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Yuba City, California

October 2011



A "Mountain Schooner"  
*Clara Sheldon Smith, Photographer*  
*From the collection of the Community Memorial Museum*



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\*The year the director joined the Board.

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## President's Message

It's turning to fall. Time to harvest. To reap the rewards of another year. I hope for you it has been a good year. We need at least two more people on the Historical Society Board. I would love to have both the south end of our county and the Meridian area represented.

As you sit and think about the year please think about our county and its history. What would you like to see us do to promote preserving history of Sutter County? Please share any of your ideas with board directors. A list of the current directors is on the inside cover. I would like to see 2012 as a good year for Historical Society and our wonderful museum.

Perhaps you might consider giving membership in the Historical Society and Museum as a gift to loved ones this holiday. Your love of local history is important to you, and what a nice way this would be to share it!

Please try and attend our events and give us feedback about things you are interested in seeing and doing. Our next event is our annual October luncheon. We're meeting on **Saturday, October 15 at 11:30 am at Ruthy's in Yuba City. Don Burtis will present the program on the history of Sutter City. The cost is \$16 and advance reservations are required.** Please see the flyer tucked into your bulletin and the information on the back cover for details.

In this issue we are printing two letters sent during the Civil War to a resident of Sutter County. I suspect many of us have old letters that would be of interest to other members. If you have letters you'd be willing to share in the Bulletin, please talk to one of the editors or call the Museum.

This fall we also sadly say goodbye to a true friend of local history and the Historical Society, John Reische. As President of the Society from 2001-2003, John worked tirelessly to bring quality programs to our meetings, and as Past President he provided counsel and assistance to the new officers. We offer our condolences to his wife, Dot, who is also a loyal supporter of our Society. John will be sorely missed.

Enjoy the season,  
Sarah Ettl Pryor  
President

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## Director's Report

The new exhibit *Clara Sheldon Smith, Art Photographer* (through November 27<sup>th</sup>) has received a warm reception in the community, with many raves about her remarkable work. Allan Lamb, the Museum's award-winning photography consultant volunteer, comments that Clara Smith's work was about 20 years ahead of its time and actually foreshadowed what would become cutting edge photography by prominent photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I want to alert you to a wonderful opportunity to learn more about preserving photographic images from Allan Lamb at a free program on **Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>** at 7:00 p.m. here at the Museum. The program is titled *The Negative and the Positive*, and Allan will talk about the glass plate negatives that Clara Smith used and a bit of history of photo processes, and will focus on how we can help to save our photographic history, whether in our own family collections or other places. Allan is dedicated to helping save our history as told by photographs, and he can teach all of us more about taking steps toward that important goal.

Join us for a spooky evening with Aondreaa the Storytailor and her Ghoul Friends for the dramatization of a half-dozen *really scary* stories at the Museum on Friday, October 21 at 7:00 p.m. Aondreaa recommends them for middle school students through adults (*toooo scary* for little ones!). The program is free, a gift from the story tellers, and bound to be an exciting Halloween experience.

We hope you will be lured to the Museum to work with the Christmas elves making ornaments for the Museum's big Christmas tree this year. Two workshops are scheduled, one on **Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>** and the other on **Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>**. Both begin at 10:00 a.m. and continue until noon. The reward (besides cookies) is seeing your handmade ornaments shining on the 16-foot tree at *Trees & Traditions* and the Children's Program & Open House. No skills or knowledge needed. Bring a friend if you like.

*Trees & Traditions*, the Museum's biggest fundraiser, will take place on **Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>** from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. with lavish hors d'oeuvres, wine and champagne. Tickets, available mid-October, are \$45 a person. The Museum really needs your help with decorating for the event, so please put **Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>** on your calendar. We make large wreaths and garlands from fresh greens, which takes a large crew of volunteers. Please help us out! The next afternoon, **Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**, we again need volunteers to make hors d'oeuvres for the gala event. We also ask you to be thinking about a donation to *Trees & Traditions*, either a small decorated tree or a gift to raise money in a drawing. In this most challenging of economic times, the Museum really needs the support of all of its members and friends.

As you begin your holiday shopping, please keep the Museum Store in mind. It is always the right place to find a unique gift, and, in turn, you support the Museum when you shop there. Thank you to all of you who work so diligently in so many ways to show your support for the work of the Museum.

Julie Stark  
Director

## Memorials

In Memory of **Beverly Findlay  
Andreotti**  
Tom & Suellen Teesdale

In Memory of **Oakley Barrett**  
Jim Staas

In Memory of **Jack Cleveland**  
Howard & Ruth Anthony

In Memory of **Barbara Cotter**  
Elaine Tarke

In Memory of **Joan Doty**  
Linda Benner  
Connie Cary  
Herb Crowhurst  
Marnie Crowhurst  
Don Cunningham  
Dan & Jean Jacuzzi  
Larry & Helen Harris  
Bruce & Gini Harter  
William P. Lockett  
Robert & Eleanor Mackensen  
Bonnie Madden  
Donna & Barry McMaster  
Doris Mitchell  
Ida Philpott  
June Ramsay  
Merlyn Rudge  
Tosh & Tae Sano  
Sharyl Simmons  
Phyllis Smith  
Julie Stark  
Margaret Strain  
David & Gina Tarke  
Elaine Tarke  
Tom & Suellen Teesdale

In Memory of **Marie Fuller**  
Sharyl Simmons

In Memory of **Geraldine Jones**  
George & Melinda Barlow  
Bob & Lee Jones  
Steve Richardson

In Memory of **Amelia Krueger**  
John & Connie Bustos

In Memory of **Rev. Dr. Edgar Nelson**  
Bob & Sandra Fremd

In Memory of **Lois Marian Nelson**  
Bob & Sandra Fremd

In Memory of **John Reische**  
Audrey Breeding  
Phyllis & Terry Bullard  
Bud Doty  
George & Shyrlie Emery  
Ida Philpott  
Claudia Ryan  
Sharyl Simmons  
Phyllis Smith  
Julie Stark  
David & Gina Tarke  
Carol Ray Trexler  
Jeff & Eileen Van Dielen  
Karen Young & Family

In Memory of **John Richardson**  
John & Connie Bustos

In Memory of **Fred Schaefer**  
Bob & Katie Bryant  
Tom & Suellen Teesdale

In Memory of **Candace Silva**  
Joe & Rebecca Benatar

In Memory of **Yutaka Toyoda**  
Tom & Suellen Teesdale

In Memory of **Kathleen (Kay) Barkley  
Waters**  
John & Dorothea Reische

Donation to Museum Endowment Fund  
In Memory of **Pat Ann Everett**

Donation for Kitchen Fund  
Mary Knapp  
Patsy K. Thompson

**Letters from the War:  
The Civil War Touches a Sutter County Family  
Edited by Sharyl Simmons**

*The following letters were sent to George Washington Ramsdell, one of the early settlers in Noyesburg and, later, Live Oak. Ramsdell was born in New York and immigrated with his family to Lenawee County, Michigan. As a young man, he came west to Sutter County and settled in the northern part of Sutter County.*

*The first letter is from George's younger brother, Charles, who was serving in the 18<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry, Company C and was stationed in Nashville, Tennessee. Charles was 19 when he joined the Army in Michigan and served in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama.*

*The editors would like to thank Carol Withington for providing us with the letters.*

Nashville, Tenn  
Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1863

Dear Brother,

I am almost ashamed to write to you now so late but they say better late than never and I know by experience that a letter when one is away from home is not slighted. George I have never forgotten that promise to write you that morning you left. I have commenced 2 or 3 letters to you before I came in the army but something would turn up and I would throw them aside since I have been in the army. I have often thought of you and of writing but never have had much time until we came here.

George I could tell a long yarn of what I had seen and done since I enlisted and yet have not been in a regular battle yet. Was in a little skirmish at Danville Ky. Heard the bullets whistle and saw

men fall but they was mostly rebs and killed by our artillery. I saw 1 shell take 7 out of their saddles.

We came here from Lebenon Ky the 14<sup>th</sup> of last April the first 2 months we were on picket duty, City Guard, and train guard from here to Murphreesboro. I was on a gun boat 2 weeks running up and down the Cumberland. Made 3 trips on up to Carthage 150 miles, 2- down to Clarksville 65 miles, liked it first rate.

For the last 3 months we have been on guard. 8 companies quartered in the Court house. They do the patrol duty and Cos. C [or G] and F [?] live in their tents in a yard right across the street from President James K. Polk's house and about 40 rods from the Capitol which they guard. I am in the Capitol now writing this letter. I always come up here to write. I am on the second story in the Representative's room. It is the nicest State Capitol in the U. S. It

stands on a hill very near the center of town. A person standing on the steps can look all over town and then come to go up 150 feet on top a fellow can see from 10 to 20 miles. Pretty handy. It is built entirely of granite stone.

I like soldiering first rate. Not well enough though to be one when the war is over with. I have seen some pretty bad things when I was in Ky. I have footed it pretty nigh all over the state and stole more chickens, pigs, sheep and passed more poor money than I could count in a while. Everything is very high here and if we bought all the extras we have we would not live very well. Melons from 40 cts to \$2 a piece and yet I have all I want most every day. They have a large market house and it is crowded every morning.

We have the name of being the best regiment that ever left the state and I know it. I wish you could see us on dress parade some night. White gloves, boots blacked, brasses bright and guns polished so you can see your face on the barrel. We have the Springfield rifle and can just beat the regulars drilling every day in the week. Well I guess that will do about soldiering.

I received a letter from Cousin Lib this morning. Everyone is all well at home. I have had quite a flood of letters this week. 1 from Mart [*ha - one of his sisters*] (by the way George she has quite a good

husband - I think a full blooded quaker), 1 from Sarah [another sister]. She said she had just heard from you and was going to answer it right off. I suppose she will tell you that Jake has been drafted and that he has paid his fine. She says Dick [*last name unreadable*] was drafted but he had just got his commission as Assistant Surgeon in a New York reg. in Ky. I also received a letter from [*illegible*].

I went to Louisville last week. Took a lot of rebel prisoners there. It is about half way home. It made me almost feel like going there. We take from 50 to a 100 there every week.

The Citizens and Soldiers had quite a time last night. Joy over the good news from Charlestown. We had speeches from Gov. Johnson<sup>i</sup>, Parson Brownlow<sup>ii</sup> and others.

We were under Gilmore<sup>iii</sup> in Ky 6 months. We all hated him there but he seems to be doing very well at Charlestown.

Well George, it is almost dinner time and I shall have to quit it. Seems as though I could write you all day, but there is no Sunday in the army and I'll have to take most all the afternoon to get ready for drill parade and drill from 5 until dusk. Answer as soon as you can.

Your brother,  
C. H. Ramsdell

*Less than two years later, George received a letter from his father, Nathan Ramsdell, informing him of the death of his brother, Charles. The description of the events leading to Charles making it home just days prior to his death is cinematic in scope.*

*Charles' ultimately fatal wounding happened during action against General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry near Athens, Alabama on September 23-24' 1864.*

Adrian  
Jan. 3, 1865  
Respected Son George,

It is some time since we have heard from thee, and have been expecting a letter for a long time. We are not very well here at home. Ira is sick and Sarah is sick with the canker sore throat and Mother has been sick but are all better now. But George I have sadder news to write. Charley is no more. Ira brought him home on the 14<sup>th</sup> and he died on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the last month only staying with us five days. And a brave good boy he was too. I will try and give thee his and Ira's history for the last two months. Thee has heard of his being wounded in the fight at Athens, Alabama the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, Ira wrote thee a letter to that effect. We learned by Telegraph that the left arm was amputated and was shot through his side and as soon as we could find out his condition Ira started after him for to take care of him till he could get him home. I think it was about the middle of October when Ira started after him, and was three weeks in getting there. The army orders were so strict that he had to work every strategy he could think of to get through the lines. Had it not been for acquaintances he could

not have got through. Charles had heard of his coming but did not suppose that he could get there, he knowing how strict their orders were. (Charley after he was wounded was taken to a private house.) He said he knew Ira's footsteps as soon as he stepped on the portico which was at 11 o'clock at night. Ira says he held out the only hand he had to shake and was very glad to see him. He was taken prisoner but was wounded so bad the rebels did not want him so left him.

Ira stayed and nursed him about three weeks and he seemed to gain some. (Perhaps I had better mention here how long he lay before anything was done to him.) It was 36 hours and he almost bled to death and begging for someone to take off his arm. He succeeded in getting a black woman to pour water on him, and finally a citizen doctor took off his arm for him. But did not understand, it left the bone too long so the flesh could heal over leaving a running sore to run his life out. The folks where he was staying were very kind to him and did all they could for him, but they were stripped of everything that was eatable especially in the condition that he was. But they did not know how to cook. Their blacks were all gone who they had depended on to

do their cooking. After Ira got there he went as far as 26 miles to get something that Charles could relish and under his kind care and treatment he seemed to mend slowly. But to his surprise Athens was evacuated in the night and Ira happened to get on to the last train as it was moving off. He went to Decatur 13 miles and went and saw Gen. Granger and talked with him about getting Charles. He said he could not do anything for his engine was worth 20,000 and Charles was not able to be moved. So Ira did not know what to do but made up his mind to stay with Charles let what would come. The General finally inquired what regiment Charles belonged. Ira told him the 18<sup>th</sup>. Well the General says he can't stay there and gave an order to the Conductor to take an engine and two rack cars and plank the side to keep the bullets off and 30 men to guard the train and go and get him. They did so and came on to Huntsville 25 miles and stayed all night and then came on to Nashville which took them four days, Charles feeling about as well as when he started.

After getting to Nashville there seemed to be something else in the way. The Surgeons there would not give him transfer to go any further. But Hood's army were closing up for a flight and they had one at Franklin, and when the wounded began to come in and the hospitals were getting full they gave him a transfer to Louisville. (Charles very anxious to get home.) The road from Nashville to Louisville was very rough and hurt him considerable and he was taken with

a diarea which weakened him very much. Ira wrote to us from there that his courage and anxiety to get home was all that was saving him. Ira tried to get him transferred to Detroit and finally after one week and with the assistance of the State Agent of Michigan he succeeded in getting him transferred to Detroit. They then started to boat to Cincinnati and from there to Toledo. (Ira was taken sick at Louisville, with the janders [*possibly jaundice*].) When they got to Toledo we received a Telegraph that they would be at the Baylas crossing in the afternoon. Thomas, David, William and Henry Clapp came up from Adrian on the train and brought him till I met them with the sleigh and horses.

As soon as Charley got into the house he looked around the room and said I am home. Ira had written that he was very poor but we were surprised for he was nothing but skin and bones. I never saw so poor a person, and yet his voice was strong, and we had some hopes and had a doctor here as soon as could. The doctor came and dressed his wounds and said they were very bad. We watched and nursed him all we could and the third time the doctor came he said there was no chance for him and I made up my mind to inform him of it. (This was on first day morning.) I sat down by his side and told him that there was very little chance for his recovery. He looked up very calm and says do you think so? What does the doctor say. I gave him to understand that the doctor thought so, and that he had better look to his Saviour who was ever

ready when asked with sincerity of heart to lend a helping hand and he would feel that joy and peace that would tell him without a doubt that he was forgiven and would be saved. I then went and sat by the stove. Charles then seemed to be in great meditation and prayer and I should think lay about fifteen minutes when he called out Oh Father come here. The Lord has forgiven me. He says he will receive me. He seems to stand before me. All is so bright, so joyous. Oh thank the Lord.

He then talked to us quite a spell so calm and feeling so happy. We all stood by the bed and the tears flowing. Charley says it is a time of rejoicing. instead of crying.

We watched over him closely and did all we could to alleviate his suffering. But such a sufferer and not a murmur or complaint. O he says such good Brothers and Sisters and such good Father and Mother it was hard to part with them. But it would not be long before we all should meet in heaven. You must all strive to meet me there.

The next day in the afternoon I sat by his side when he looked up to me and said Father I feel very weak. I believe I am going. I will bid you goodby. Which he did so calm and peaceful with a smile on his face. Had bid all but Rachael and Ira when he seemed to rally up a little. Well he says I guess I made a little mistake. I may lie an hour longer yet. He seemed then to go to sleep and slept perhaps fifteen minutes. He then awaked and said he would bid the rest goodbye. He then bid Rachael and Ira goodby and talked to us with a smile on his

face. He said all seemed so bright and joyous he was sure of his heavenly home. He soon dropped away without a struggle with a smile on his lips. The last breath, he spoke of Ira being such a kind brother to him in coming after him and taking such kind care of him. George such a good boy as he was. The link is broken in our family never to be replaced. We Telegraphed to Lydia. She got here to the funeral the night before. Now George now can not thee sell out and come home? Charles said that he should come home when his time was out and work the farm.

N. A. Ramsdell

*The following paragraph was written at the top of the letter, before the greeting. It was obviously added at the last minute as a plea from father to son to come home.*

George it seems to me that if thee should sell out for half price thee could sell the gold for double in government money. I will give thee any chance thee can ask and I am sure thee can make more than to stay there. I do not want to drive the matter but I really think that it is for the best. Think of it hard.

*We don't know if George Ramsdell considered selling his holdings in Sutter County, but we do know that he remained a Sutter County resident for the rest of his life. He was buried in Noyesburg Cemetery in 1905.*

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Andrew Johnson - U. S. Senator from Greeneville in East Tennessee. He was the only southern senator not to resign and supported Lincoln's military policies. He was appointed military governor of occupied Tennessee. He later served as Lincoln's vice president during his second term and became the 17th President of the United States.

<sup>ii</sup> William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow - An American newspaper editor, minister and politician who served as Governor of Tennessee from 1865 to 1869. He had been forced to flee Tennessee after secession, but returned in November 1863 and resumed publishing his newspaper.

<sup>iii</sup> Quincy Adams Gillmore, a graduate of West Point, first served under General Sherman and later was appointed a brigadier general. He traveled to Kentucky where he supervised the construction of Fort Clay. It was during this period that Charles Ramsdell served under him. Ramsdell was not alone in his opinion of General Gillmore. "Gillmore, one of the best artillerists and engineers in the army, proved to be a regular nincompoop as a general in the field. Almost every day, and sometimes twice a day, we were called into line to listen to general orders, issued on almost every imaginable subject, from the wisdom at headquarters. (*History of the 104th regiment Ohio volunteer infantry from 1862 to 1865* by Nelson A. Pinney, 1886, page 8.)



**William Henley Smith**  
**Early day member of Fairview Church**  
by  
**Carol Withington**

The Fairview Church, located three miles northeast of Nicolaus, was built with "a purpose to stay." Members had originally met in the Fairview schoolhouse during the 1870s, but when an evangelistic meeting increased membership, a decision to build was made.

Known initially as the Fairview Christian Chapel, the dedication ceremonies took place on October 23, 1883. According to an area newspaper, it was "owned and controlled by what is known as the Christian Church, but all other denominations may worship (therein)."

The frame church measured a reported 32 x 58 feet and contained a

baptistery and auditorium. It was supplied with comfortable seats and had a seating capacity of 225 persons.

The entire structure was constructed at a cost of \$3,600 and reflected "great credit upon the people of that section of the county." The building was also supplied with a stove, chandelier and side lamps.

"Such items as the foregoing are a credit to any community," the newspaper noted. "Good country churches and schoolhouses furnish the best security for the future."

Building committee members included A.L. Chandler, Frank Morehead and Cornelius Stolp. Among

the early lifetime members was W.H. Smith, a prominent Sutter County pioneer.

William Henley Smith was born on November 6, 1833 in Warsaw, Calloway County, Missouri. His father, James W., was a native of Virginia. During his lifetime, the elder Smith followed farming and later entered the hotel and livery business.

Smith's mother was the former Elizabeth Duncan, also a native of Virginia. Her father was a Baptist minister who was also involved in farming.

Young Smith spent most of his boyhood on the Missouri farm. At the age of 17, he and his older brother, John James, purchased four yoke of oxen and together they made the overland trek to California, arriving on August 2, 1850.

Upon his arrival in Nicolaus, which was then the Sutter County seat, Smith engaged in the sale of stock. He later herded stock for Captain Waldo, an employee of John Sutter.

The following year, Smith became engaged in teaming to the mountains to haul hay with ox teams. He later purchased his own team and continued this endeavor. On his trips back, however, the enterprising Smith brought back loads of lumber.

On November 6, 1856, Smith married the former Sarah E. Brown, a native of Missouri, who arrived in California in 1853. Following their marriage, the couple purchased a 200-acre ranch on the Bear River where Smith engaged in farming. Three years later, the ranch was sold for a reported \$1,500.

According to Smith's grandson, the late Elmer C. Smith, the original house was later moved to a high mound

of land on present day Pacific Avenue in order to protect the home from flooding. It took two wagons with a team of eight horses to accomplish this feat.

Known to many as "Henry" or "Henley," Smith at one time accumulated up to 560 acres of land. He later disposed of all but 160 acres.

The Smiths were parents of four girls, Minnie, Emma, Lola and Margaret; and three boys, George W., James E. and Roy.

Newspaper accounts relate that Mrs. Smith was known throughout her lifetime as an active entertainer. Many area social gatherings took place in the family residence where she was noted for preparing "a variety of delicacies."

Politically, Smith was a Democrat and in the interests of his party, served two terms as a member of the board of supervisors. He was chairman of the board during his second term.

In 1906, the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Five of the surviving children "gathered around the banquet board to congratulate their parents on their long and happy wedded life."

During that year, the couple moved to Sacramento to live with their daughter, Mrs. A.D. Tilton. Failing health had compelled Smith to give up the active work on his Nicolaus farm.

On January 6, 1907, Smith died at the age of 73. The funeral was conducted from the Fairview Church. Sarah, his wife, died in 1915.

According to a local newspaper, Smith was always one of the foremost enterprising citizens of the county. He took an active interest in public affairs and was "ever ready to assist with his funds and his counsel."

# **READING MID-VALLEY HISTORY: Explorers and Fur Trappers, 1807-1841**

A Selected and Annotated Bibliography

by

David M. Rubiales, Prof. Emeritus, Yuba College

For over 2,000 years, until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, human life in the Mid-Sacramento Valley region proceeded mostly unchanged. The Nisenan and Patwin people, the former along the Feather River and the latter along the Sacramento River, lived lives without metal and agriculture, and without concepts of personal property rights or technological innovation. They were a deeply conservative people who repeated the cycles of human life over and over again with a desire to hold the world in a constant mode. They believed that change was unnecessary and perhaps even dangerous. Then, in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new people with different ideas about what was valuable and desirable began to make their way into Nisenan and Patwin territory.

The newcomers who ventured into the Mid-Valley region in the first four and one-half decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century represented the northernmost settlers of the Spanish Empire, fur trappers who were the western vanguard of the expansionist American nation, as well as fur trappers who

represented the commercial enterprise of the Hudson's Bay Co.

Even though Spaniards had sailed along the Upper California coast as early as 1542 and had colonized the territory beginning in 1769, the first documented expedition into the Mid-Valley by soldiers carrying the Spanish flag did not occur until 1808. The purpose of this first visit was to explore the country for mission sites. The soldiers traveling under the flag of Spain were called "soldados de cuero" (leather clad soldiers) and were armed with both gun and lance and each carried a shield. They were tough frontiersmen under military command.

Behind the Spaniards came American, British, and French-Canadian fur trappers, all of whom doubled in the role of explorers. They too were tough and even though they worked for private profit operated under a military structure.

The bibliography that follows is arranged in two parts. Part I consists of explorations under the Spanish Empire; Exploration by American and Hudson's Bay fur-trappers comprises Part II.

## PART I

### Introduction

After 1800 the colonial administrators of the Spanish crown widened their view of Alta California to include the interior valleys. The Yokut and Patwin Indians were harassing the Spanish missions by stealing livestock and providing refuge for runaway neophytes. The Spanish decided that they could put a stop to these problems by establishing new missions in the interior. Reconnaissance was therefore necessary and for the next thirteen years expeditions were launched from the coast and explored the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys as well as the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Two diaries that are of interest to the readers of this Bulletin survive the era: that of 1808 by Ensign Gabriel Moraga and that of 1821 by Lt. Luis Arguello.

Cutter, Donald (ed.). *The Diary of Ensign Gabriel Moraga's Expedition of Discovery in the Sacramento Valley, 1808*. Los Angeles: Glen Dawson Books, 1957.

The first Spanish expedition to reach the local area, in 1808, was led by Alferez (Ensign) Gabriel Moraga, a native of Sonora, New Spain (Mexico) and an accomplished frontiersman. The specific objective of this expedition, which set out from Mission San Jose in late September, was to explore the river country east of the northern group of missions with the aim of finding new worthwhile sites. After exploring the length of the Calaveras,

Mokelumne, and Consumnes Rivers as well as part of the American River, Moraga reached the lower Feather River in early October. He named the river "Sacramento" in the mistaken belief that he was on the main channel of that river, not understanding that the Feather was a tributary of the larger river. This mistake would be corrected in 1821 by Luis Arguello, another soldier serving the Spanish crown.

Moraga noted the width of the river and its overflow plain. From the lower Feather the explorers proceeded cross country to "a mountain range in the middle of the valley," the Sutter Buttes, and then westward to the Sacramento River. After moving north of the Buttes, Moraga crossed the valley, relocated the Feather River and then proceeded southward and eastward. He crossed the Yuba and may have entered Nevada County. The expedition continued southward and retraced its steps back to Mission San Jose. No suitable sites for new missions were found as the country was determined to be excessively prone to floods.

Fisher, Vivian (ed.). *The Diary of Captain Luis Antonio Arguello, 1821*. Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1992.

Sometime in 1821 reports reached the Spanish governor in Monterey that Americans or Englishmen had established a settlement north of San Francisco Bay. The governor ordered an expedition under the

command of Luis Arguello to reconnoiter the Sacramento Valley and the northern coast. Arguello assembled seventy men, including an Englishman, two Native Americans to act as interpreters, a priest, 225 animals, and one cannon - a formidable force for the northernmost part of the Spanish Empire at that time.

After crossing the Carquinez Straits on launches Arguello and his men crossed modern Yolo County and reached present day Sutter County. The expedition skirted the Sutter Buttes on the west and proceeded north until catching sight of Mt. Shasta at which point they turned westward toward the coast. No Americans or Englishmen were encountered. Perhaps the most important aspect of this expedition was recognizing the Feather River as being separate from the Sacramento and renaming it.

## **PART II**

**Grinnell, Joseph, Dixon, Joseph F., and Linsdale, Jean M. *Fur Bearing Mammals of California, 2 vols.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937.**

The fur trade brought the first Americans to the Mid-Valley region. From 1828-1838 the local area became one of the most intensely hunted regions on the continent. Beaver was the most sought after animal but bears were extensively hunted as well as elk and antelope. This volume provides detailed descriptions of each species, their habitat, and behavior.

**Morgan, Dale L. *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West.* Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953.**

The first American to set foot on the banks of this region's four rivers, the Sacramento, Feather, Yuba, and Bear, was Jedediah Smith. Born in New York State in 1799, Smith made his way to St. Louis in 1821, ready to begin a career as a fur trapper. He was a serious young man who never drank whiskey and neither smoked tobacco nor used vulgar language. Even more importantly, he kept a daily log of his travels and activities and of his observations of the local country and its inhabitants.

Within four years Smith was owner of a company and a respected leader in the trade and became one of the most important, if not the most important figure in the fur trade during the decade of the 1820s. Indeed, Smith was the first person to reach California overland from the American frontier, the first American to cross the Sierra Nevada, and the first American to reach Oregon from California. Morgan states that "when Jedediah Smith entered the West it was still largely an unknown land; when he left the mountains, the whole country had been printed on the living maps of his trappers' minds. Scarcely a stream, a valley, a pass, or a mountain range but had been named and become known for good or ill."

Brooks, George R., ed. *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*. Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1977.

This is the journal of Jedediah Smith's first overland journey to California in 1826-1827. Smith and his men entered California without authorization from the Mexican government and after a stay at Mission San Gabriel and a visit with the Governor in San Diego, Smith was ordered to leave California on the same route as he had arrived. The intrepid fur trapper, however, had a different notion and instead headed northwest into the San Joaquin Valley where there was, he had previously heard, abundant beaver. Smith did not venture farther north than the mouth of the American River and left California under duress, as the Mexican authorities were anxious to locate him and stop his wanderings in the province, lest he incite Indians to rebel against the Mexican ranchos.

The Americans set up a base camp at the mouth of the Stanislaus River and trapped and explored as far north as the American River. During the spring of 1827, after several attempts and with great difficulty, he crossed the Sierra Nevada and made his way to Bear Lake, northeast of the Great Salt Lake, where the fur trappers' rendezvous of 1827 was to be held. Though Smith did not reach the Mid-Valley region during this particular expedition, this book provides background and context for Smith's expedition to our region in 1828.

Sullivan, Maurice. *The Travels of Jedediah Smith*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

In early March of 1828 Jedediah Smith reached the banks of the Feather River. Just as he was the first American to reach the banks of the American River two years earlier, he was the first American to set foot on the banks of the Feather. Smith's journal is always lively and filled with events of the day, many of them harrowing. Moving up the Feather River during the month of March, Smith and his men traded and fought with the local native people, fought and killed grizzly bears, and trapped beaver. They also spent considerable time mired in sloughs and soggy ground.

This is a must-read for anyone interested in how mountain men spent their days and for lively descriptions of the local flora and fauna in a riverine environment. On March 9, 1828 Smith and his men were on the Feather River between its tributary rivers, the Bear and the Yuba. He recorded the following:

Early in the Morning Mr. Rodgers went after the wounded Bear in company with John Hanna. In a short time Hanna came running in and said that they had found the Bear in a verry bad thicket. That he suddenly rose from his bed and rushed on them. Mr. Rodgers fired a moment before the Bear caught him. After biting him in several places he went off, but Hanna shot him again, when he returned, caught Mr. Rodgers and gave him several

additional wounds. I went out with a horse to bring him in and found him verry badly wounded... I washed his wounds and dressed them with plasters of soap and sugar...

The game of the Country was Bear Elk Black tailed Deer Antelope Large and small Wolves Beaver Otter and Raccoon. The Birds were Swan Geese Crane Heron Loons Brant Many kinds of Ducks Indian Hens. Some small birds but they were not plenty. The birds of Prey were Buzzards Crows Ravens Magpies &c. The trappers took 9 beaver.

**Dillon, Richard. *Siskiyou Trail: The Hudson's Bay Company Route to California*. New York:McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975.**

After Jedediah Smith opened the Sacramento Valley to the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company, based at that time at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River in present-day Washington State, began yearly expeditions to the untapped region. The route from the fort in the north to the Kings River in the south was 850 miles in length and became known as the Siskiyou Trail. Walla Walla Indians, Americans, Englishmen, Scotsmen, French-Canadians, and Mexicans were all found on the trail at one time or another. It was truly the fur trapper's highway. The Sutter Buttes (then known simply as the Buttes) became a major landmark on the Siskiyou Trail and the local area was the most productive for beaver trapping of its

entire length. Dillon's writing is colorful and engaging and holds up decades after publication.

**Maloney, Alice Bay (ed.). *Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura, John Work's California Expedition*. San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945.**

Jedediah Smith introduced the continental business of fur trapping to the Sacramento Valley but it was the Hudson's Bay Company that dominated trapping in the region from 1829 - 1840. The expedition of 1832 - 1833 was logged daily by its leader, John Work, and the journal survives to provide us with an intimate account of trapping. On Sunday, December 9, 1832, Work led his men onto the Sutter Buttes in search of game. Work noted in his journal that there was "overcast weather, a very heavy rain in the evening," but he did not realize that he was witnessing the beginning of a great storm that would leave the Sacramento Valley underwater and the Buttes an island in a shallow sea.

In this journal Work gives us the first written account of a great flood in the Sacramento Valley. He describes the local terrain and provides daily counts on the amount of game trapped and killed. After the turn of the year he describes the malaria epidemic, brought by his own expedition, which tragically destroyed up to seventy-five percent of the local Native-American population. Alice Mahoney, the editor of this journal, provides vivid description of the Hudson's Bay Company trappers:

At the head of the brigade rode the leader, a chief trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, astride a strong limbed Nez Perce horse and armed to the teeth with the best weapons of the day... All of [his] men were clad in deerskin and were well equipped with the weapons then in vogue. At his side along

with his bright-beaded tobacco pouch, each man carried the long knife of the trapper and hunter.

The trappers brought their wives, many of whom were Native American, as well as their children and Mahoney comments that "Many of the Indian women were as good shots as their spouses."

## Crowhurst Memorial Scholarship Award

In January we introduced you to a scholarship that focuses on Sutter County's heritage. The Crowhurst Memorial Scholarship Award was established in 1979 in memory of Estelle Peirano Crowhurst, who was known for her column *The Diary of a Housewife*, which was published weekly in the *Independent Herald*, a Yuba City newspaper. The award is also a memorial to Estelle's son, Thomas J. Crowhurst, who excelled in journalistic writing, especially about sports. He wrote *The Sutter Notes*, a column for the Appeal Democrat, and contributed information for the sports pages.

The scholarship is awarded to a talented high school student. Written in journalistic style, winning entries are based on fact and manage to include a bit of humor. The award continues now in conjunction with the Community Memorial Museum as a means of involving more people in the appreciation of Sutter County history. Students interested in a career in journalism who feel they have creative literary talent are encouraged to participate in this scholarship opportunity.

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**Kristina Heflin**  
**Sutter Union High School**

### Lost Treasures of Sutter County

Every morning, as I drive to school, I watch the sun rise over the Sierra Nevada mountains, illuminating the Sacramento Valley. The Sutter Buttes stand out in dark contrast to the bright lowlands surrounding them. They're reflected in the hundreds of flooded rice fields. I'm the first in my family to be born here in Sutter

County, and mornings like these make me cherish every moment.

Sutter County is, and has always been, an agriculturally focused area. From the native peoples who gathered from the land, to the early American settlers who brought wheat and cattle with them, Sutter has been a cradle of agricultural prosperity. John Sutter, the Swiss immigrant for whom the county is named, was a patron of the land. For many years, he was contracted to supply the wheat for the

Russian colonies of the lower Aleutians. Of course, the famous mill that turned out gold, rather than lumber, was originally built by John Sutter in order to capitalize on the rich timber of the Valley.

The Gold Rush changed everything about the way of life in California, even in Sutter County agriculture. With the Rush came thousands of Chinese miners. They discovered that the wetlands created by the annual flooding of the Yuba, Feather, and Sacramento Rivers were very similar to the fertile fields of their homeland. So rather than mining gold, they cultivated a mother lode of rice. The effects of this transition can be seen today nearly everywhere in Sutter County, where over sixty percent of the agricultural land is in use for growing rice. The remaining land is used for orchard fruits, another tradition brought over by Sutter and his followers.

Unfortunately, Sutter County is also facing its most difficult challenge in the twenty-first century: the loss of youth involvement in the agriculture industry. Although Sutter is a predominately agriculturally driven county, it is also home to over ten thousand students who will go through their entire school career without even a basic knowledge of how food winds up on their plates. When these students become adults, they do not enter into the agriculture work force. They will become an ignorant generation; when it comes to voting, they will certainly neglect the issues

facing agriculturalists such as land loss and water rights. In the end, it will be the farmers who will suffer for their neglect.

I am proud to have been born in Sutter County. I am proud to call myself both a student and a steward of agriculture. Very soon, I will be leaving the county of my birth to pursue a higher education in agriculture. When I return, I hope it will be to find a new sun of knowledge and hope rising over the Valley.

**Everett Willey**  
**East Nicholas High School**

When I go out duck hunting I am captivated by the early morning mist on the water and a stillness of everything that is around me. The quacks of mallards or the whistles from a sprig make my heart begin to race with the anxiousness that envelopes me when I hear them calling. On days that I am lucky enough to see hundreds of birds flying above me I can only imagine what it would have been like only a hundred years ago when the amount of ducks and geese would darken the sky. I'm sure that witnessing this many birds would have been deafening especially if they were all snow geese, because those birds are very loud. It saddens me when I think of never being able to see a sight of this magnitude, because it is something that I will not see in my lifetime. This also gives me a reason to help these magnificent creatures regain those numbers and let future generations

experience what I can only dream.

In the early 1900s the Butte Sink was dry land covered mostly by alkali grasses. This is prime goose feeding grounds, but the only problem was that there was no water where they could feed. So they would have to back south at night to rest and drink the water. Having all this prime land to feed and rest in would attract geese by the millions. The migration of this many geese would be indescribable to see. There are many recordings of these events in historical records. Now I am flabbergasted when I see thousands of geese flying, but to see millions of geese all in the air calling to each other trying to figure out where they are going would be a dream come true for me. This attracted people who enjoyed sport hunting, which is just a mass killing of birds, which in my eyes is barbaric, because killing for fun is cruel. These sport hunters would kill a lot of birds. There is one account of four hunters who hunted for four days and killed 783 geese, which is 48 geese per person per day. This is just one recorded hunt and there may have been hunts that killed even more birds, but what I do know is that the combination of over hunting and the change from grasslands to rice farmlands decimated the number of geese in the Colusa Basin and helped the ducks begin to thrive.

When the Glenn-Colusa Canal was built it brought water to the plains, which turned the plains into a basin, and with that water came ducks. There were so many ducks that rice

farmers had such a difficult time that they would pay hunters to hunt them. When the rice and ducks came so did the duck clubs; between 1900 and 1929 there were over forty new duck clubs established. This was the end of the goose era for the Colusa area and the beginning of the duck era. Over the years the numbers of ducks have been declining because of the increasing amount of hunting and the loss of land. Ducks have been a major part of the Sutter County's heritage and it would be a shame to see this heritage start to decline. It is pleasing to see that the numbers of sprig have been increasing. Biologists noticed that their numbers were becoming scarce soon enough for them to act and reverse the ominous future for sprig. This shows that we are paying attention to the birds and not hurting a very important part of Sutter County's heritage.

I have grown up in Sutter County and duck hunting has been a major part of my life, so I would hate to see this tradition be lost. I have seen the loss of land in Natomas due to development and would hate to see this happen in Sutter County. There is nothing like a morning hunting experience with your dad or some friends and having birds calling and working into your decoy spread. Watching these ducks come swooping down looking forward to feeding is like seeing your presents Christmas morning. I believe that ducks and other waterfowl are here to stay and remain an important part of our heritage.

# Coming Events

## September

Clara Sheldon Smith, Art Photographer exhibit continues through November at the Museum

## October

- 5 “The Negative and the Positive,” Photo Preservation Program with Allan Lamb, 7:00 pm at the Museum
  
- 15 Membership Luncheon at Ruthy’s in Yuba City  
Saturday, October 15, 11:30 am  
Cost \$16, advance reservations required  
Program: Don Burtis on the History of Sutter City  
See flyer inside Bulletin
  
- 17 Volunteer Appreciation, 10:00 a.m. at the Museum
  
- 21 Ghost Stories Program, 7:00 pm at the Museum
  
- 27 Ornament Workshop, 10:00 am at the Museum

## November

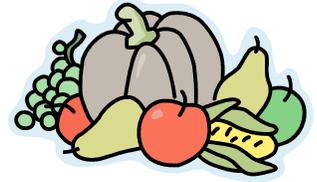
- 16 Ornament Workshop, 10:00 am at the Museum
  
- 27 *Clara Sheldon Smith, Art Photographer* exhibit ends

## December

- 1 Decoration Day, 9:00 a.m. to finish at the Museum – stay as long or as little as you like
  
- 2 Hors d’oeuvres Workshop, 1:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room kitchen at the Museum
  
- 3 Trees and Traditions Christmas Gala, 5:00 p.m. at the Museum
  
- 18 Children’s Program and Open House, 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the Museum

# Puzzling

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



Arguello	Bonaventure
Crowhurst	Fairview
Hanna	Heflin
Henley	Hudsonsbay
Jedediah	Kentucky
Lamb	Michigan
Moraga	Murphreesboro
Preservation	Ramsdell
Rubiales	Sheldon
Willey	Withington

# **General Membership Meeting**

**Saturday, October 15 at 11:30 a.m.**

**at Ruthy's**

**229 Clark Avenue, Yuba City**

**\$16 per person**

**Reservations required**

**Program: History of Sutter City**

**Don Burtis**