "the largest funeral supply house in Northern California."

In 1889, he took the oath of office for county coroner, a position he held until 1899. He was also elected by the Republican party to the office of sheriff where he served from 1899 to 1903.

Bevan married the former Josephine Phelan and three children were born of this union. They were T. Frank, Angela Ellen and Josephine.

Another public-spirited man of Yuba County was Peter Engel, who was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on March 15, 1852.

Engel received his education in the public schools of Marysville and upon graduation was employed in the woolen mills for over two years. He thereafter learned the trade of watchmaker with Frank E. Smith and by 1879 started in business for himself as a repairer of watches, clocks and jewelry.

Engel was first located in a window of a small store, but by 1883 he was able to purchase the business established by A. Davis and Son, which was located on D Street. Here he remained for 27 years, until he moved to the Peri Building, also located on D. Street.

A large advertisement appeared in a 1910 edition of the Sutter Co. Farmer announcing this large \$40,000 inventory moving sale. Included was the following: "Mr. Engel states that none other than his own reliable, dependable, guaranteed, high-grade goods will be sold at this sale, and Mr. Engel's word is as good as his bond."

Engel, who was known as having "one of the best appointed and most modern jewelry stores in Northern California," retired in February 1922 after being in business for 43 years.

He married the former Josephine McKenney in 1885 and they had three children, two of whom lived to maturity. They were Walter W. and Frances Mary.

Later, Peter Engel served on the Marysville Board of Education for 22 years and also was instrumental in the erection of new and modern school buildings in Marysville.

"Are you satisfied with your present method of keeping books? If not come and inspect our new system - Moores Modern Methods" - thus was the 1910 advertisement of G. W. Hall, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

George W. Hall was born on March 26, 1861 and after leaving his home, he arrived in the United States making his way to Kansas City, Missouri where he obtained a position as a grocery clerk.

After his arrival in Marysville in 1885, he found employment with the Swain and Hudson planing mill. Two years later, in partnership with A. B. Miller, he purchased a stationery store located at 220 D Street and just four years later, took over the latter's interest.

During the years that followed, Hall also became a member of the firm of George W. Hall and Son, proprietors of a music store located at 422 D Street in Marysville. He was also connected with the theatrical business, acting as manager of the Marysville Theatre from 1901 to 1904, when the building was destroyed by fire.

Hall was a member of the city council for six years and served as

mayor. It was during this capacity, at the time of the San Francisco fire, that Hall called a mass meeting for the purpose of collecting money and supplies for the sufferers. Hall was also well known for the progressive movement which he inaugurated during his office.

He married the former Leila Fisher and eight children were born of

this union including Hedley, Francis F., George W. Jr., Robert, Leila, Jane and Catherine.

Gone are the days when the traveling public stopped at the trough to water their thirsty teams, but the names of those businessmen and firms that made this structure possible remain deeply etched in the history of Sutter and Yuba Counties.

## Samuel Stabler Pioneer

by  
Carol Withington

*Published in The Morning Herald, October 8, 1978*

"Attention men with muscles owning "lots of days' work" or men of money who want to find a home in a winterless climate. The counties of Sutter and Yuba are ideal for you." In order to reach interested prospects, C. E. Williams wrote a publication in 1887 under the direction and by the authority of the Immigration Bureau.

"We have room for people desiring a home in a pleasant and healthful location," the pamphlet read, "where land is still cheap, where the laborers can get good wages, where there are so many opportunities for industry and capital that there are not enough of us to more than commence to develop them all."

Among the Sutter County members of the board of directors for the Bureau of Immigration was S. J. Stabler, an early day district attorney and pioneer commercial fruit businessman.

Samuel Jordan Stabler was born at Sandy Spring, Maryland on February 12, 1830. Studying law at a young age, Stabler was eventually admitted to the

bar and there began the practicing of his profession in his home state.

When news of the California gold discovery arrived in his area, Stabler foresaw the great possibilities of this state and set out for the Pacific Coast.

Stabler arrived in San Francisco in 1850. He engaged in business as a merchant and auctioneer. Three years later he went to the mines in El Dorado County and later move to Sierra County.

In 1860, Stabler arrived in Yuba City. A year later he married the former Alice Fronk, a native of Indiana. They had three children, a son Harry P. and daughters Kate and Marguerite.

### **2-1/2 acres \$180**

The year of his marriage, Stabler purchased land from the estate of Judge R. B. Sherrard. He paid a reported \$180 for the approximately 2-1/2 acres where he eventually built his home of Italianate design. The residence was later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Kells for \$3,500.

Stabler was elected district attorney on the Democratic ticket,

where he served for two terms from 1868-1871. He also was a senior member of the law firm of Stabler and Bayne, which was in existence for 18 years with offices in both Sutter and Colusa counties.

In 1878, a bill to incorporate Yuba City was presented to the Legislature. Following its passage, the bill received the approval of the Governor.

The act provided for the election of a Board of three trustees. Stabler, along with W. F. Peck and J. B. Stafford, were duly elected. However, at their first session, it was decided that the rate of tax allowed by the charter would not meet the needs of city government and other "desired" improvements. The decision was to disband and not attempt to organize the council.

Due to poor health, Stabler was eventually forced to retire from active law practice. He moved to Oakland, but still retained his interest in Sutter County.

#### ***Fruit Tree Homestead***

In 1886, he purchased a homestead of 208 acres, where he planted a variety of fruit trees. Through trial and error, he discovered that more money could be made by raising Thompson Seedless grapes. He therefore took up 120 acres of fruit trees and replanted the land with grapes. In addition, he improved his place by erecting a "fine set of buildings" which included warehouses and a large dryer.

He eventually was able to cure all of the raisins his vineyards produced as well as many of the neighboring vineyards, where reportedly he carried on an extensive business. He was noted as being one of the pioneers in

the fruit business extensively in Sutter County.

In 1896, Stabler returned to the area. He lived on his homestead until his death at the age of 84, Feb. 8, 1914. Stabler had been in failing health for some time. Yet up to the day previous to his stroke, Stabler "was able to be about," his obituary notice read.

Although he had been a California resident for over 60 years, Stabler continued to retain "the courtly and polished manners" of a Southern gentleman, which early in his law practice earned him the title of "Judge" among his many friends.

A member of the Sutter County Board of Trade, Stabler took much interest in community affairs where he assisted materially with his time and funds. He also aided in church and temperance endeavors.

#### ***Deep Reader***

Stabler was regarded as a great student and a deep reader. He stood high in his profession and his counsel and advice were sought by young and old alike.

His son, Harry, continued in his father's fruit industry. The son was regarded as an authority and was one of the first to employ a systematic approach to protect the industry from pests and diseases.

Through his efforts and others, laws were passed which created boards of Horticultural Commissioners. Young Stabler served on the board in Sutter County for 38 years. He was also a member of the state Legislature.

The Stabler residence still remains and is a stately reminder of that Southern gentleman who arrived in Sutter County in 1860.

# Puzzle Page

N Q V V B T G D E E C Y A J Z C  
 O B T C K T K R L E H C S I E R  
 I C C Z K O S L L J V R E L Y T  
 T A X F T B E O E K N O R R S P  
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|-------------|------------|
| Abbott      | California |
| Chautauqua  | Clamshell  |
| Drescher    | Fairbanks  |
| Floods      | Gophers    |
| Jaycee      | Knorr      |
| Levee       | Nicholas   |
| Reclamation | Reische    |
| Stabler     | Swamp      |
| Swing       | Trough     |
| Tyler       | Withington |

# Coming Events

## July

- 25 Historical Society Potluck Picnic in the Park, 5:30 p.m.  
Program: Camp Far West History with Bill Knorr  
Howard Harter Memorial Park, behind the Museum

## August

- 13 Sister Swing & Vintage Autos  
6:00 p.m. Autos (free)  
7:00 p.m. Concert (\$15)  
at the Museum

*At Work: The Art of California Labor* exhibit opens  
at the Museum