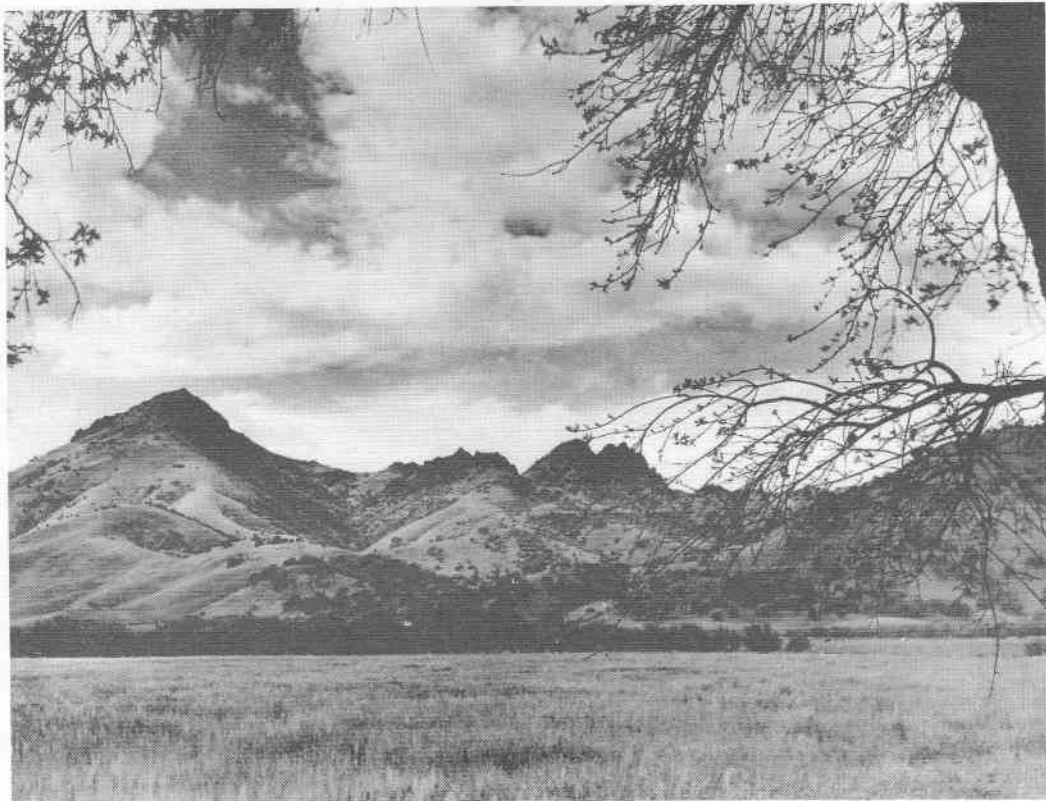


Vol. LI No. 2

Yuba City, California

April 2009



The Sutter Buttes

Photo credit: Community Memorial Museum



OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Audrey Breeding, President

Bob Mackensen, Vice President

Phyllis Smith, Secretary/Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Audrey Breeding-1997

Sarah Pryor - 2008

Constance Cary-1987

Margaret Pursch-2002

Bruce Harter-1991

John Reische-2000

Helen Heenan-1996

Margit Sands-2007

Bob Mackensen-2002

Jennifer Scrogin-2007

Leona Pennington-2006

Phyllis Smith-2000

Steve Perry-1994

Janet Spilman-2007

Cynthia Pfiester-2004

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 Phyllis Smith and Sharyl Simmons. 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 2009 dues are payable as of January 1, 2009. 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	\$ 20
Individual	\$ 25
Organizations/Clubs	\$ 35
Family	\$ 40
Business/Sponsor	\$ 100
Corporate/Benefactor	\$1000

President's Message

Ask and it shall be given! In the last issue I noted that it can be difficult to prepare a bulletin every quarter because of the lack of articles, and Roberta Fletcher responded with our main article in this edition, "Little House on Pearce Ranch." Roberta didn't write this just for us, it was something she prepared for her children and then thought we might like to have. And she was right! If you have done something similar, even if it is not as extensive, we would love to showcase it. And although Roberta is a great writer and needed no editing, if that is not your situation, don't be discouraged. Our editors are very talented and very discreet. They can make an article out of letters, notes, interviews, you name it, and if writing is not your talent no one will be the wiser.

Do you have your copy of the 2008 edition of *Thompson and West's History of Sutter County*? They are available at the Museum store for \$45 plus tax. And if you would like one mailed, we take care of the whole thing for \$60, which includes shipping by priority mail. *Thompson and West*, as it's known to its fans, includes 40 chapters on various aspects of local history, and 115 illustrations of Sutter County farms and residences, and biographies of over 320 residents. Perhaps some of your ancestors are listed, and you will be sure to recognize some of the properties in the illustrations. We will have copies of the book for sale at our April membership meeting.

Speaking of the meeting, this year we are changing locations. We will be meeting at the Sutter United Methodist Church, on the corner of South Butte Road and Acacia Avenue in Sutter. Lunch will be provided by Aroma Catering, and will include beef, chicken, spinach salad, vegetables, rice pilaf, and dessert. For our program we will present the awards to the Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest winners, and then Frank Coats will talk on General Land Office Records and Maps of the Sutter Buttes. This is a topical issue as there has been recent discussion about access to Peace Valley, and who owns the right-of-way.

How can we increase our membership? That's a question we are going to be addressing the months to come. Do you have friends who appreciate local history? Encourage them to join the Historical Society and the Museum! Most of us have too much "stuff" already, so give a membership as a gift. If you have other ideas about sharing our message and recruiting new members, please let us or the Museum staff know.

And now, another request. The Museum needs a gently used refrigerator to replace its existing 20+ year-old model. If you have a refrigerator to donate or know of one, please call the Museum (822-7141).

Thank you for your continued support!

Audrey Breeding
President

Director's Report

Spring is beautiful at Howard Harter Park, a time of blooming and renewal. Take a few moments to enjoy walking the paths and admiring the blossoms. It's a time to remember the joys of life that are free to all, those things that have real meaning.

While walking there, you might like to envision the proposed meeting room that we hope will someday soon fit perpendicularly across the end of the new Multi-Ethnic wing. It will partially enclose another beautifully landscaped area and a patio that can be enjoyed during events in the meeting room.

With the goal in mind of raising funds to furnish a professional kitchen in the new meeting room, a plot is being cooked up at the Museum. We are asking you for the brief loan of any local cookbooks (anywhere in the Yuba and Sutter Counties) published before 1976. Over the years, many groups have published cookbooks to raise funds. We would like to include brief extracts from these books, with permission, to create a cookbook that represents our particular culinary history. It is certainly bound to be a varied and colorful one. If you have a beloved family recipe that was handed down to you, we would be honored to include that too. We would like the book to describe, through the recipes, how people in our area ate over the years.

Be sure to put on your calendar the Spring Vacation Children's Program on Thursday, April 9 at 10:00 a.m. when the Storytailor will spin riveting folktales for children. The event is free, and no reservations are needed.

I know you are planning to attend *Wear & Remembrance* on April 18th and 19th in Franklin Hall at the Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds. Vintage clothing and accessories in a vast array will provide you with many hours of shopping enjoyment. Kaffe T'Latta will have nice lunches available for purchase, and Bettina's Bakery will tempt you with homemade goodies. Admission is just \$5.00 to benefit the Museum, and you may use one of the bright pink coupons, available at the Museum, for \$1.00 off. Take a whirl through 125 years of fashions, textiles, jewelry, hats, etc. - and any of it can be yours to take home!

You may see Gerry Tsuruda's eloquent black and white photographs *Roadside*, an exhibit in the main gallery, through Sunday, June 7. Talented local photographer Tsuruda took photos from the side of the road, starting with area views, and expanding across the West and then across the country for a collection of truly unique views. These photos are truly a treat for the senses.

We are looking forward late in June to the traveling exhibit *Bear in Mind*, a look at the California Grizzly Bear. In our own section of the Sacramento Valley, grizzly bears were a not uncommon sight in the river bottoms and in the Sutter Buttes. We welcome you to learn more about these remarkable animals that have long been missing from the California landscape.

Julie Stark
Director

Memorials

In Memory of **Glenda Ruth Alves**
Mr. & Mrs. J. Pieter Van
Eckhardt

In Memory of **Helen Brown**
Ev & Liz Berry

In Memory of **Rod Fletcher**
Joe & Darlene Davis

In Memory of **Helen Welter Frye**
Dorothea & John Reische

In Memory of **Wayne Hinsdale**
George & Shyrlie Emery
Merlyn Rudge

In Memory of **Calvert McPherrin**
Shirley & Ray Anderson
Beymer Well Service
Dorothy Coats
Celeste Cobeen
David & Mary Cushman
Joe & Nancy Heier
Michael & Kathryn Hislop
Darin & Michelle Luttrell
Hal & Mona Martin
Aelan & Louise Martin-Kobellas
Lucille Landa & Family
The Morehead Family
Families of Joe Morehead II &
Darren Morehead

In Memory of **Calvert McPherrin (cont.)**
Ben & Jan Perry
Brud & Betty Perry
Margit & Pete Sands
Bonnie Dee Scriven
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Madden Sorenson
Craig & Maureen Tarke
David & Gina Tarke
Elaine Tarke
James & Claireen Tarke

In Memory of **Edith Evelyn Michaud**
Ida Philpott

In Memory of **Ben Mueck**
Dub McFarland

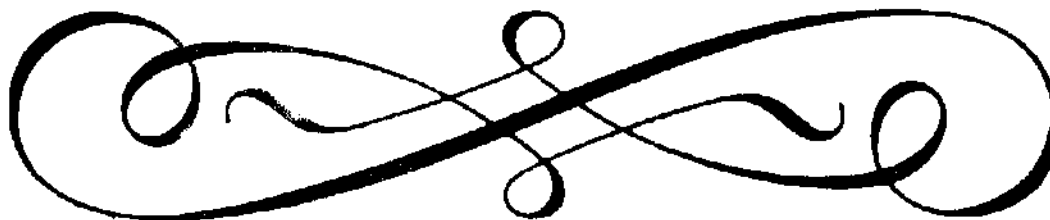
In Memory of **Kent Pierce**
Marnee Crowhurst

In Memory of **Dona Schultz**
Marie E. Fuller

In Memory of **Claire Stevenson**
Marnee Crowhurst

Outright Gift
Janet Wisner

In honor of **Audrey Breeding's 80th**
birthday
Alice Dewey & Janet Dewey
Theiss



A Brief History of North Butte

by
Mike Hubbartt

Mike Hubbartt has lived on the remote north side of the Buttes for the past 30 years. He has been accessing the Buttes with the permission from his neighbors and has led North Buttes summit ascents since 1980. Since 1997 he has been on the Board of Directors and a hike guide for the Middle Mountain Foundation. He has just received a contract to publish a pictorial history of the Sutter Buttes from Arcadia Publishing. Please contact him at 530-695-2440 if you have any interesting old photos and related stories that convey your experiences in the Sutter Buttes.

The distinctive silhouette of the North Butte is on the right side of the Sutter Buttes as seen from a southern perspective of Sutter County where most of us live. On the county's parcel map, it is but a small 200-acre rectangular property that comprises most of the North Butte peak.

There are some interesting notes about the history of this property that is now owned by the Middle Mountain Foundation, a nonprofit land trust and educational corporation dedicated to preserving the Sutter Buttes and surrounding farmlands. It was once destined to be the mountain-top site of communication broadcast towers. Prior to that it was homesteaded by a family in the early 1930s who hoped to find natural gas that was then beginning to be tapped elsewhere in the Buttes.

For a long time the only printed record regarding this history was in a brief reference in Louise Hendrix's book, *The Sutter Buttes, Land of Histum Yani*, regarding an old rattlesnake farm on North Butte. Who owned it, when, or why was never explained. (See the following article from her book.) The mystery was recently uncovered in the course of an inquiry with a neighboring landowner, Shirley Dean Schnabel.

Shirley was a youngster back in the thirties, but she remembered well her old neighbor, Oscar Piemme, because he helped with some of the construction projects around her family's ranch. "Why, he built this custom cabinet in the kitchen for us and we still use it today!" she remarked.

As a result of this information Shirley's daughter Margit Sands tracked down Oscar's son and arranged to have his family over for a barbeque at the old Dean Family Ranch in the Buttes in February of 2000. Three Piemme brothers and their wives came for a day and took some of the Middle Mountain Foundation guides back up to the old home site and related some recollections of their old family homestead.

After a stroll up the hill to what remains of the old home site several hundred feet up the eastern face of North Butte, the group retired to the quaint 1920s Dean Ranch house deep within the Buttes for a meal of barbecued wild pig. A few questions from the assembled group provoked some intriguing reminiscing from the brothers.

Like a circuitous hillside trail back in the Buttes, their stories

meandered through faded recollections and conveyed a touching story of a young family working together through the lean times of the depression. Oscar Piemme Jr., the eldest, was 11 years old in 1933 when they moved into the Buttes and his memories were the clearest. In that year brothers Frank and Albert were eight and two respectfully. Their impressions unfolded randomly over the course of the evening after dinner and are herewith set down.

A salesman for a "wildcat" oil company told their parents, Oscar (Sr.) and Anne Aloysia Piemme, about the potential mining and gas opportunities in the Buttes. A 200-acre parcel was available for homesteading in 1932 and to take possession, they had to build and live on the property. Dad had an old "hard tired" truck, Oscar said, and they used an easement through the Dean Ranch to reach their home site adjoining a year-round spring part way up the east face of North Butte mountain. Anne's brother helped them build a small frame house. The slope was steep so the house had to be built up on stilts, with a deck walkway out over the hillside. He penciled a map of the layout in relation to the spring. It included a house, an outbuilding, and garden area.

When we told them that it was today referred to as the "snake farm," they were amused. "We had goats, and we had rabbits in cages, and oh yeah, we did occasionally catch a rattlesnake or two and keep them in those cages! Father," he said, "devised a snare to capture snakes, a kind of looped wire run through a tube. The wire could be pulled tight and he had a bucket with a hinged top to put them in." He went on, "I think we sold

them to some Chinese in Marysville who used them to make a snake oil to cure arthritis."

"But mostly we kept goats and milked them and rabbits and we had modest success with a small vegetable garden. The times were tough, and we probably didn't eat that well. We went to town only once a month for food."

Young Oscar remembered climbing all over the mountain, finding a cave, and getting lost. He believes that it was his father who tied a steel cable to the pinnacle at the top of the peak. It is still there today.

After only a year or two, the family moved back to Yuba City and left the old homestead empty. Oscar recalled that his dad got a job at Robinson Paint Store. Shirley Schnabel, who became a teacher, remembers having young Frank Piemme as a student in her class some years later. She told us that in 1955 the house was destroyed by a grass fire that was accidentally started by a beekeeper.

There are many hardware remnants of the old house strewn about the hillside below the spring. Plumbing pipe fittings, doorknobs, and parts of their stove lie scattered about amid a built-up stone embankment. Middle Mountain Foundation hike guides sometimes take hikers up the challenging southeast hillside and traverse its uneven slope to the old home site. On the saddleback ridge below, a foundation of a stone corral, complete with a narrowing chute for loading livestock and tire ruts of the old roadway, remain, vestiges of past endeavors.

A good storyteller can use these scraps of history to weave a colorful tapestry to visitors at the home site about a touching story of a young

family roughing it in a picture-book setting during the Depression, and chuckle at the irony of how a memory of a few snakes kept in a cage grew into an intriguing tale about a “rattlesnake farm!”

The property was sold to the McClatchy Corporation (parent company of the Sacramento Bee newspaper) in the 1940s for \$2,500. Subsequent stories in the Marysville Appeal-Democrat reveal their intention to utilize the peak as a remote antenna site, but technical and economical considerations ultimately dissuaded the firm from pursuing that goal.

Many longtime residents in the Twin Cities area reminisce about the old days before vandalism and liability litigation got out of hand in the late

1960s, a time when landowners were tolerant of occasional hikers asking to picnic or trek up to the summit.

McClatchy donated the parcel to the Middle Mountain Foundation in 1996. It is deep behind private rangeland and is only accessed nowadays on a limited basis on guided outings for the public as part of the MMF interpretive program to promote awareness of this unique natural and cultural landscape and the historic landowner stewardship that has preserved it.

To access the Sutter Buttes, and find hike schedules, fees, and arrangements, contact the Middle Mountain Foundation by phone at 530-671-6116 or on line at www.middlemountain.org

“Rattlesnake Farm” at North Butte

by
Louise Butts Hendrix

This article is from Sutter Buttes Land of Histum Yani, 1980.

In the 1920's a “rattlesnake farm” was operated on North Butte near a spring. It is believed the rattlesnakes were maintained for the milking of venom for medicinal purposes and when the operation no longer proved profitable, it was abandoned. Edwin A. Hendrix Sr. of Yuba City reports seeing dead rattlesnakes in several cages at the North Butte “farm” in 1929 while on a hike with the Live Oak Boy Scout Troop. The abandoned rattlers in the cages belie the story that the rattlesnakes were turned loose when the “farm” was discontinued and that is the reason

there are so many rattlesnakes in the area. There are rattlesnakes in the Buttes, as in the foothills, because the terrain furnishes a natural habitat. They do not bother unless disturbed. Hendrix reports no Boy Scouts of the several hundreds he led in hikes in the Buttes in the 1920's and 1930's were ever bitten, although several rattlers were killed. The usual precautions of wearing boots, being alert, and staying away from the rattlesnakes' hidden abode, were safety measures observed by Hendrix's Scout Troop.

Butte House Road

by
Don Burtis

The road we now call Butte House Road was part of the original stage road that led from Yuba City through the community of South Butte and on through the pass in the Buttes to Colusa. It was generally called the Marysville Colusa Road until the Butte House was built in 1855 and the road from Yuba City to the South Butte area was then called Butte House Road. This pathway to the Buttes is believed to have been selected by the Indians who traveled there for harvesting the acorns supplied by the many oak trees that grew in the area. The reason it didn't travel in a straight line is because it followed the higher ground. Travel through this area in winter could be a real problem because the lower levels of land could be covered with water. Have you noticed the twist in the road just before you reach the cemetery at Sutter when you are traveling from the east? Did you ever wonder why it was there? Why didn't it travel in a straight line into Sutter City? Until the time Sutter City came into existence, Butte House Road went on a northerly diagonal line from the twist in the road, by the oak tree just before the cemetery to a point where the Pass Road begins today. It was at that junction that it also intersected with the street we now call Acacia.

When the cemetery was surveyed it was in the shape of a trapezoid. The cemetery was on the south side of Butte House Road as shown on a "Map of the Cemetery at Brittan School" as surveyed by John Pennington in May of 1875. This also

confirms the fact as to the location of Brittan School in 1875. The stage obviously traveled this road through the farm of W. H. McPherrin, splitting it into two parts. The map shows how the cemetery looks superimposed on a section of Sutter City. When the College Park Addition of Sutter, "the McPherrin tract," was subdivided, what is now Butte House Road was called Ward Avenue. In order for Butte House Road to connect with it, the road had to make a jog, so we have a curve in the road around the oak tree. What happened to the diagonal part of Butte House Road? The answer lies in the action taken by the Sutter County Board of Supervisors on Monday, May 13, 1889. It was ordered that the petition of R. J. Lyon and other members of the company that developed Sutter City, asking that a portion of Butte House Road be vacated, be approved. There were two parts to the request.

1. Vacate the road from the point where it intersects with the west line of section 10 (this is about where the curve in the road is located) to the point where it junctions with the county road running from Sutter City north to Mt. Vernon Church. (The county road running north is Acacia and Mt. Vernon Church was located on the corner where Acacia and Pass Road now meet.)

2. Lay out a new road from the point of commencement (the curve) to run due west to intersect with the road

from Sutter City to Mt. Vernon Church. The new roads were to be put in good condition for travel without any expense to South Butte Road District; the County of Sutter to have a deed for a right of way over the same. This action was requested in 1889 which was two years after the creation of Sutter City. Ward Avenue was the name of the street that formed the south boundary of the cemetery and that name was changed to Butte House Road as it continued from the curve to Acacia Street.

The east end of Butte House Road ends abruptly when it runs into Gray Avenue in Yuba City near the Bank of America. It used to end just as abruptly years ago when it ran into Onstott Road before the present freeway (Highway 99) was created. Actually Onstott Road was a narrow road that ran in a north/south direction parallel with the freeway. Although Onstott road ran to the north when Butte House intersected with it, it was hardly noticed. A very noticeable curve to the right was the route of most of the traffic, curving around the home of Chauncy Harter, then located about where the Veterans' Building is across from the Community Memorial Museum. After making the curve, you were on Onstott Road going south where you came to a stop sign at the Tahoe-Ukiah highway (now called Highway 20).

The west end of Butte House ends abruptly when you come to the stop sign at Acacia in Sutter. As described earlier Butte House Road used to end when it changed to the Pass Road where the north end of Acacia now ends.

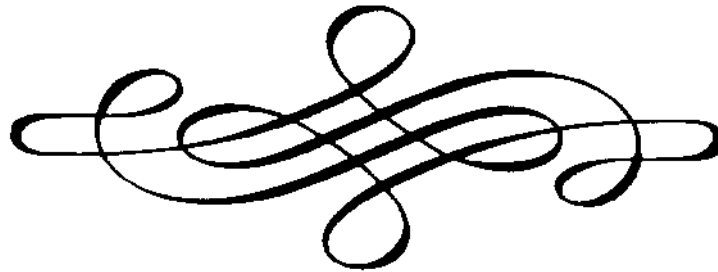
Butte House Road, when the land had been settled, had a variety of traffic using it: riders on horseback or in buggies, the stage coach, large wagons being pulled by teams of horses, mules or even oxen that carried heavy loads of Butte Rocks or bricks used for buildings, lumber, sacks of grain or even loose hay. Farmers in the area would use the road to transport the sacked grain they had harvested in their fields to the warehouses along the Feather River in Yuba City after mills were constructed. Other sacks of grain would be shipped downstream by river steamer (paddle-wheeler, that is) to go to market in Sacramento or San Francisco.

Then came the automobile, which wasn't at first considered a real problem. As time passed and the cars traveled faster, and the road being paved but not very wide, some very bad accidents happened. It is the opinion of many that drivers using bad judgment involving speeding have been the cause of most of the accidents.

One of my good friends was the late Eunice Clark who lived in her home on Butte House Road about a short quarter-mile west of where it intersects with East Butte Road. On the west side of her home on the south side of Butte House Road, an irrigation ditch passes under the road and continues south. At this point, the ditch used to be a bit wider than it is now and it was possibly the most popular swimming hole for the folks who lived in Sutter, especially the kids. There were tall trees on the east side of the ditch in the 1930s and someone had climbed up the tree and tied a large rope onto an over hanging branch so the kids could swing out over the water and drop in.

I'll share a personal story about Butte House Road that happened in 1955 after the levee broke and Yuba City was destined to be flooded as water poured through the break. The people of Yuba City had been ordered to evacuate. I loaded my pregnant wife and two children in the car and headed toward Sutter since my mother lived there, and it is much higher in elevation than Yuba City. Traffic enforcement was in effect and there were many beside myself heading west

out of town. All vehicles were being directed west on Highway 20. My mother, obviously worried about our situation, left her home in Sutter and drove to Yuba City to make sure we were okay. She arrived at our home, saw that we had departed and returned to her home in Sutter. She had been home for about an hour, she said, when we arrived. The traffic on Highway 20 was very slow. She had traveled on Butte House Road in both directions. She said, "Butte House is a great road!"



News

Wear and Remembrance

Wear and Remembrance, a vintage clothing fair, is a fundraiser for the Museum. Proceeds are applied to the Museum's operating costs. Unfortunately, this year's Wear and Remembrance is cancelled, due to a dearth of dealer participation. We're hoping for a rebound in the economy and to be back next year.

Picnic in the Park

In June we'll have our annual Picnic in Harter Memorial Park, behind the Museum. This is a casual potluck where we have a short program and take the time to socialize with other members. We start gathering at 11:30 am and have lunch at noon. Please join us for this Saturday event!

Little House on the Pearce Ranch

by

Roberta Pearce Fletcher

This "Little House" book is a little of the history of the ranch, a little of the history of the area around the ranch, a little of the way life was in the mid to late 1940s and a little of my life when I was eight, nine and ten years old.

I inherited from my parents, Irving and Dorothy Pearce, the forty acres that the little house was on. They bought the ranch on O'Banion and Bailey roads in Sutter County when I was 8 years old. We lived in Watsonville at the time. I was going through some old pictures and I thought I would write a few things down about each picture. Once I started writing I kept thinking of more and more things to write about.

All photos courtesy of Roberta Fletcher.



The Little House on the Pearce Ranch

This picture was taken in September, 1946, and is of the east/back side of the house. The door went into the kitchen and the window on the right was a bedroom window. A couple years later the door was removed and put on the south side of the kitchen. A window was put in its place. I remember sitting on those steps one time and thinking, when I get old, will I remember this moment? I still do. The tree on the left of the house was a cottonwood/poplar tree. The tree on the right of the house is a valley oak. There was a swing in the cottonwood tree and I would read my history and geography school books sitting on the swing. There used to be fireflies (before the extensive use of pesticides) and my older sister Gwen and I would try to catch the fireflies under the oak tree in the early evening.

The trays on the ground were used for drying almonds. We had to hand hull the almonds and put them on the trays to dry. I was a city kid and I didn't like having to hull the almonds and thinking about all my friends in Watsonville who were out playing and having fun and I was stuck there on the ranch hulling almonds by hand.

There are clothes drying on the clothes line. We had not moved to the ranch yet, so Mother could have hand washed these clothes. After we moved, Mother had the electric wringer washer which she used in Watsonville. It was a tub with an agitator and a two-roll wringer that you put the clothes through to squeeze the water out. She kept it in the bathroom. You filled the washer tub with water using a hose. You turned it on and let it agitate the clothes for a while. You started the "wringer" and threaded the clothes through it and into the bathtub to rinse. The bathtub had "claw" feet. You swished the clothes around by hand to rinse them and then threaded the clothes back through the wringer. You then took them outside and hung them on a clothes line. I used to think how lucky we were that we did not have to wash clothes using a scrub board. We had never heard of automatic washers and dryers. (We had never heard of televisions either.) Later, Mother had a shed built out behind the hay/horse barn and had double laundry sinks put in to twice rinse the clothes. (There is an old double laundry sink in the shed at the Butte Avenue place.) Later, she got an automatic washer and dryer and put them in the kitchen.

Gwen always tried to come into the bathroom when I was taking a bath. I would move the washing machine in front of the door to try to block her from coming in. It took some shoving on her part to get the door to open. At least it gave me enough time to get out of the tub and try to get some clothes on.

There are two dresses on the clothes line. One was Gwen's and one was mine. Before school started each year, Mother would make/sew us each three dresses. We got new school shoes and new socks, slippers and underwear. I remember when I started the fifth grade at Central Gaither Grammar School. I was proud of the three dresses that Mother made me. I wore a new one each day. We were supposed to wear one dress for several days, until they got dirty. Gwen told Mother that I wore a different dress each day and Mother got mad at me and told me to wear the same one several days in a row before I put on a new dress.

The girls at Central Gaither were farm kids and they wore pants to school. When we went to Yuba City High School we had to wear dresses except for one school day each year which was designated "Levi" day. The dress code did not change at Yuba City High School until the early 1970s when the girls could wear pants to school.

When I was in the sixth grade I remember thinking that when the new century came that I would be an old lady. Well, the new century has come. I also remember stating that we would never have a man on the moon. Well, I was wrong.

At Easter, Mother would make us a nice dress and we got some new dress shoes. I looked forward to going to Sunday School all decked out in my new Easter outfit. Grace Methodist Church was located on the northeast corner of O'Banion Road and George Washington Boulevard. The corner was called O'Banion Corners.

I was told that the old Central school was on the southeast corner. It was moved to where Central Gaither School is and was used as a cafeteria when I went there. The two school districts of Central and Gaither combined to make one school district.

Barbara Duncan Bogdonoff Williams told me that Liz O'Banion married Charlie Duncan. The two roads were named after the two families who had lived in Sutter County a long time. Our son Bob was in Boy Scouts with Barbara's son Andy.

I attended Central Gaither Grammar School from the fifth through the eighth grades. I never felt that I "fit in" because we were not "long-time family" residents and we were not from the mid-west. Most of the people in Sutter County had been there for generations or they were recent emigrants from the mid-western states.

There were a few men from India who were farm workers living in Sutter County. The United States did not allow the women to immigrate so some of the Indian men married Mexican women. They were of the Hindu religion. The majority of the East Indians who are living in Sutter County now are from the Punjab region of India and are of the Sikh religion.

I was really pleased when Beale Air Force Base re-activated in the late 1950s because it would bring people with diverse backgrounds into our community. Many were discharged or retired from the service and remained here.

Now in the early 2000s, there is a lot of building of residential homes in Yuba and Sutter Counties for commuters to the Sacramento area. This again has the potential for changing the character of our community.

Farm crops were picked by migrant workers who had come to California from the mid-west. There were some farm crews of Mexicans or African-Americans. They would stay in our farm labor camp during the harvesting of the peaches and prunes. This was before the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. I remember that an African-American crew stayed in the camp after a Mexican crew had been there. The African-Americans (I believe we called them Negroes) hosed everything down, including the inside walls of the camp, because Mexicans had recently been there.

There were times when Dad would go to 3rd and C streets in Marysville and pick up "winos" to work in the orchard during harvest. There were a lot of winos/hobos who traveled from one place to the other following the crops. They usually rode in freight cars from one place to another. They were often seen hitchhiking along the roads. It was much safer to pick up hitchhikers then. During World War II, if you saw a hitchhiker in a military uniform, you were expected to pick him up as long as there was room in your vehicle. Now, because of all the people who use illegal substances it is not safe to pick up hitchhikers.

There were many times when Dad would drive a truck loaded with peaches and would take them to the peach grading station in Tudor. He would come back with the fully loaded truck because they did not pass the grade for the cannery. Usually it was because they were too small. He then would dump a box of peaches onto a grading table and we would toss out the bad peaches and use a peach ring to toss out the little peaches. Dad would "stack" the load by putting the good boxes in places where the workers at the grading station were more likely to choose. Sometimes he was lucky.

The house was across from the Bailey (now Nishikawa) house. You turned in north of the little house and parked the car around in back - this was actually the front of the house. You then could circle around (when it wasn't muddy) to the south of the house to exit. The south driveway had a row of apple trees along it. As no

pesticides were used on them, they were full of worms. The land had not been leveled and there were no ledges between the house area and the orchards.

I was told by Noela Dodson, Bill Dodson's sister, that there was originally a two-story house on the site but it burned down. The land was high there and the house never flooded. The "Little House" had three feet of water in it after the December, 1955 flood. The levee broke below Yuba City and the water flowed down to the bypass. As the water could not go farther south, it backed up and after a couple weeks it flooded the house.

When you parked around in the front part of the house, the house would be on your left and two old red wooden barns would be on the right with a driveway between them. If we drove between them we would be looking at where the current house is located. The barn in the picture is the north barn. This was the horse barn. There was a horse that came with the Ranch. Dad used it to pull the almond cart. The horse was not very cooperative and was difficult to control. Dad bought a tractor and got rid of the horse. This barn had a loft over the south side and on the north side was the place where loose hay was stored. The south barn was located where the duck pond was. The old fig tree was right next to the south side of the barn.

When I was about 10 years old and Mother was working out in the orchard and Gwen and I were left alone in the house, Gwen took off all my clothes, and shoved me out the front door. She wouldn't let me back in the house. She was older and stronger and I was no physical match. When Mother came in for lunch, I told her and she took Gwen out behind the north barn and beat her with a leather belt. I felt sorry for Gwen even though I did not like what she did to me. To this day, she probably blames me for telling on her rather than accepting the blame for what she did. At least she never did it again!

I remember the first time when Dad drove in to look at the ranch. He came in on the north of the house and parked on the west/front side. Mother, Gwen and I were not impressed with the house. He asked us if we wanted to get out and look around and we all told him, "No!" He bought it anyway.

We commuted on week-ends and spent a couple weeks in the summer at the ranch until June, 1947, when Mother, Gwen and I moved to the ranch. Dad was working for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in Watsonville and he commuted on week-ends for several years until he could get a transfer closer to the ranch. I remember a lot of the drives up to the ranch but I don't remember the ones back to Watsonville. I guess I was happy to get back to Watsonville and see my friends. On the drives up, if it was still daylight, we could see the Buttes - they were called the Marysville Buttes then - and I knew we were almost there. (Sutter County residents had a "fit" and said that they were Sutter Buttes, not Marysville Buttes. The name was later changed on the maps.) At night, I would see the trees on the left side of the road between Robbins and the causeway and I knew we were almost there. I especially hated the dark, rainy, windy nights when we arrived at the ranch house. We had to run from the warm car to the house. The house would be cold. The bedroom was cold and the bed was cold.

At first, in the summer, my arms and legs were covered with scabs from mosquito bites. I assume, after awhile, my body built up some immunity to them and I wasn't bothered as much from their bites. There were cracks in the house and

mosquitoes could enter. I slept with the sheet over my head to keep them from biting me.

Dad grew up in Los Gatos in the Santa Clara Valley. There were orchards in Los Gatos and I remember driving the 10 miles from Los Gatos to San Jose and there were miles and miles of orchards. Now the San Jose city limit borders the Los Gatos city limit.

I believe Dad had a dream of owning an orchard and since he worked for the Soil Conservation Service he wanted one with good soil. He repeatedly told me, the last six months of his life, that he did not want me to sell the ranch. He wanted it to be his legacy. Gwen told the estate attorney that she wanted all of the ranch sold, even the part I wanted to keep. I was able to keep the 40 acres which was part of his original 50 acre purchase.

Dad bought the 40 acres that the house was on and 10 acres on Duncan Road east of the Dodson place in 1946. The 40 acres had the house and barns and old peach trees on it with the exception of five acres of almonds. The almond orchard was located along O'Banion Road between peach orchards. There were imperial prunes on the 10 acres and a fairly large farm labor camp on the Duncan Road property.

The next year Dad bought 50 acres along Duncan Road and George Washington Blvd. The front part had peaches and the back was a prune orchard. I used to ride on the back of the truck in the orchard and throw down peach boxes for the pickers. They used a peach bag with a strap around their necks. The bags were open in the top and they would put peaches in them. The bottom of the bag was open but was tied closed when they were picking the peaches. They would untie the bottom and let the peaches fall into the box.

The prunes were shaken onto the ground. We used to have to pick up prunes (I hated it) into buckets and pour them into boxes. Gwen was a lot faster with her hands and would get her half of the tree picked up before I did. When we got the prunes picked up that Mother had told us to do, we could sit in the car and play with "paper dolls." The dolls were made of a flat piece of heavy paper and the clothes were paper. We would cut out the dolls and clothes and "dress" the dolls.

When we lived in Watsonville, before Dad bought the ranch, he used to spend his two week vacation from the federal government picking prunes. Mother, Dad, Gwen and I would pick up prunes. He saved the money toward buying the ranch. I hated picking up prunes then and I wasn't pleased that Dad bought a Ranch with a prune orchard on it.

When I was learning to drive, Bob took me out to the prune orchard and made me drive in a long ways and then back out. Because of that experience, I still do not like to back out a car.

The Bailey family had been in Sutter County for a long time. Bailey Road was named for the family. Don Bailey owned the house across from the "Little House" and he owned the land in front and back of his house. He built the existing metal sheds and they were used for raising chickens. His land had not been planted into orchards. When Bill and Louise Nishikawa bought the house and shed site, they used the sheds for storing and sorting tomatoes. They then sold them to grocery stores and markets.

Dad and Mother bought the 100 acre ranch from Harold Newkom. Harold had inherited the land from his father. Bill Dodson's grandfather worked for Harold Newkom's father. His grandfather was killed when a team of horses "ran away" and he was thrown off the wagon. Newkom gave ten acres on Duncan Road to his widow, Bill's grandmother. She had four sons and raised chickens to support her family. Bill now lives on the property.

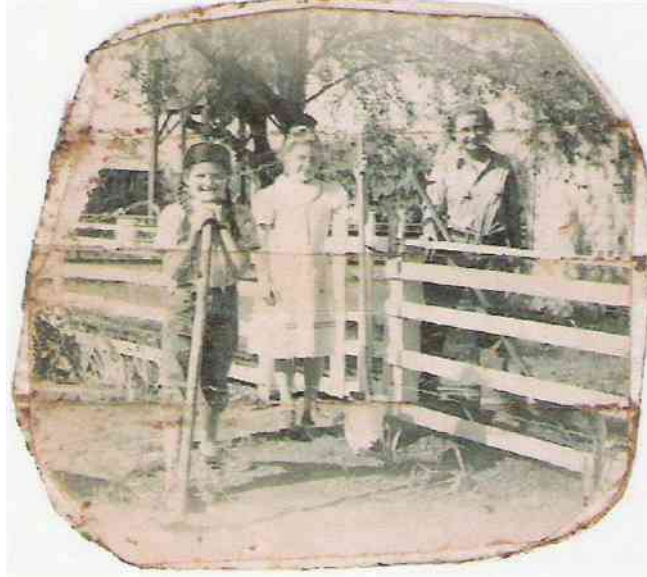


Playing Baseball

This picture is of the southwest side of the house. I am the right-handed pitcher with dark brown hair. Gwen is the left-handed hitter with blonde hair. Mother always braided our hair. My scalp was very sensitive and it hurt when she combed my hair and braided it. She kept telling me it didn't hurt. When she was in the hospital for the last time I told her I was going to get "my revenge" when I combed her hair. I didn't. I always try to be careful when combing someone's hair because I remember how it used to hurt me.

Mother built the fence around the house with peach tree props and white washed it. White wash is kind of like paint, but it does not last like paint does. Mother had started to plant flowers and a lawn. The tree in the front yard was a black walnut.

The two windows on the left were for the front room. We didn't call them living rooms then. The window on the right which is higher was over the kitchen sink. The house had not been painted yet and the kitchen door had not been moved to the far right where the last window is.



Dad's Ranch Workers

Dad was very proud of his "three girls," Roberta (Bertie), Gwen (Gwennie) and Dorothy (Dot) (my mother). He carried this picture in his wallet. The edges are tattered and he covered the picture with "scotch" tape. Mother did a lot of the Ranch work. I graduated from Bertie to Bert and then, finally, to Roberta.



Pepper and Rags

This picture was taken the same day that the "baseball" picture was taken and is of the southwest side of the house with the tank house in the background. Gwen is kneeling with Pepper and Rags and I am holding the cat. Johnny (John Bazzinni) brought the dogs, when they were puppies, from his parents' place north of Reno. Pepper was named because he had little black spots all over him and Rags got his name because he pulled the clothes off the clothes line and made rags out of them.

Pepper was a nice dog. He would let us put doll clothes on him and push him around in our doll buggies.

Johnny worked with Dad at the Soil Conservation Service in Watsonville. When Dad bought the ranch, Johnny came up and worked on the ranch. Johnny drove the tractor and Mother irrigated and pruned the peach trees.

Johnny was in World War II and served in Italy. He was of Italian descent so he must have had mixed feelings while serving there. We would ask him about what it was like and he would not say anything. He would just give us a very sad look that meant, "It's nothing I want you to hear."

We pulled a two-room cabin on skids that was at the camp on Duncan Road and put it behind the barn. Johnny lived there when we first moved to the Ranch. He later lived with Clara Lessey who owned the property to the west. Clara and Johnny were good to us when we were growing up.



*I wrote on the back of this picture:
"Me with 2 of the little rabbits Jan. 31, 1949"*

I did not like braids and I asked Clara Lessey if she would cut my hair and give me a permanent. I was really glad that I did not have to have my hair combed out and braided every morning.

I was wearing glasses all the time when this picture was taken. When I first became near-sighted in the third grade, Mother took me to an eye doctor in Watsonville who only believed in correcting the vision to half of normal vision and he did not want me to wear glasses all the time. His reasoning was that my eyes would get better. When Mother took me for another visit, that doctor was on vacation and there was a fill-in doctor. He believed in full correction and wearing glasses all the time. Thank goodness. I really liked being able to see and I never minded when other kids called me "four eyes" because I could see!

I remember lying on that lawn on summer afternoons and looking up at the fluffy white clouds floating in the blue sky. I used to wish I could get up on a cloud and float away. I love flying because I am floating above the clouds.

There is a water tankhouse on the far right. There was a well with an electric pump and you had to push a button to start the pump. You also had to push a button to stop it. Mother would often forget and water would spill out of the tank all over the ground. There was an opening just below the roof and owls and other birds could get inside. When the water spilled out there would be dead owls flowing out with the water. We drank that water! Filling the tank gave the water gravity flow to be used inside the house. They later got an automatic pressure system tank and took the tankhouse down.

There was enough land between the driveway north of the house and the peach orchard for a garden. Mother would plant vegetables there.

They had replaced the back door into the kitchen with a window. I remember Mother making homemade root beer. The last time she made it, the root beer in the bottles exploded and ended up on the ceiling, walls and all over the kitchen. She never made it again. The root beer had really been a special treat.

We lived way out in the middle of nowhere. In the summer, on Sundays, we went to Sunday School and Church. And that was it, except Mother would go to town every two weeks and buy groceries. Sometimes she would let us go with her. Often, when she did, she would make us sit in the car while she shopped for groceries. I always looked forward to having new groceries in the house. I remember that the first thing I usually ate were the crunchy, fresh carrots.

The thing that I remember most about that kitchen window is that when Gwen was a teenager we were all eating at the kitchen table. Dad got mad at Gwen about something and when he went to hit her, she ducked and his hand hit the window and broke it. We didn't have CPS back then. Parents were expected to control their children.



Mother in front of the barn

Mother worked hard on the ranch. She pruned the peach trees and she irrigated. Johnny would drive the tractor and make ridges in the orchard to follow the contour of the land. The trunks of the trees were painted with different colors and the tractor driver would "ridge" the ground following the colors to make irrigation "checks." The land was not leveled at that time. You would fill one check with water and then make an opening to fill the next one and then on down the line. You had to shovel close the opening, and you had to shovel close the openings that the ridger made. If the water broke out, you had to shovel close that opening. It was hard work. I can still hear Mother's voice telling me not to step on top of the ridges. If you did, the ridge could break and would have to be shovel closed by hand.

This barn was directly across from the house and was south of the horse/hay barn. It was located where Dad had his duck pond. The fig tree was right next to the south side of the barn. There was a room in the barn, with dirt floors, next to the fig tree. Gwen and I had our dolls and doll clothes in a dresser in that room. There was a round piece of metal covering up an old well in that room. We were told that it was an old salt well and to stay away from it.

There is a driveway to the right of this barn and it is in between the two barns. If you were on this driveway you would be looking at the new house site. After I was grown, Mother and Dad built the new house and demolished the "Little House" and the barns.



We can help you tell your story!

But you have to tell it to us first.

Do you have letters? Diaries? Photos? Notes? Recordings?

Your memories are the history of Sutter County - share them with us!

Operators are standing by.

Call Sharyl at 822-7141

or

Phyllis at 671-3261



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

FINCH

Bailey	Baseball
Braids	Brittan
Buttehouse	Buttes
Centralgaither	Obanion
Orchard	Peacevalley
Pearce	Pepper
Rabbits	Rattlesnake
Refrigerator	Robbins
Roberta	Rootbeer
Tsuruda	Wildcat

PAGE

Coming Events

April

9 Storytailor, 10:00 a.m., at the museum

Wear and Remembrance CANCELLED

25 **Historical Society Annual Membership meeting**

11:30 social time, 12:00 luncheon, \$15 (reservations required)

Sutter Methodist Church – 7751 South Butte Road, Sutter

Program: Judith Barr Fairbanks Awards

Frank Coats:

General Land Office Records and Early Maps of the Sutter Buttes

Roadside exhibit by Gerry Tsuruda opens at the Museum

June

7 *Roadside* exhibit ends

21 *Bear in Mind, California Grizzly* exhibit opens at the Museum

27 **Historical Society Annual Picnic in the Park, 11:30 a.m.**

Howard Harter Memorial Park, behind the Museum