



Vol. LIII No. 2

Yuba City, California

April 2011

Meeting
April 9
2 pm



High School
Art at the
Museum

Hock Farm Doors Rededication January 15, 2011

[Photo by Charles Smith]



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Audrey Breeding, President

Sarah Pryor, Vice President

Phyllis Smith, Secretary/Treasurer

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Steve Perry - 1994

Joe Bouchard - 2009

Cynthia Pfiester - 2004

Audrey Breeding - 1997

Sarah Pryor - 2008

Constance Cary - 1987

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Ruth Mikkelsen - 2009

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Greg Wellman - 2010

*The year the director joined the Board.

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The 2011 dues are payable as of January 1, 2011. Mail your check to the Community Memorial Museum at 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City, 95993-2301 530-822-7141

Student (under 18)/Senior Citizen/Library.....	\$ 20
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President's Message

This is my last message to you as the Historical Society President. New officers will be elected at the April meeting. It's been an interesting and eventful two terms as President and I believe the Historical Society is positioned to continue to do its good work for years to come. I want to thank the Board of Directors who stepped up and took their responsibilities seriously. I also want to thank the Society's members who have been so supportive of our activities. We've had good programs and excellent turnout for our meetings and as we work to grow our membership, I can see a bright future for us.

Our cover photo is a nod to the past, as a similar photo was taken in February, 1930 (and graced the cover of our Bulletin in October, 2009) to dedicate the plaque placed at the Hock Farm Doors by the Sutter and Yuba Bi-County Federation of Womens Clubs. The Society's project of refurbishing the Hock Farm monument is coming to a close, so once again our members gathered to celebrate the preservation of this important contribution to Sutter County and California history. I want to extend a very grateful thank you to Steve Perry on behalf of the Society and our community for all the hard work he put into the project.

I hope some of you enjoyed the bus trip on March 26th. This is the time of the year the Buttes are at their greenest. As you may know, we've had to cancel our Buttes hike the past few years and need to decide whether to continue to offer it.

Our next meeting is the April Membership meeting on Saturday, April 9th. We'll be meeting at Community Memorial Museum (1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City) at 2:00 p.m. for a packed program of officer elections, Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay winner presentations, a program from a representative of Home Depot with ideas on refurbishing and restoring your home, and, of course, delicious home-made desserts!

Thank you for letting me serve as your President and please extend your continued support to my successor and our ongoing projects, including increasing membership, the Dust Bowl Project under the guidance of Vicki Rorke, and the continuation of our quarterly entertaining and educational programs.

Together, we serve as a strong voice for preserving our community's history and it has been my pleasure helping to make our voices heard.

Audrey Breeding
President

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Director's Report

This spring finds the Museum at an interesting juncture in its 36-year history. The exciting part is construction of the new meeting room that is projected to be completed this spring. The long-awaited project promises to make life easier for museum visitors and staff alike. Just imagine, everyone who attends a program or event at the museum will have a place to sit where they can actually see the program! Many visitors have ended up standing or seated behind a pillar or not staying for the overcrowded program in the small central gallery of the museum. The meeting room will provide a comfortable and pleasant place to gather.

The Museum Commission is working hard to raise funds to furnish the meeting room kitchen with appliances and all that a professional kitchen requires. There are also tables and chairs to purchase and, outside, landscaping and fencing for the courtyard. To that end, the Commission is planning a huge yard sale in June. You are asked to donate your unwanted treasures for the sale. Call Steve Richardson at 673-6644 to donate or ask for pickup of your gently used things. And, of course, you will want to attend the giant sale on June 18th. We will announce the central location in the June Muse News. If we all pitch in and donate our reusable items, it will be a gigantic sale, and the proceeds will put us that much closer to the kitchen being completed and ready for use.

The more somber side of the picture is the budget outlook at the Museum. As a Sutter County Department, we were asked to submit a budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 that reflects a 20% cut. Rather than reduce our staff of two or reduce open hours, we opted to commit to raise additional revenue to offset the reduction, which could mean raising as much as \$38,000 in addition to our usual fundraising. Our goal is to increase museum membership by 20%, museum store income by 20%, and donations, and to rent the new meeting room as often as possible. We will need the help of each and every one of you to meet our daunting new goals. If we are unable to reach them, we may be facing a reduction in services and open hours. We absolutely intend to continue to serve our members and community as we have for over a third of a century, so we ask your solid support to meet the goals.

Be sure to remember two history events this spring that are lots of fun. The Museum Commission's Community Events Committee will represent the Museum with a booth at each event. Smartsville's Pioneer Day is on Saturday, April 23rd, and Sutter Buttes Day in the town of Sutter is on Saturday, June 11.

You will also enjoy perusing the student art on exhibit in the Museum this spring. Yuba City High School's exhibit opens on Friday, April 1st and remains through April 15th. It will be followed by River Valley High School's student art from April 22nd through May 6th. The talent on display will surprise you.

Julie Stark
Director

Memorials

In Memory of **Frieda Brugmann**

Meridian Farm Women
Jim & Nadine Mitchum

In Memory of **Dean Chellis**

Ann & David Rai
Leela Rai
Mary Rai
Olivia Chellis Rai

In Memory of **Pieter van Eckhardt**

James & Reta Overton

In Memory of **Bernice Herman**

Jean Heilmann

In Memory of **Pat Dover**

Jim Staas

In Memory of **Eugene H. Lonon**

Joan Campbell
Marnee Crowhurst
Sandra & Bob Fremd
Steven Richardson
Garron & Anita Riechers

In Memory of **Mellora Padgett**

Helen Heenan

In Memory of **Andy Quintana**

Jim Staas

In Memory of **Gene Taresh**

David & Gina Tarke

In Memory of **Dave Teja**

Jim & Nadine Mitchum

In Memory of **Shirley Dean Schnabel**

Lane, Barbara & Jim Abbott
Dartha Baker
Joe & Ludel Bouchard
Audrey Breeding
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bowder
Connie Cary
Dorothy Coats
Marnee Crowhurst
Francisco & Rosey Damboriena
Graham Family
Raona R. Hall
Bruce & Gini Harter
Helen Heenan
Joe & Earlene Knight
Susanne & Dino Lekos
Carol Lemenager
Middle Mountain Foundation
Verna Mueller
H. Earl Parker
Ginny & Ernie Paschke
Norman & Loadel Piner
Garron & Anita Riechers
Jane Sarah Roberts
Willard & Jennifer Scrogin
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Smith
Clifford Spencer
Mary, Janet & Jim Spilman
Julie Stark
Cynthia Struckmeyer
Elaine Tarke
Marilyn Waltz Family
Yuba City Women's Club



He Wasn't a Company Man Local Boy Makes Good

by
Larry Harris

This biographical sketch of a depression-era family in Yuba City is compiled by Larry Harris, a descendant of early Sutter County pioneers Andrews Jackson Simpson and Hezakiah Luther. The information is from autobiographical material and from interviews with Joy Sorenson, the youngest daughter of Joseph Sorenson, 23 years younger than Joseph's first-born son, James Le Voy Sorenson.

This Grapes of Wrath-type odyssey is of a family that lived in Rexburg, Idaho. Joseph Sorenson, 19, had married Emma Blaser. On July 30, 1921 they had a son, James. Fourteen months later a daughter, Eileen, was born.

Joseph was a wannabe farmer — crop prices were low, yields were low, there were no more government subsidies. They were broke!

Joseph left his wife and children with his parents and moved to Yuba City, California, where Emma had a brother, Fred Blaser, who lived on Rosalind Street and worked in construction as a plasterer. Joseph found work as a ditch digger, digging sewer lines in Yuba City. He was a good ditch digger. After a year, he sent for his wife and children. They rented a tarpaper shack on Bandy Way one block north of Forbes between Clark and Gray Avenues, at that time a poor section of town. Joseph worked at whatever he could find as a manual laborer. He was a hod carrier while the Marysville Hotel was constructed. He remarked that "with all the reinforcing bars that they were putting in that Hotel it would last a long time." It has — perhaps too long.

He was a cement finisher, often working by the light of a lantern held by his young son.

In 1926, they had another son, Donald. Donald had the flu, the hospitals were full, and when the doctor came, it was too late. Six-month-old Donald died.

Joseph delivered ice. He delivered more ice than any other driver. He became manager of the Sutter Ice and Fuel Company that later became National Ice and Cold Storage Company.

Their lives became better. Joseph remodeled a chicken coop/chicken house at 813 Louise Avenue near Bandy Way. Emma was very pleased. "My husband treats me like a queen, we have running water and a toilet."

Joseph's mother developed cancer. They drove their Model T Ford the 700 miles back to Idaho. They were wearing summer clothes and were caught in an October snowstorm in Nevada. The trip took three days. After Joseph's mother died, they returned to Yuba City. Joseph was doing well.

In 1934, they moved to Lincoln, California where Joseph started a livestock auction yard and flea market with a partner, Lester Call. They

operated the partnership for 21 years on just a handshake.

They became well-off even though Joseph missed a couple of opportunities. He was offered a beverage franchise for Sacramento, Placer, and Sutter counties. The price was \$2,300 and included two trucks, bottling equipment and supplies. Joseph recalled the hard work it took for him to save the \$2,300 that he had

and turned down the offer. The beverage was Coca-Cola.

Later, he was offered the land that the auction yard and market occupied at \$337 per acre for the two hundred acres involved. He could have swung the deal but he didn't because he thought it wasn't fair to his partner. This property is the best industrial property in Roseville, now worth millions. It is now Denio's.



Joseph Sorenson in Yuba City
Photo provided by Larry Harris

Joseph became prominent in the livestock auction business and was elected president of the National Livestock Organization. The Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson asked him to help write the Stokers and Livestock Act to regulate the livestock auction business.

This "Grapes of Wrath" family was one of the few that survived the great depression and prospered in Yuba City, California. As the TV commercials say, "But wait," a few words about Joseph's son, James Le Voy Sorenson.

When James Le Voy started school, at the first parent-teacher meeting the teacher told them that James was retarded and would never learn to read. They were, of course, very upset. Emma, a loving, caring mother, tried to help James learn to read. The more she tried the worse he got. They accepted that he was retarded and James accepted it also.

He was an active, cheerful boy. He delivered newspapers on his bike. He sold magazines to his customers on "Kings Row," now known as Second Street, in Yuba City. While he was trying to sell the magazines, he kept petting the customer's dog. He would leave a magazine, and when he came back the customer usually bought the magazine.

He stayed in-school struggling to read. In the third grade, the girls in his class asked him to help them with fractions.

He worked gathering almonds. He would glean the almond orchards and sell the recovered almonds on Kings Row.

One day when he was going to school, he stopped where his father was digging a ditch. Joseph was paid by the amount of ditch he dug. Young

James remarked, "That man over there will make more money than you." Joseph replied, "Come back after school." When James returned his father had dug one-third more than the other man had. Joseph's work ethic was "to work steadily, rest when the going got tough and sharpen his shovel." James remembered this later in life and rested and sharpened his "mental" shovel.

James recalled that "times were tough in Yuba City. You had to be tough to survive. I organized a gang for self-defense. We had fist fights in back alleys."

After they moved to Lincoln, California, James wanted to get a job at the peach cannery there. He sneaked into the cannery by going across the railroad tracks. He entered the cannery and joined a group of young men called the "pie boys." They picked up the peaches that fell from the sorting belt, washed them and put them on the pie fruit line.

The foreman caught him and told him to get back over the fence. James persuaded him to let him work that day and not get paid for it. At the end of the day, the foreman said that he could come back but, wink, wink, he had to be 18 to work in the cannery. For four more years, James was 18 on the cannery records.

While working for \$.25 an hour as a "pie boy," James noticed that the "lye men" were getting \$1.25 an hour. Their work was dangerous and it was difficult to keep the lye concentration and water temperature right to properly peel the fuzz and skin from the peaches. Using a thought process that helped him succeed in life ("is there a better way?") he suggested that a catwalk be built around the lye vats

so they could easily see how to control the process. The foreman said, "Why didn't we think of that!" James got \$1.25 an hour as a "lye man."

James got better in school. When he started high school, he got C's and D's. In his senior year, he got all A's. Many years later, he realized that he had dyslexia — word blindness.

James wanted to become a doctor. After WWII broke out, he received approval to enlist in the Naval V-7 medical school program. James' respect for his father, a good Mormon, caused him to give up his hope to be a doctor and he went on a mission that 19-year-old Mormon boys were expected to do.

When he completed his mission, he received a commission from the Maritime Officers Training School. After the war, he got a job as a salesman with the Upjohn Drug Company in Salt Lake City even though he didn't have a pharmaceutical degree. He was going to work in the Sacramento area but his wife had relatives in Salt Lake City.

Remembering his depression years in Yuba City, he developed a frugal lifestyle. He made his appointments early in the morning so he wouldn't have to buy lunches for the doctors or administrators. The other salesmen told him to turn in large expense accounts so they wouldn't look so bad and convinced him that the expense account was part of his salary.

After his early morning rounds, he would take a tuna sandwich and go into the hills around Salt Lake City. He figured out where the city would grow and bought land at \$25 an acre. His thought process was "study the tree and put your basket where the fruit will

fall." The land turned out to be prime real estate.

He knew a geology professor at the University. At this time, uranium became a "hot rock." When a deposit was found the professor told him and he then staked claims in surrounding government land at \$25 each. He also got other Upjohn salesmen to stake claims for him in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. He paid them \$50 for each claim. Later he would sell many of the claims at \$2,000 to \$3,000 each.

When Upjohn found out after eight years that although he was exceeding his sales quotas he was making more money on his side deals than his salary, they fired him. "He wasn't a company man!"

With two other pharmaceutical salesmen he formed a pharmaceutical sales company. They signed their agreement in the first KFC store in the nation. It was in Salt Lake City. The sales went well. When he was working in pharmaceutical sales, with Upjohn and his own sales company, he was very observant of the doctors' work, the procedures in the operating room, the emergency rooms, and the ICU and hospital practices.

One day in an emergency room a very badly hurt 11-year-old boy, bleeding profusely, was being given I.V. transfusions. A bottle ran dry, an air bubble went to the boy's heart, it spasmed and the boy died. James was very emotionally upset by this. The catheters at that time were hollow steel needles that had to be strapped to the patient's arm. He invented a flexible catheter to replace the steel tube. It was immediately adopted.

He observed that the surgeons would smell the cloth surgical masks used then. When asked why, they said

that although the masks were laundered some of them smelled of tobacco or halitosis.

He worked with a bacteriologist testing material until they formed one that was 99.9% bacteria proof. Sorenson's ingenuity surfaced when he used glue to shape the mask. He bought a \$65,000 machine that made 3,000 masks per hour at \$.17 each. They sold like hot cakes.

The Deseret pharmaceutical sales company did quite well. Sorenson became discouraged when his partners would not give him a greater share of the profits.

The idea that he wasn't a company man again surfaced. The partners bought him out for \$137,000. A condition of the sale was a "no compete" clause for two years.

With the money he started a lingerie company. He named it the Le Voy (his middle name) Elegant Modest Lingerie Company. He used a Tupperware-type sales method with housewives selling the lingerie in their homes. It was very successful. It was truly modest lingerie as no Le Voy garments have ever been found in the Victoria Secret catalogs.

After the two year "no compete" period was over, he started the Sorenson Research Company in a corner of the lingerie company in 1962.

As James Le Voy Sorenson was passionately involved in medical science, he recalled from his drug sales days the observations and experiences from which he invented and received at least 42 patents, mostly medical devices and some in electronics. Probably every one of us has benefited from a Sorenson medical device. They have saved many lives.

In addition to the flexible catheters and disposable surgical masks his patents include: Intraflo,¹ Receptal,² Dial-A-Flo,³ Auto Transfusion Systems (reinfusing the patient's own blood), and arterial catheter techniques such as starting a catheter in the femoral artery and threading it to the heart. With the Hewlett Packard Company, he developed a real-time monitor to observe the cardio-vascular system. With his son, James Lee Sorenson, he developed a "continuous peripheral nerve block pump" that was used in the Iraq war.

Sorenson Research Company got big. Too big, too fast, and a cash flow problem developed. Sorenson needed \$21 million to solve his cash flow problem. He offered the Dial-A-Flo system to Abbot Laboratory Co. They turned it down; Abbot wanted his entire Sorenson Research company. James offered the company at the exaggerated figure of \$100 million. They took it. Sorenson took the money in Abbot stock. He was the largest single stockholder and was on the board of directors. He soon resigned, as he still was not a company man. With his patents and devices Abbot prospered.

After selling to Abbot, he couldn't retire. He was driven to work as that was his lifestyle. He continued in real estate and started many businesses where his children worked. He started a nonprofit molecular Genealogy Research Group. His objective was to demonstrate to the people in the world that our DNA is

¹ Intraflo Continuous Flush System device, used when someone needs repeated blood draws.

² A closed, disposable liner collection vessel.

³ An IV line with a dial used to set the drip rate for fluids.

very similar and we shouldn't have wars against each other.

The group collects DNA from people all over the world and relates it to written genealogy records in Salt Lake City. They have collected over 100,000 DNA samples and are going for 500,000. During the Indian Ocean tsunami 250,000 people were killed, mostly Thailanders. The Sorenson group identified 2,500 bodies by their DNA. They did it for free. It would have cost \$1.5 million.

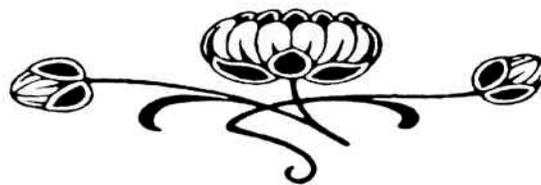
Sorenson had a great mind. His wife Beverly wanted him to see the movie "A Beautiful Mind" starring Russell Crowe. His dyslexia prevented him from following a plot.

He was an extraordinary entrepreneur who believed in himself. He had principles that he followed, such as: "Is there a better way?", "I've tried to solve the problem and haven't found the solution — yet," "back off and sharpen your mental shovel," and his K.I.S.S. principle was "keep it simple Sorenson."

James Le Voy Sorenson was a

private person. He rarely gave interviews, he continued a modest lifestyle all of his life. He wrote poetry and composed hymns. His greatest love was his family. His obituaries when he died January 20, 2008 of prostate cancer almost all included his childhood, living in a tarpaper shack and a chicken coop in Yuba City, California. He was survived by his wife, Beverley Taylor Sorenson, eight children, 47 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

The obituaries also included that he left an estate of \$4.5 billion to charity. He was the 67th richest man in the United States, the 177th richest man in the world. His Abbot Laboratory stock alone was worth \$2.9 billion. He owned 200 million tons of coal reserves, 500,000 acres of real estate and 32 different companies. He was richer than Ross Perot, Ted Turner, Donald Trump and even Oprah Winfrey. Not bad for a retarded boy who was a gang leader who grew up during the depression in poverty in Yuba City, California!



Dust off Those Memories!

One of our latest projects is collecting Dust Bowl memories. Did you or your family migrate to California from the Mid-West in the 1930s? Did you interact with people who were uprooted and came west looking for a new life? Vicki Rorke would love to talk to you! Vicki will work with the Museum staff to create an exhibit based on local experiences.

You can contact Vicki at Vicki_SCHS@sbcglobal.net or 916-852-8144.

John Algeo
Early Justice of the Peace
by
Carol Withington

According to research, the little settlement of Pleasant Grove, situated on the very southeastern edge of Sutter County, was first known as Gouge Eye. As the story goes, when Charles Bishop opened his general store, a rather "rough character" began hanging about the village.

It seems that this man whose name was Laws did not have much love for Bishop, so proceeded to begin talking about him in order to hurt his trade. This he accomplished by stating that "anyone trading at Bishop's would be "gouge-eyed." Soon this term became a by-word with everyone for miles around.

When the post office was established in 1867, the town was given the name of Pleasant Grove Creek. Eight years later, however, it was shortened to its present name of Pleasant Grove.

As of 1879, the town boasted of a store, saloon, hotel, boarding house, shoemaker shop, two blacksmith shops, a schoolhouse and hail, a doctor and in the immediate vicinity about half a dozen houses.

Among the early-day residents of Pleasant Grove was John Mahon Algeo, who was born in Steubenville, Ohio, in 1824.

According to the book, *A Pioneer Heritage*, by Oba C. Algeo, daughter of John, Algeo was admitted to the Supreme Court of Ohio in 1847, six years after her grandfather, James Laughead Algeo.

It seems that the younger Algeo

was ready to begin his practice when his father inadvertently signed a security note for a client who soon thereafter disappeared. Unfortunately, the Algeos were forced to sell their home in order to pay off the debt. This incident so discouraged John that he decided to go to war "when Texas and Mexico were having trouble over the boundary line."

During this time, Algeo wrote a college friend and told him of his plans. His friend wrote back saying that "you are too well educated for a mere soldier. When you get to New Orleans, go to the post office and ask for your mail. I will get you a commission from Washington and send it to you there."

The only way for Algeo to get to New Orleans was to go down the Ohio River to the Mississippi. To accomplish this, Algeo worked his passage on a freighter for six months, but upon his arrival, the war was over. Algeo then worked his way back to Cincinnati. However, enroute he heard of the gold strike in California.

As soon as he arrived home, Algeo was able to persuade his father and stepbrother to undertake the overland trip to California.

Upon their arrival, they began working in the mines in El Dorado County, wintering in Sacramento. In 1851, they decided to try their success in the Yuba County mines, but enroute they rode through "wild oats that were higher than they were on horseback."

It immediately occurred to young Algeo that maybe it would be easier

and more profitable to make the wild oats into hay and sell it to the miners. After all, mining required strong muscles and digging which was extremely hard work for “white collared men” such as they.

After working several months in the mines of Yuba County, the Algeos selected 320 acres, four miles from the Feather River and the settlement of Nicolaus.

Hay was hauled to the mines by teams, taking a total of two days for the 30 miles. In 1852 the Algeos stayed overnight in Wheatland, halfway to the mines, with the Thomas Vestal family. Here John met Amy Vestal and two years later they were married, making their new home on the Algeo ranch.

Due to hydraulic mining which caused an overflow in the riverbeds during the rainy season, the Algeos constructed a home on a high mound and another mound was used for the barn to escape the yearly flooding.

During the ensuing years, a family of ten children were born and raised on the ranch.

In 1873, Algeo was elected Justice of the Peace. His office was located in Nicolaus, and he commuted nearly every day in a buggy that was

“used exclusively for this purpose.” He wore a clean white shirt each morning and was rarely seen as a farmer.

After the grain crop was harvested, Algeo would plant watermelons, musk melons, pumpkins and other seeds “all about the place,” according to his daughter. He also raised chickens and turkeys

In the fall, grain was teamed to Sacramento and a supply of flour, sugar, salt and other necessities were brought back and placed in a storehouse near the kitchen.

At one time the Democratic party wanted Algeo to run for the state legislature. He declined, noting that it would require him to be away from his family too much. He persuaded his sister’s husband, Franklin Warrington, to run. He did and was elected.

On July 3, 1889, Algeo died at his family home after a short illness. His funeral took place the following day and was attended by a “large assemblage of friends and neighbors.”

There is very little left to mark the home place. Years have taken their toll. But as Miss Algeo stated, “Nothing stands still — time passes.”

It’s about you (or it can be)

The Historical Society Bulletin staff is always looking for material to print. If you have a story to tell, we can help you tell it. If you have an article to publish, we can publish it. If you have a suggestion for an article we'd love to hear about it. Help us keep the Bulletin lively and interesting.

A Selected and Annotated Bibliography of the Nisenan People of Sutter and Yuba Counties

by

David M. Rubiales

Professor Emeritus

Yuba College

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Most members of the Sutter County Historical Society are aware of the special and significant role that our local area has in the history of California. It was along the banks of the Feather and Sacramento rivers that the flawed but visionary John Sutter, in 1839, began the process of turning California from a remote Mexican province to the most favored destination for settlers in the American Westward Movement. The discovery of gold ironically ruined John Sutter but resulted in the establishment of Marysville as the third largest city in California during the Gold Rush era.

It is mostly forgotten, however, that our local area is also notable for its Native American history. Americans know of the Sioux and Cheyenne, of the Cherokee and Iroquois, and of the Apache and Comanche, but how many know of the Nisenan? Despite the greater familiarity of the aforementioned tribal nations, it is the Nisenan (also known as the Southern Maidu) and their fellow Penutian speakers in central California – the Yokut, Miwok, Ohlone, Patwin, Wintun,

and Konkow – who are recognized collectively not only as the largest non-agrarian society in North America before Columbus, but also the longest surviving culture on the continent.

Before the Iroquois in New York and before the Apache in New Mexico, there was the Nisenan living along the banks of the lower Feather River. Dozens of villages dotted the landscape, some with only a few dozen inhabitants and others with several hundred. There was Yupu (Yuba), Chiemwie, Taisida, Molokum, Mimal, Sisum, Hok, and Yukulme as well as many others that had existed for not just hundreds of years but for over a thousand years.

Each village reflected a vibrant riverine culture in which daily life revolved around tule ponds and sloughs and acorns and salmon. Food was plentiful and war was uncommon. Life was orderly and proscribed: tradition and ritual were paramount and egoism and innovation were unwelcome. Nisenan life was orderly and balanced as only a culture that lasted for over three thousand years could be. It all

came to an end with the advent of the Gold Rush, but there is still much that we can learn from the Nisenan. The following bibliography, while not exhaustive, is intended to assist readers who are interested in local Native American culture and history.

Bakker, Elna. An Island Called California. University of California Press, 1971.

The sensitivity of Native Americans to their natural environment is well documented. Bakker describes the pre-European natural environment of the local Nisenan and Maidu in chapters 8, 9, and 10. Bakker states that "to those interested in the natural landscape of California, the Central Valley of Indian days would have been far more fascinating than it is now."

Beals, Ralph L. Ethnology of the Nisenan. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1933 (Vol. 31, No. 6, pp. 335-414).

his richly detailed monograph is not about the valley Nisenan but rather about the foothill and mountain Nisenan people to the east of the valley. The social relations of the two regions were limited but trade from foothill to valley and valley to foothill was frequent and essential. Trading parties, comprised exclusively of men, were always large, with no fewer than 100 and as many as 200 members. The

principal trade articles were acorns, salt, and beads. Topics covered by Beals include hunting and cooking techniques, games, vocabulary, astronomy, religion, personal conduct, and much more. It's always useful to know about one's neighbors.

Bean, Lowell John and Blackburn, Thomas C. Native Californians: A Theoretical Perspective. Ballena Press, 1976.

This is a somewhat technical work but provides in-depth description and analysis of various groups. In chapter one the authors state that the specialization and reliance on the acorn instead of agriculture was a choice and did not reflect limitations on the part of native cultures. Social organization in north-central California is covered in chapter four.

Bright, William. A Coyote Reader. University of California Press, 1993.

No other animal captured the imagination of the Native Californian, including the local Nisenan people, as Coyote. He is inseparable from the stories and mythologies of the first people of our region. Linguist William Bright analyzes the role of Coyote in Native American culture and presents a variety of Coyote stories by authors who portray him as trickster, glutton, thief, clown, pragmatist, and survivor. In other words, in the

same way as we would portray ourselves!

Browne, J. Ross. *The Indians of California*. Colt Press, 1944.

In 1855 Browne, an Irish immigrant, was appointed Inspector of Indian Affairs on the Pacific Coast. Unlike most other Indian Agents, Browne was honest in his dealings with Native Americans and sympathetic toward their plight. In this brief book he describes the frauds and outrageous treatment committed against the Indians of California during and after the Gold Rush, including those in our local area. He said, "An honest Indian Agent is the rarest work of God I know." In the last paragraph of the book he laments that "the reservations are practically abandoned; the remainder of the Indians are being exterminated every day; and the Spanish Mission System has signally failed."

Chartkoff, Joseph L. and Chartkoff, Kerry Kona. *The Archaeology of California*. Stanford University Press, 1984.

This book is very useful for understanding the origins and cultural evolution of Native Americans in California. It is not overly technical and is quite accessible to the general reader. The authors trace the migrations of native peoples from Asia to California and demonstrate the uniqueness of the state to the rest of

North America. The origins of the Nisenan people are presented in the context of one of the "longest and most successful ... developments of a cultural tradition in America."

Cook, Sherburne F. *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization*. University of California Press, 1976.

This is a densely written study that is nevertheless worth the effort. Cook covers the entire state, but there is much information concerning our local area, particularly in reference to the Gold Rush era. Trained in biology rather than history, Professor Cook uses statistical analysis as much as traditional sources such as letters, government documents, and official reports to record the tragic demise of Native Californians at the hands of Europeans and Americans.

Cook, Sherburne F. *The Population of the California Indians, 1769-1970*. University of California Press, 1976.

This work covers the entire state but extensive information is included about the people of the Sacramento and Feather rivers. Professor Cook (U.C. Berkeley) established that perhaps as much as half of the Konkow and Valley Nisenan died in a malaria epidemic in 1833. The disease was introduced by Hudson Bay Co. fur trappers and hunters. This tragic event opened the Sacramento Valley to colonization by

John Sutter and others.

California, this would be it.

Heizer, Robert F. (ed.) *The Destruction of the California Indian*. Peregrine Smith Inc., 1974.

Sherburne Cook (see above) established that between 1848, the year of gold discovery, and 1870, one year after California was linked to the rest of the nation by railroad, approximately 70,000 Indians died in the state. This catastrophic loss of human life was the result of disease, starvation, and intentional genocide. Heizer has assembled a collection of documents from the period 1847 to 1865 which provide a chronology of the events and policies of the period. Some of the documents are from Yuba and Sutter counties. The book includes contemporary articles from the Marysville Herald.

Heizer, Robert F. (ed.) *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8. (California)* Smithsonian Institution, 1978.

This is currently the single best source for the ethnology of Native Americans of the entire state. The historical period is also covered but in less space than those chapters devoted to the pre-European period. Specific chapters are devoted to the Nisenan, Maidu, and Konkow. Village names and locations are noted in maps which designate linguistic and cultural boundaries. If one were able to have only one book devoted to Native American culture in

Heizer, Robert F. and Ellaser, Albert B. *The Natural World of the California Indians*. University of California Press, 1980.

This is an excellent source for understanding the relationship of the California Indian to the natural environment. Heizer and Ellaser divide the state into ecological zones (including the Sacramento Valley) and discuss the characteristics of each one in relation to the local inhabitants. Patterns of village life are described in detail with emphasis on tools and food gathering techniques. This is a good companion to *An Island Called California* by Bakker.

Heizer, Robert F. and Whipple, M.A. *The California Indians: A Sourcebook*. University of California Press, 1971.

This is a general survey of California Indian culture intended for the general reader. There are no specific chapters devoted to the Maidu or Nisenan, but there is much useful information regarding religion, social organization, etc. The book's usefulness has not declined over the four decades since its publication and should be in your library.



Hill, Dorothy. The Indians of Chico Rancheria. California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1978.

John Bidwell arrived in California in 1841 and worked for John Sutter at Hock Farm just south of present day Yuba City. The rancho granted to Bidwell by the Mexican governor included several "rancherias," most of which were Maidu, but Konkow and Wintu people were also represented. Dorothy Hill has researched the history of these people from the time when they enjoyed autonomy through the nineteenth century. This is a brief but well-researched and written study that reveals the nature of Indian life under a relatively benevolent white conqueror who started the California episode of his life in present day Sutter County.

Hurtado, Albert L. Indian Survival On the California Frontier. Yale University Press, 1988.

This is an important work that places the Nisenan (and the Yuba-Sutter area) in a larger historical perspective. Hurtado demonstrates how the Nisenan and Miwok interacted with fur trappers, establishes the importance of the Nisenan to John Sutter's colonization effort (New Helvetia), and recounts the experiences of these Native Americans during the Gold Rush. Chapter 3, "Saved so Much as Possible for Labor: New Helvetia's Indian Work Force," provides

exacting details of Sutter's economic, social, and sexual relations with the Nisenan. It is not a flattering portrait of the county's namesake.

Hurtado, Albert L. John Sutter. University of Oklahoma Press, 2006.

From the Native American perspective it is difficult to admire John Sutter. Hurtado places much of Sutter's achievements and his place in history in the context of Nisenan labor, and states that Sutter "could see that access to and control over Native peoples' labor was indispensable to most frontier enterprises where fortunes were to be made." Hurtado further states that "Indian workers and soldiers remained the core of settlement..." and "loyal Indian soldiers were his [Sutter's] fist in the wilderness." Without Indians John Sutter was nothing. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in frontier relations between Indians and whites in the local area.

Kroeber, A.L. Handbook of the Indians of California. Smithsonian Institution, 1925 and California Book Co., 1953.

Alfred Kroeber, during his lifetime, established himself as the dean of California Indian ethnologists and his "Handbook" remained for over fifty years the standard reference work devoted to this subject. Three chapters — 27, 28, 29

— are devoted to the local Maidu (the Konkow and Nisenan are included in this designation). The chapters are heavily illustrated and cover language, customs and culture, religion, tool making, etc. This is an essential reference for anyone interested in local California Native American culture and history.

Kroeber, A.L. The Valley Nisenan. University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1929 (Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 253-290).

A.L. Kroeber was the dean of California anthropologists during the early twentieth century. As a professor at the University of California he led the movement to acquire as much information as possible from Native American *informants* as the native population rapidly declined and knowledge of traditional culture slipped away. Kroeber was the first anthropologist to use the term Nisenan rather than Southern Maidu for the people who lived on the lower American River, the Sacramento River north of the city of the same name, and on the lower Feather River between Oroville and Verona. The book gives village names and locations and describes social and material culture.



Kroeber, Theodora. Ishi In Two Worlds. University of California Press, 1961.

In 1911 Ishi, the last survivor of the Yahi people, left his ancestral territory along upper Mill Creek east of Red Bluff and walked south into Oroville, California. He was acclaimed to be the "last wild man in North America" but after reading this biography the reader may wish to re-evaluate just who was "civilized" and who was "wild." Theodora Kroeber, whose anthropologist husband, A.L. Kroeber, was one of Ishi's guardians, was able to portray his life with great insight and without false sentimentality. Chapters one and two provide an excellent introduction to Native American culture in California, while chapter four details the viciousness of which American settlers in the Sacramento Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills were capable. Theodora Kroeber's characterization of the California Indian as "reserved, contemplative, and philosophical" stands for the Nisenan as well.

Margolin, Malcolm. The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area. Heyday Books, 1978.

Although this book does not deal with our local region (the Ohlone and Nisenan were closely related, however) and is fiction, it is nevertheless an excellent source for gaining insight into the California

Indian perspective and their daily life. It is well-written and sensitive to the first people of California. It may be the best place to begin a study of California Indian life.

Margolin, Malcomb. (ed.) *The Way We Lived*. Heyday Books, 1981.

The subject of this book is California Indian reminiscences, stories, and songs, including selections from the Maidu, Nisenan, and Konkow. Margolin is the publisher of *News From Native California*, a quarterly devoted to "an inside view of the California Indian world." The stories and songs selected by Margolin transport the reader into another world, a world largely forgotten, ignored, or misunderstood by modern people. The Nisenan creation myth, shared with the Maidu, begins "In the

beginning there was no sun, no moon, no stars. All was dark, and everywhere there was only water." The reference to an environment covered by water accurately describes the Sacramento Valley 10,000 years ago.

Rawls, James J. *Indians of California, The Changing Image*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1984.

Rawls traces the attitudes and policies of state and federal officials regarding the treatment of Native Americans in California. Much material is devoted to Edward F. Beale, John Sutter, and the Indian experience in the Gold Rush. Rawls explains how the Indian reservation system that was imposed upon Native Americans throughout the west was a "distinctly California product."

These books are available for sale at the Community Memorial Museum store:

The Natural World of the California Indians

The California Indians: A Sourcebook

John Sutter

Ishi in Two Worlds

The Ohlone Way

The Way We Lived

Remember, as a member of the Historical Society and the Museum you receive a 10% discount on all purchases.

Many of the books are available at the Yuba County, Sutter County and Yuba College libraries. Also, all of the books are available from Amazon.com.

Coming Events

March

26 9:00 a.m. Bus Trip Around the Buttes

April

1 Yuba City High School Student Art exhibit
At the Museum

9 General Membership luncheon
2:00 p.m. At the Museum
Program: Older Home Renovation
By Julia Hamilton of Home Depot
Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest Award Winners
Dessert to follow

22 River Valley High School Student Art exhibit
At the Museum

29 10:30 a.m. Children's Program
The Greek Grannies
Aondreaa the Storytailer & Marilyn the Muse
"Mythologically Speaking" - Four Famous Myths
Free At the Museum

May

10 *Herblock's Political Cartoons* exhibit opens at the
Museum

June

22 *Herblock's Political Cartoons* exhibit closes at the
Museum

P

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

Algeo	Bandy
Coyote	Depression
Deseret	Dustbowl
Dyslexia	Genealogy
Ishi	Kingsrow
Kitchen	Konkow
Lingerie	Maidu
Nisenan	Sorenson
Transfusion	Uranium
Utah	Wrath



General Membership Meeting

**Saturday, April 9 2:00 p.m.
at the Museum
1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City**

**Program: Renovating Older Homes
Julia Hamilton, Home Depot**

**Judith Barr Fairbanks Essay Contest Award Winners
Election of Officers
Dessert**