

Vol. XLIX No. 1

Yuba City, California

January 2007



Double Happiness Porcelain Bowl
California Department of Parks and Recreation Collection
(photo by Der Hsien Chang)



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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 2007 dues are payable as of January 1, 2007. 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
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President's Message

We start the new year with the loss of another former Historical Society board member and supporter, Marian Regli. Marian was on our board from 1996 to 2003, when she moved to Chico to be near her daughter. Marian was a teacher in Nicolaus and East Nicolaus, and contributed many articles about the area to our Bulletin. She is very much missed!

We have a special treat in this issue of the bulletin - original articles by two local academicians! Barbara Stengel, who was our wonderful guest speaker at our October luncheon, has written an article on the fight for supremacy in Sutter County - what city will win the title of County Seat? And Der Hsien Chang, who will be our presenter at our January meeting, has given us a look at her search for the truth about Chinese pottery artifacts found in California.

We're making some changes to our quarterly meeting schedule this year. Last year's January Saturday afternoon meeting was a success, so we're continuing that tradition this year (see article below). And because of the heat we often encounter in mid-July, our annual picnic will be held on June 23; hopefully those few weeks will make a big difference!

If you have ideas about making our membership meetings more enjoyable and interesting, please let any of our board members know.

Audrey Breeding
President



January Membership Meeting

We have historically held our January meeting on a Tuesday evening at the Museum. But many people have expressed some hesitancy about coming out in the January weather at night, so this year we're trying something different. Our meeting will be **Saturday, January 20, at 2:00 p.m.**, still at the museum, and in keeping with tradition, we'll offer dessert after the program.

Our speaker will be local archaeologist Der Hsien Chang, who also has a wonderful article in this issue of the Bulletin. Der Hsien will be speaking about Ch'ing Dynasty Provincial Porcelains in California.

So please, join us for a relaxing, convivial afternoon of chat and cookies!

Director's Report

The new year of 2007 is bringing some unique events and exhibits to the Museum. First up, we have a rare opportunity to meet an eminent Western historian and learn about his new definitive biography of John Sutter on Saturday, January 27. Al Hurtado will speak and sign copies of *John Sutter, A Life on the North American Frontier*. A Sacramento native, Hurtado is the Chair of Modern American History at the University of Oklahoma. John Sutter remains an enigmatic and intriguing figure in our history. Kevin Starr, author, historian, and former State Librarian, says of the new book, "*The story of American California begins with the ambitious, elusive, morally compromised life of John Sutter. Thanks to this tirelessly researched and richly detailed biography, the ambiguous life of Sutter the Founder - fully revealed in all its tarnished glory - yields to larger ambiguities of exploitation and empire that continue to disturb the present.*" The program begins at 2:00 p.m. The book *John Sutter* sells for \$34.95 in the Museum store.

By mid-January, the new exhibit *Picture This: Marysville's Forgotten Photographer* will be up for you to enjoy. Clyde O. Taylor worked for a brief time as a professional photographer, but he had a lifelong passion for the craft. He lived in Marysville from 1899 to his death in 1947. During that span of time, he recorded scenes and events in his hometown and the surrounding area. He was also a fireman, so the collection includes dramatic photos of disastrous fires. There is a group of photos taken in Yosemite in winter. The Yosemite Lumber Company ran a railroad, and stunning early 20th century photos show men and engines clearing the tracks in deep snow. Taylor lovingly portrayed family and friends. Even though we don't know the names of all of the subjects, they are wonderful portraits of people of past decades. Some photos are by other photographers, as Taylor liked to collect interesting photos, as well. The entire collection forms a multi-faceted picture of life in our small community so many years ago. The exhibit will be up through March 16.

Don't forget to fill out the form for *Love's Messenger* in this issue. You can treat your sweetie, remember a friend, or say thank you to someone special, all for \$25 delivered. February 14 is the day the Museum volunteers deliver the beautiful Valentine gift bags, so get your order in soon. All proceeds benefit the Museum's educational programs.

Have the best year ever, and make your Museum an important part of the year.

Julie Stark
Director

What's the News?

January Membership Meeting

Please join us for our annual dessert meeting, **Saturday, January 20, at 2:00 p.m.**, at the museum.

Our program will be presented by local archaeologist Der Hsien Chang, talking about Ch'ing Dynasty Provincial Porcelains in California. In this issue we also have Der Hsien's story of her search for information about the ceramics. So please, join us for a relaxing, convivial afternoon of education and edibles!

Author's Presentation

Al Hurtado, an eminent Western historian, will speak and sign copies of his new book *John Sutter, A Life on the North American Frontier*. A Sacramento native, Hurtado is the Chair of Modern American History at the University of Oklahoma. John Sutter remains an enigmatic and intriguing figure in our history.

Join us on **Saturday, January 27 at 2:00 p.m.** at the museum. The book *John Sutter* sells for \$34.95 in the Museum store.

Love's Messenger

It's not too early to order your delightful Love's Messenger Valentine gift bag for that special someone! Gift bags contain champagne or sparkling cider, glasses, chocolate truffles, and lovely small gifts with a silk rose for just \$25, with free delivery on Valentines' Day, anywhere in the local area. Look for the order form in this bulletin.

Anyone is welcome to volunteer to fill and deliver the gift bags, starting at **9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 14**. It's great fun!

Buttes Hike/Bus Trip

Our ever-popular hike in the Sutter Buttes will be **Sunday, March 18** and will be led by the Middle Mountain Foundation. The cost per hiker is \$35. Reservations are required, and early reservations are strongly recommended, as the number of hikers is limited to 20. The group will split into two parts, one to tackle the ridge and one to tackle the gentle stroll, so everyone can find a hike that meets their abilities.

And another popular event - our annual guided bus ride around the Buttes. The bus ride is **Saturday, March 10** and costs \$15 per rider. Like the hike, the bus fills up quickly, so be sure to make your reservations early! The bus is limited to 40 riders.

We have a special offer this year - if the hike fills up and there is enough interest, we'll run a second bus trip on March 24.

Memorials

In Memory of **Anita Benton**

Ida J. Philpott
Merlyn Rudge

In Memory of **Helen Besegh**

Kathe Herr

In Memory of **Maudie "Ruth" Cardwell**

The 39ers

In Memory of **John E. Coyle, M.D.**

John & Dorothea Reische

In Memory of **Nick Gomes**

Mike & Helene Andrews

In Memory of **Lila Harrington**

Bob & Dorothy Coats

In Memory of **George Herr**

Barbara Barnett
Allen & Kathe Herr
Norm & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **Genevieve Jaeger**

The 39ers
Mike & Helene Andrews
Bob & Dorothy Coats
Sandra & Bob Fremd

In Memory of **Bruce & Mary Jenkins**

Audrey Breeding
Norm & Loadel Piner
Russ & Rita Schmidl

In Memory of **C. B. Kennison**

Mike & Helene Andrews

In Memory of **Donald Peterson**

Marnee Crowhurst

In Memory of **Anna Putman**

Ida Philpott

In Memory of **Marian Regli**

Connie Cary
Dorothy Ettl
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Smith
Julie Stark
Leslie & David Swartz

In Memory of **Beverly Speckert**

Jane Ullrey

In Memory of **Richard Tarke**

John & Dorothea Reische

In Memory of **V. Lisle Trexler**

Carol Ray Trexler

In Memory of **Walter Ullrey**

Maurine Adams - First Friday
Bridge Club
Alice Andreason
Mike & Helene Andrews
Andy & Barbara at Andy's
Heating & Air Conditioning
Beverly Balfour
Janet & Ed Baur
Richard Bowder
Nancy Bristow
Stella Brower
Mary Butler
Bob & Dorothy Coats
Marjorie Cosens - First Friday
Bridge Club
Marnee Crowhurst
Joe & Barbar Dilley
Joyce Dukes
George & Shyrlie Emery
Marge & Bryan Fairlee
Gray Avenue Christian Church
Helen Heenan & Family
Bette Herr
Dorothy Jang
George & Kathleen McDowell
Gayle & Mitzi Morrison

In Memory of Walter Ullrey (continued)

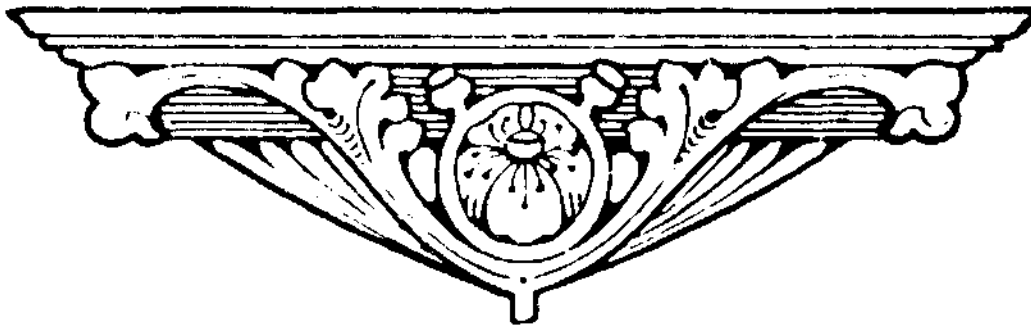
Dorothy Niesen
Cathy Pangle - First Friday
Bridge Club
Norm & Loadel Piner
Mary Margaret Purviance - First
Friday Bridge Club
John & Dorothea Reische
Wilma Richert - First Friday
Bridge Club
Stuart & Gay Savage
Katherine Schmidl
Russ & Rita Schmidl
M/M Ernest Speckert
Bethel Stilwell

In Memory of Walter Ullrey (continued)

Bob & Betty Storm
David & Gina Tarke
Don Turano
Burwell L. Ullrey & Family
Damon Ullrey Family
Albert & Mary Ulmer
James Uno
Robert & Rose Wood

Outright Gift

Bee Bonita Brandt
Allen & Kathe Herr
Hatsuye Nakamura
Yuba City Women's Club



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.

The Contest for the County Seat

by
Barbara Stengel

When, on the morning of January 24, 1848, John Marshall bent to retrieve a few shiny yellow particles from the tailrace of John Sutter's newly constructed sawmill, he inadvertently set in motion one of the greatest migrations in history, the Gold Rush, which brought over 200,000 fortune-seekers to California in just four years. Most newcomers quickly made their way to the banks of the rivers and streams rushing out of the Sierra Nevada, but a few realized very quickly that supplying the miners could be at least as profitable as mining and would provide a far more reliable source of income. During this turbulent and promising period, any place on the riverbank that could be reached by a steamer and was close to a reasonably good road or trail to the mines seemed to have the potential to be a future metropolis. Like mushrooms after a summer rain, new towns sprang up all along the rivers near the mining regions. Along the lower Feather River, from the Feather's confluence with the Sacramento to the mouth of the Yuba, speculators laid out the towns of Vernon (now Verona), Nicolaus, Oro, Plumas, El Dorado, Eliza, and Yuba City in 1849 and 1850. Each proprietor praised his town's advantageous location and hoped that it would quickly become a significant *entrepôt* and make the fortunes of its founder.¹ Of the towns mentioned above, only

Yuba City has prospered and Nicolaus and Vernon survive as pleasant little hamlets, while the others quickly disappeared from the landscape. Yet, at various times Nicolaus, Oro, Vernon, Yuba City and the distant Auburn competed for the honor and economic importance of being the seat of Sutter County's government.

In 1850, the California Legislature's Committee on Counties, handicapped by a lack of good maps and considering the transitory characteristics of the mining population and the sparseness of California's population in general, had initially divided the state into twenty-seven, necessarily large, counties. As one of the state's original counties, Sutter County encompassed territory, including the town of Auburn, which was later -- in 1851 -- used to create Placer County.²

Oro was the first official county seat of Sutter County. Located at the confluence of the Bear and Feather rivers, less than three miles upstream from Nicolaus, it had nothing to recommend it but its founder's brashness and political influence. Oro's founder and proprietor was the resourceful Thomas Jefferson Greene, one of the California Senate's more colorful members. In February 1850, Green claimed to have already sold most of Oro's lots, but in late spring, the town had only one edifice, a zinc structure provided by Green for the use

¹ *Alta California*, 21 February 1850; *Sacramento Transcript*, 27 April 1850. Throughout this article, I will refer to modern Verona by its older name, Vernon.

² Owen C. Coy, *California County Boundaries*, rev. ed. (Fresno, CA: Valley Publishers, 1973), 272.

of the Court of Sessions. When the court convened its first -- and only -- session in Oro in May, the building proved dark and stifling hot, and the court decreed to move the seat of government to Nicolaus until proper buildings were available at Oro. However, at year's end Oro had few inhabitants and the zinc building was moved to Nicolaus.³

Once Senator Green's folly had been eliminated as a contender for the county seat, the county's principal towns of Yuba City, Vernon, Nicolaus, and Auburn vied to reap the benefits that fell to the seat of government. Because of its proximity to Oro, Nicolaus easily won the first round of what would be a protracted contest. Because Nicolaus also lacked adequate facilities, the court convened in the American Hotel and in the home of Frederick Vahle under what must have been very crowded conditions. Recognizing an opportunity to capture the county seat and its attendant business, the people of Auburn offered in 1850 to supply funds for more appropriate accommodations, provided the county seat moved to their town. In an election held in the fall of that year, Auburn became Sutter's county seat. County officials, members of the bar, and others who followed the court and county government to Auburn, where, as Judge Philip W. Kayser reminisced about two decades later, they were warmly welcomed with a festive dinner hosted by that town's

³ Peter J. Delay, *History of Yuba and Sutter Counties, California* (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1924), 220-221; Harry Laurens Wells and William Henry Chamberlain, *History of Sutter County, California, 1879* (Oakland, CA: Thompson and West, 1879. Reprint Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1974), 38; *Alta California*, 11 February 1850.

merchants, miners, and professional men.⁴

While the citizens of Nicolaus and others living in the southern portion of the county resented the removal of the county seat and smarted from the loss of business and prestige, the residents of the county's northern area experienced greater hardship. Any trip to see to their legal and official business now required a much longer ride across terrain that, particularly during the wet winter of 1850, often proved impassable. On December 26, 1850, these aggrieved citizens petitioned the legislature with their request to "be set off in a new county." Stating that "great inconvenience and expense [was] incurred by taxpayers and citizens," the petition's fifty-five signatories explained that during the rainy season they were "cut off with [sic] the Seat of Justice, rendering to the citizens of the northern part of said County all profits of the County organization a nullity."⁵ After the legislature complied with their request and named Auburn seat of the newly created Placer County, the Sutter County seat was reestablished at Vernon on June 21, 1851. Elisha Crosby, the proprietary founder of Vernon and a member of the California Senate, had

⁴ Wells and Chamberlain, 33, 38; *History of Placer County, California* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1882), 93-94; Martha Scheiber to California Department of Parks and Recreation, May 3, 1968. The *History of Sutter County and the History of Placer County* state that the county seat was moved from Nicolaus to Vernon by an election of the people, but no report, vote count, or any other evidence of this election was found.

⁵ Owen C. Coy, *California County Boundaries*, 1-2, 4, 275; Delay, 222; State of California, Secretary of State, Petitions to the Legislature, 1850.

used his influence to have his town made county seat and offered the gratis use of two buildings for conducting county business. Vernon had been severely flooded during the previous winter, and many residents and businesses had abandoned the town. Declaring Vernon the county seat did not give the town a new lease on life. To make matters worse, as long as steamships were able to travel as far upstream as Nicolaus during periods of low water, Marysville merchants sent wagons to Nicolaus to collect supplies. When steamers could not travel further upstream than Vernon, the merchants bypassed that town and obtained their supplies directly from Sacramento.⁶ On May 3, 1852, an act of the legislature restored the county seat to Nicolaus where accommodations had improved slightly. Court and County business were conducted in the American Hotel, while the coroner held the occasional inquest at the town's other hotel, the Bell House. Because Sutter County had as yet no jail, prisoners were confined, at "considerable expense," in Yuba County's jail in Marysville.⁷

The construction of a bridge between Yuba City and Marysville in 1853 facilitated travel between these towns and gave Yuba City farmers and merchants access to Marysville and its markets. Seeking to strengthen their

town's fortunes, the people of Yuba City challenged Nicolaus for the honor, convenience, and pecuniary rewards of the county seat. While Yuba City could offer no better courtroom or office space than Nicolaus, it could hardly do worse. The documentary evidence concerning the ensuing contest between the two towns is sparse, but the matter seems to have been placed before the voters in 1854 when, apparently, two elections were held to determine the county seat. In the first election, Nicolaus garnered more votes than Yuba City, but allegations that at Johnson's Crossing passing teamsters and stage drivers had been cajoled to cast votes in favor of Nicolaus caused this election to be contested.⁸

While Sutterites continued to argue the merits of each town's claim, B.G. Hurlburt, Chief Justice of the Court of Sessions, sought to end the squabbles and ordered another election to determine the matter once and for all. In this election, which seems to have been held in October 1854, Yuba City won. Hurlburt immediately ordered the removal of the County's records and officers from Nicolaus to Yuba City. James R. Dickey, a resident of the Nicolaus area, who at that time served as county treasurer and occasionally supplied goods and services to the court, initiated proceedings against Judge Hurlburt, County Clerk G.W. Lee, Sheriff M.F. Gaar, and District Attorney W.C. Stoddard and petitioned the Tenth District Court to bring the county's

⁶ State of California, Statutes, 1851; Charles Albro Barker, ed. *Memoirs of Elisha Crosby: Reminiscences of California and Guatemala from 1849-1864* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1945), 56; Joseph A. McGowan, *History of the Sacramento Valley*, 3 vols. (New York and West Palm Beach: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1961), 1:66-67.

⁷ State of California, Statutes, 1852; Sutter County, Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A, pp. 40, 62-63; Wells and Chamberlain, 63.

⁸ Wells and Chamberlain, 39, 100; McGowan, 1:85; Owen C. Coy, *Guide to the County Archives of California* (Sacramento: California Historical Survey Commission, California State Printing Office, 1919), 541; State of California, Secretary of State, *Petitions to the Legislature, 1855*.

business back to Nicolaus. Of the county officers sued by Dickey, only Lee was a Nicolaus resident; Hurlburt, Stoddard, and Garr lived in or near Yuba City and would have found that town a more convenient place to attend to court and county business.⁹ On December 16, 1854, the District Court issued a writ of mandamus requiring court and county business to be conducted at Nicolaus.¹⁰ Despite this ruling, the Court of Sessions, presided over by Judge Hurlburt, convened for the January term of 1855 in Yuba City, while the three supervisors, two of whom -- David Abdill and Madison Boulware -- represented the Nicolaus and Vernon areas, conducted county business in Nicolaus. When the applicants for a ferry license questioned the legality of these meetings, the supervisors adjourned one meeting and removed to Yuba City and then returned to Nicolaus.¹¹

The judge and county officers appealed their cases to the California Supreme Court which, in August 1855, held that California's statutes lodged the responsibility to determine the seat

of justice, or places for holding court, with the Legislature, which could not delegate this responsibility to any other body. Therefore, Hurlburt, when he had ordered the election, had assumed the Legislature's ministerial duty and had acted outside his competency. Accordingly, court and supervisors convened for their August 1855 term in Nicolaus.¹² To accommodate the Court, the supervisors rented a house from Frederick Vahle and commissioned him to undertake the needed alterations to make it suitable for official use. In November, with the courtroom nearing completion, the supervisors ordered the county's furniture and records to be moved from Yuba City to Nicolaus.¹³

While *Dickey v. Hurlburt et al* was still pending before the California Supreme Court, a number of "Citizens and Voters of Sutter County" took their case directly to the Legislature. An undated petition, signed by 367 citizens of northern and northwestern Sutter County, was carefully edited before it was submitted to the Legislature, probably in the spring of 1855. Several signatures were crossed out, perhaps because the individuals in question did not reside in Sutter County or were not yet twenty-one years old and thus failed to qualify as "citizens and voters." Not surprisingly, no names of residents of southern Sutter County listed. The petitioners clearly referred to the "Two Several Elections...held in [Sutter County] for the removal of the County Seat" and carefully noted that "county business has been transacted at [Yuba City]" since "the last Election

⁹ Wells and Chamberlain, 74, 76; Sutter County, Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A. A, p. 69; Yuba County, Superior Court, District Court Register No. 3, p. 300; Sutter County, Clerk, *Book A of Deeds*, Vol. E, p. 183. United States, Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Schedule of Population (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, Roll No. 30); United States, Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule of Population (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, Roll No. 16).

¹⁰ Yuba County, Superior Court, *District Court Register No. 3*, p. 300/

¹¹ Sutter County, County Court, *Minute Book*, 33; Sutter County Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A, pp. 1, 6-7, 11, 15.

¹² *Dickey v. Hurlburt* 5 Cal 343; Wells and Chamberlain, 39.

¹³ Sutter County, Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A., pp. 62-63.

which took place in October last." Wishing "to put an end to all litigations and expenses," they asked the Legislature to declare Yuba City the "permanent County Seat."¹⁴

On April 19, 1856, the California Senate passed "[a]n Act to Submit the Question of the Removal of the County Seat of Sutter County to a Vote of the People of said County." The Legislature set May 15, 1856 for the election and charged election officials "to see that none but legal residents of said county are permitted to vote." The town that received "a number of votes equal to a majority of all votes cast" was to be the county seat. Absent such a majority, the county seat would remain at its present location. When the Board of Supervisors canvassed the ballots, Nicolaus fell short by three hundred votes and Yuba City reclaimed the prize.¹⁵ With the location of Sutter's county seat apparently settled, the supervisors directed the sheriff to select suitable buildings in Yuba City to serve as courthouse and county offices until a new courthouse could be constructed.¹⁶

Within a few months, George B. Upham, a Nicolaus trader who had briefly served as county treasurer and between 1852 and 1856 was appointed Associate Justice of the Court of Sessions for an incredible ten terms, embarked on yet another effort to have the county seat returned to Nicolaus.¹⁷

¹⁴ State of California, Secretary of State, Petitions to the Legislature, 1855.

¹⁵ State of California, Statutes, 1856; Sutter County, Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A, p. 119.

¹⁶ Sutter County, Board of Supervisors, *Minutes*, Vol. A, p. 119.

¹⁷ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Schedule of Population; Wells and Chamberlain, 75-76.

Arguing that a county seat could not be established through a vote of the people, but must be designated by the Legislature in accordance with California's Constitution, Upham sought an injunction restraining the Supervisors from erecting new buildings for county purposes in Yuba City. The District Court of the Tenth District held for the Supervisors, but the tenacious Upham appealed his case to California's Supreme Court which ruled that, while the Legislature could not delegate general legislative powers, it could delegate the voters of a county to select a county seat, and thus declared the Legislature's act of April 19, 1856 and the following election constitutional.¹⁸

Sixteen years later, the people of Nicolaus once more attempted to regain the county seat for their town. In the early hours of December 20, 1871, Sutter County's courthouse was nearly completely destroyed by fire. Because it was impossible to determine definitely the cause of the conflagration, many suspected arson, while others soberly argued that, during the heating season, a faulty stovepipe was likely at fault.¹⁹ When, within a few days, a levee break on Gilsizer Slough sent floodwaters into Yuba City, "idle talk about moving the county seat" began to circulate. Almost immediately, residents of southern Sutter County began to campaign for Nicolaus, notwithstanding the fact that this town, too, had in the

¹⁸ *Upham v. Supervisors of Sutter County* 8 Cal 378.

¹⁹ *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 21 December 1871; *Marysville Herald*, 21 December 1871.

meantime been inundated by floodwaters.²⁰

The editor of Yuba City's newspaper, the *Weekly Sutter Banner*, proclaimed the idea of moving the county seat to Nicolaus "a funny one," yet by February, numerous petitions to remove the county seat circulated among the people of Sutter County, albeit not always legitimately signed, or so it appeared. In the struggle over the county seat, both sides employed the rhetoric of "the greatest public good" although, as the *Banner's* editor charged correctly, the loudest talkers frequently seemed to be moved by "a large element of self-interest." Among the movement's leaders in Nicolaus were Philip Drescher and D.H. Redfield. Both were men of mature years, had held elective office, and ranked among the southern section's more prosperous and respected citizens. Surprisingly, they also received support from several farmers whose farms lay on the Feather's western bank, approximately equidistant between Nicolaus and Yuba City.²¹

The proposal to relocate the county seat gathered support, but the interest in Nicolaus waned and was replaced by the desire for "a more central location," even if this meant the founding of a new town. The *Banner* scoffed at the idea of a "New Jerusalem" on the swampy tule lands and stated that too many seemed to view the removal of the county seat from Yuba City as a panacea for their own discontents, be they the influence of social or political cliques on local

²⁰ *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 6 January 1872; *Marysville Herald*, 28, 30 December 1871.

²¹ Wells and Chamberlain, 117, 118, 121; *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 27 April 1872.

government or that of saloons on the people's sobriety.²²

Already on January 22, Democrat Campbell P. Berry, a resident of Nicolaus Township who represented Sutter County in the state assembly, had introduced a bill to authorize Sutter County Supervisors to borrow \$20,000 from the County's Swamp Land Fund to build a new courthouse and jail. The Swamp Land Fund was to be reimbursed through a new *ad valorem* tax levied on all taxable property in Sutter County.²³ At several mass meetings held in southern Sutter County in March 1872, those who favored the removal of the county seat passed resolutions to request Berry to introduce a bill to prohibit the Supervisors from moving ahead with the construction of the new courthouse until the matter could be put before the voters. On March 22 Berry introduced such a bill. His bill also specified that, if removed from Yuba City by the voters, the new county seat be located at a more central site some distance west of Yuba City and approximately equidistant between Nicolaus and Yuba City. Berry's bill passed the Assembly on March 27, 1872, only to be amended in the Senate which removed the provision for a central location. As amended, the bill was passed by the Senate on March 30, at the end of the legislative session. Fortunately for Yuba City, the bill

²² *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 27 April 1872.

²³ *California Blue Book, an Official Directory of the Judicial, Executive, and Legislative Departments of the California State Government, Sesquicentennial Edition 2000*, eds. Stephen Hummelt, Cheryl Brown, Bernadette McNulty; Wells and Chamberlain, 110; *The Journal of the Assembly During the Nineteenth Session of the Legislature of California, 1871-72* (Sacramento: T.A. Springer, State Printer, 1872), 295.

failed to become law when Governor Newton Booth decided to exercise the pocket veto. These events and their timing suggests that Berry may have engaged in some discrete maneuvers to have the Legislature pass his bill and yet prevent it from becoming law. As the County's sole representative in the Assembly, Berry's constituency included those who favored as well as those who opposed removal of the county seat from Yuba City. If he hoped to be reelected, he could not offend any one faction too severely, but must work tactfully to ease the disappointment one side would inevitably experience. After the bill's fate became public knowledge, Sutter County's supervisors quietly moved ahead with the completion of the new courthouse. A year after the old courthouse had gone up in flames the *Banner* pronounced the nearly finished structure "a building the county has reason to be proud of."²⁴

In southern Sutter County, however, all was not yet quiet. Southern Sutterites still smarted from their unsuccessful quest for the county seat, and in neighboring Placer County many were dissatisfied with their own government. During the late 1860s, county salaries and perquisites in Placer County had sharply risen, and despite legislation to limit salaries and mileage, the county's payments to reimburse officials for 8,507 miles of travel on county business in only seventy-six days suggested incompetent management and corruption.²⁵ During and shortly after the contest over Sutter's county seat, two proposals to reconfigure the Sutter, Yuba, and

Placer county lines attested to the lingering discontent among the people of that section. Making common cause with the Placer County dissidents, Sutter County residents who lived west and north of the Feather and Bear rivers teamed up with citizens of southwestern Placer County and proposed to petition the Legislature to transfer that part of Sutter County lying north and west of the Feather and Bear Rivers to Yuba County, while attaching southwestern Placer County to what remained of Sutter.²⁶ Another petition, signed by "Citizens of Sutter and Placer Counties," made more sense in that it proposed to detach the southwestern portion of Placer County and combine it with the area east and south of the Feather and Bear rivers to form a new county, to be named "Center County." The creation of Center County, claimed the 176 petitioners, would relieve them of "many damaging inconveniences, and add materially to [their] prospects and general welfare." While several citizens of Nicolaus and Vernon townships signed this petition, none of the names of the leaders of the earlier attempts to return Sutter's county seat to Nicolaus appear on either of these petitions that the Legislature seems to have, wisely, ignored.²⁷ Sutter's county seat remained in Yuba City, where the "new and elegant" courthouse was being readied to house the court and county offices.²⁸

²⁴ State of California, Assembly, Journal, 1871-72; *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 6 April 1872.

²⁵ *History of Placer County*, 162-163.

²⁶ *Weekly Sutter Banner*, 24 February 1872. As reported by the *Banner*, this was a nonsensical proposal. Perhaps the petitioners meant "east" instead of "west." There is no record of this petition in the California State Archives.

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How I Spent my Summer Vacations

by
Der Hsien Chang

Der Hsien Chang is a local archaeologist. She was guest curator of a Chinese Pottery exhibit at the Community Memorial Museum in 2003-2004.

For my master's thesis (California State University, Sacramento, 2006), I studied Chinese ceramic artifacts unearthed from archaeological sites in California. I traveled to Hong Kong and China and met with experts in both countries and in the United States, visited museums, and conducted research in historical and archaeological records. The process was fascinating, and although I learned much from the cross-continent research on the topic of Chinese ceramics, I also found there is much more study to be done on this topic.

I became interested in this subject when I took my very first archaeological field class during the initial excavation at Virginiatown, a mining camp located north of Auburn Ravine in Placer County. In the spring of 1992, the CSU Sacramento Department of Anthropology excavation uncovered large numbers of Chinese artifacts including wine pots; soy sauce pots; barrel jars; globular jars; Bamboo, Double Happiness, Celadon and Four Seasons porcelain tableware; a unique fish medallion bowl; and opium pipe bowls. Structural finds include a "rammed earth" building and several other structures.¹

The Site

Virginiatown was established in June of 1851 and was surrounded

by other mining towns. In 1853 the population of Placer County, which included Virginiatown, reportedly had 10,784 individuals with 3,019 Chinese, 730 "domesticated Indians," 81 "Negroes," nine "mullatos," 343 white females, and 6,602 white males.²

Sometime after 1860, a Chinatown located west of Virginiatown came into existence. However, the land and most of the buildings were owned by the Euro-Americans with the exception of three structures that were documented in the Placer County tax assessor's records as being owned by Chinese. Chinatown was portrayed as a business community with 84 entries from the Placer County tax assessor's records showing Chinese owned businesses being taxed. Businesses included a butcher shop, stores, physicians, and four "washermen." In 1860, the population of Chinatown was reported to be 471 with no documentation of any Chinese females among this group. In 1880, six Chinese females were listed with the Placer County census data.³ Based on these records, it was likely that the Chinese came to Virginiatown to work in the mines and when the mines dried up, some left and others stayed on and found other work.

Because of the scant record on the Chinese within the Placer

County Tax Assessor's Records and the Placer County census, archaeological finds posed more questions than answers regarding the history of the Chinese in Virginiatown.

My Research

The most common artifacts recovered at Virginiatown were porcelain tableware in designs known as Bamboo, Double Happiness, Celadon, and Four Seasons. In addition to researching the available literature in the United States, China, and Hong Kong, I attended several professional meetings in the United States to gather more data currently being disseminated on Chinese ceramics. These included meetings at the Society for California Archaeology, and the Asian Ceramic Research Organization meeting in 1996 sponsored by the Chicago Field Museum. I also spoke with archaeologists, museum curators, ceramic specialists, and archaeology professors in the United States. And in order to learn even more about my specific artifacts, I took porcelain specimens to Chinese specialists in Hong Kong, China, and the United States for their analysis.

Museums were important sources of data. I visited the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong; the Guangdong Provincial Museum in China; the Art Gallery at the University of Hong Kong; the storage facility at the Museum Section of the Regional Services Department in Hong Kong; the Field Museum in Chicago; the Ningxia Provincial Museum in Ningxia Province, China; the

Museum of Art in Kowloon, Hong Kong; the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco; and a variety of antique shops in Hong Kong and throughout California.

I made my first trip to Hong Kong in 1995 in an effort to develop a chronology for the porcelain archaeological samples by determining when and where in China they were produced. I showed my porcelain samples to specialists for their analyses. I made my second trip in 1996, and as a result of my meetings we identified specific manufacture sites for these ceramic styles and gained detailed knowledge about the kiln production and process.

Consulting with porcelain experts in China and the United States was complicated by the differences in the English translations used in Hong Kong and mainland China. In order to preserve the authenticity of data, I used both the Wade-Giles and Pinyin forms of translation.

The Pottery

By definition *porcelain* is a "vitrified and naturally glazed ware having two principal constituents - kaolin and porcelain stone - and fired in a reducing atmosphere at a temperature between 1200° and 1300° C."⁴ There is a wide range of porcelains; common styles are polychrome ("wucan," meaning five colors) and categories of Blue and Whites ("ch'ing hwa"). Most types of underglaze decoration are painted on a white ware using cobalt blue before an overall clear colorless glaze is applied.⁵ Other variations of the blue and green

colors are also part of this style of ware.

Polychrome porcelain may come in a range of underglaze and overglaze decoration. For example, in the Four Seasons ware, the outline of the four flower design is painted onto the vessel prior to firing. After firing, the flower design is sealed underneath the glaze, thus known as "underglaze." Another layer of paint is applied over the delineated flower outline, this time most likely without firing after the application of the paint, and this is known as "overglaze." Paint on overglaze wares tends to rub off, so extreme care is needed in handling the piece.

There are two types of ch'ing hwa painting styles: free-hand painted and pencil style.⁶ The free-hand painted style is the individual potters' interpretation of a design painted "freely" on the vessel; it is not copied line-for-line or stroke-for-stroke. Conversely, pencil style is more disciplined with an individual tracing a predetermined pattern and drawing the motif in line-by-line. The Chinese do not give any stylized names to the different designs found on the porcelain. However, some patterns are described. For example, Double Happiness pattern is a simplified design of the lotus with motif tracing back to early *Yuan* (1280-1368) and *Ming* dynasties (1368-1644). Four Seasons pattern is just known as "wucai."

Once a design or pattern is created, it continues to be manufactured and used until it becomes unpopular. For instance, Four Seasons is still being

manufactured while Bamboo, Double Happiness, and Celadon are not.⁷ Peter Lam of the Art Museum of Chinese University of Hong Kong believed these types of ceramic pieces were popular styles and mass-produced for domestic consumption, in other words, "whichever kind of motif sells is what is going to be produced."

Mr. Lam also said there is no symbolic meaning behind any motifs on these overseas Chinese porcelain wares, whether it be the four different flowers on the Four Seasons bowl, the green color on the Celadon ware, the flower pattern on the Bamboo bowl (otherwise known in California as the "Three Circles and a Dragonfly"), or the two "Happiness" characters on the Double Happiness bowl.⁸

Refuting Previous Beliefs

Previous work by Western archaeologists has resulted in theories about the origin and identification of Chinese ceramics found in temporary camps and permanent settlements in the United States which do not stand up to scrutiny when viewed through the educated Chinese lens.

Some American archaeologists have claimed that the celadon pottery unearthed in California Chinese communities was actually made in Japan or Korea. But there is a distinct difference between celadon bowls made in Japan and Korea and those made in China. Japanese bowls tend to have a fuller body with a wider footing than their Chinese counterparts. The green color from the Japanese

celadon is not translucent and crisp, while Chinese celadon is a translucent jade green where one feels that one can almost see through the jade color. The body of the Japanese celadon is not as white, compact, and refined as the clay body from the Chinese porcelain because the "kaolin" or "China clay" is a resource native to China.⁹

Korean celadon, as exhibited in the Art Institute of Chicago, has a ceramic style with a dull glaze applied on a dark, grayish-green body, not made from the Chinese kaolin. This kind of glaze probably was not fired in a "reducing atmosphere" of the Chinese style where there is a high level of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere, and that resulted in a yellow or brown glaze.¹⁰

Both Japan and Korea have borrowed heavily from Chinese culture: the form of governmental institutions, architectural city plans, the writing system, and other material culture and artistic endeavors.¹¹ In particular, Chinese ceramics have been highly regarded in Japan for many centuries for their technical and artistic values.¹² During the 19th century both Japan and Korea had closed trading policies, so it is unlikely they shipped tableware to the Chinese in California.¹³

Another common belief of Western archaeologists is that the Bamboo bowls are "porcelaneous stoneware," as opposed to porcelain,¹⁴ because of the coarse, grayish, gritty body unlike the Celadon or Four Seasons porcelain which has the white compact fine

body. However, not all Bamboo style porcelains are as crude as that described above. There are actual Bamboo vessels that are similar to any other Blue and White porcelain. To address the category of the Bamboo vessels, the Chinese archaeologists, ceramic specialists, and museum curators were given a coarse, grayish, pitted half-glazed shard of Bamboo to analyze. None of these specialists labeled Bamboo as "porcelaneous stoneware." There was a consensus that Bamboo, as badly as it was manufactured, was still a porcelain vessel.¹⁵ The reason for this is that stoneware vessels are composed of considerably different raw materials than porcelains.

Also, archaeologists in the West have labeled Bamboo porcelain wares with Western descriptive names such as Three Circles and a Dragonfly,¹⁶ Three Circles and Longevity,¹⁷ Blue Flower ware,¹⁸ and prolifically, "Swatow" ware.¹⁹ For the Chinese, all these descriptive labels are meaningless, except "Swatow" which is an altogether different issue. To the Chinese, the generic term of ch'ing hwa, loosely translated as "blue decoration," serves the purpose of describing utilitarian wares that have blue and white decorations on them. In their point of view the element of design serves an aesthetic purpose only, not as a descriptive marker to identify the different stylized pieces.

Archaeologists in California and elsewhere in the United States have been labeling "Bamboo" porcelain as "Swatow" ware, which is wrong in many ways. The real

"Swatow" ware is not comprised of a green variety of the Blue and White "Bamboo" with a "deep jade green underglaze floral design,"²⁰ but is a completely different type of ceramic. Swatow ware is "a sturdy stoneware or porcelain... made in the second half of the 16th century, and the first half of the 17th century... often roughly made and glazed, usually with kiln grit on the base."²¹ Bamboo ware found in California was manufactured in the 19th and 20th centuries. Also, there is no mention of the Swatow wares exported to the United States. With the abundance of Bamboo found in California, it would be likely that if Bamboo is really Swatow ware, there would be documentary evidence to support that claim.

"Swatow" has been identified as a port in Guangdong province, namely "Shantou." The mis-identification very likely originated with the idea that since Guangdong province produced ceramics, and they were exported via "Shantou," then all Chinese export wares are called "Swatow wares."²² It is not clear how the city of "Shantou" has been called "Swatow" in the West, and this has created confusion over the identification of "Swatow wares" by archaeologists in the United States. The result is that westerners have identified "Bamboo" as "Swatow wares", which clearly "Bamboo" is not.

Another point of confusion is about the name and origins of "Celadon." The Chinese word for porcelain is pronounced "ts' ŭ" in the Wade-Giles pronunciation system. Celadon is known as either "ch'ing ts' ŭ,"²³ translated as "green

porcelain," or "tung ch'ing" or "dongqing,"²⁴ translated in English as "winter green" or "eastern green," depending on the Chinese character used in writing "tung." Two different Chinese characters exist in the written form of tung from the words tung-ch'ing. One is the character for "winter" and the other is the character for "east." Both are pronounced "tung." Author Alison Stenger took the tung character and assumed it meant "east." Thus, in her translation of the Chinese characters, the phrase "tung-ch'ing" became "eastern green." With that assumption, Stenger developed her own conclusion that the Chinese used "eastern green" to describe that the celadon came from the east, i.e., Japan.²⁵ She did not substantiate her choice of meanings. Her assumption illustrates a lack of understanding of the Chinese culture from the Western perspective. Dr. Richard Shek, a Chinese professor at CSUS, called Stenger's statement a "highly uneducated conjecture to say that the 'tung' in 'tung-ch'ing' means east, and that east refers to an origin, namely Japan."²⁶

Stenger follows her assumption and decides that some Chinese ceramic types evolved from outside influences.²⁷ One element of "proof" is that the Japanese had ceramics for their tea ceremony that were manufactured in China. However, as with other cultural attributes, the Japanese imported the tea ceremony from China. Archaeological evidence in China dates the Chinese tea ceremony to pre-Tang dynasty (before 600 AD)

and based upon this timeline, the Chinese tea ceremony is much older than the Japanese tea ceremony.²⁸

In addition, Chinese ceramics were widely valued by other peoples and were exported as early as the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). The Chinese manufactured porcelain for various markets throughout the world with special orders for royal courts and religious ceremonies, as well as designing custom motifs on the porcelain for export and producing wares for mass consumption within and outside of China. Since China's jewel was the technologically advanced production of porcelain, ceramic production in China responded to the worldwide consumption of their porcelain and expanded their artistic and cultural designs to meet the needs of patrons living in and outside of China's borders.

Conclusions

The depth of ceramic evaluation cannot be overstated. In Chinese culture, the field of ceramic analysis is extensive and complex. It takes years to master an understanding of ceramics because of four thousand years of history. To complicate things even more is the fact that provincial wares, such as the porcelain commonly used by the Chinese in 19th century California, are not seen as important to document in

historical records, thereby leaving little information to go on in assessing their importance in the common Chinese peoples' lives. As the Chinese did not place a high value on the provincial wares, information on provincial wares are elusive.

Much more cultural research is needed to understand the provincial wares. In a society that values high culture and refinement, those that do not qualify to be in this pristine realm become invisible. That is why there exists so little documentation on the history and lives of common people in the history of China. Even in present day, those Chinese individuals who have studied provincial wares are not looked upon highly; as a matter of fact, they are ridiculed by their archaeological contemporaries. This kind of attitude hinders the understanding of research done on the four ceramic types I highlighted because these ceramics are common wares that are ignored in the academic community. On the other hand, in the West, archaeologists are making statements that cannot be proven, thereby also hindering the understanding of ongoing research. There needs to be a balance that would generate a genuine effort in seeking the truth, for that is the goal of archaeology.

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C C E K V Y D O C H I N E S E A K V
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Archaeology	Bamboo
Celadon	Chang
Chinese	Dynasty
Feather	Gilsizer
Happiness	Hurlburt
Hurtado	Nicolaus
Oro	Placer
Porcelain	Stengel
Swatow	Vernon
Virginiatown	Yubacity



Coming Events

January

- 2 Undecoration Day at the Museum
- mid New exhibit *Picture This: Marysville's Forgotten Photographer* opens
- 20 **Membership Meeting, 2:00 p.m. at the Museum**
Program: Ch'ing Dynasty Provincial Porcelains in California
by Der Hsien Chang
Dessert will be served
- 27 Book signing & presentation by Professor Albert Hurtado on *John Sutter, A Life on the North American Frontier*, 2:00 p.m. at the Museum

February

- 14 *Love's Messenger* fundraiser at the Museum

March

- 10 **Bus Trip Around the Buttes**
- 16 *Picture This: Marysville's Forgotten Photographer* exhibit closes
- 18 **Hike in the Buttes**
- 24 **Bus Trip Around the Buttes (if there's enough interest!)**
- late High School art exhibit opens at the Museum