



Vol. LIX No. 2

Yuba City, California

April 2017

OUR GOALS IN 1954

Collect historical facts and records pertaining to Sutter County; utilize this material in preparing history publications

Establish a museum for the display and preservation of the material

Foster good citizenship through the encouragement of interest in local history

OUR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 63 YEARS

Historical Society Bulletin published quarterly since 1954

Carriage Square Museum
Howard Harter Memorial Park
Community Memorial Museum
East Wing Expansion
Agricultural Wing
Front Patio

Long-time Historical Society Members made these possible

Ettl Hall
Schnabel & Dean Patio

Quarterly Membership Meetings
Historic Building Survey
Hock Farm Refurbishment
Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest
Century Farms Project
Onstott House memorial plaque

**Our work continues through the
Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County**



OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Sarah Pryor, President

Kim Cupples, Vice President

Phyllis Smith, Secretary/Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Joe Bouchard — 2009*

Steve Perry — 1994

Constance Cary — 1987

Sarah Pryor — 2008

Kim Cupples — 2014

Leona Pennington — 2006

Bob Mackensen — 2002

Margit Sands — 2007

Phyllis Smith — 2000

*The year the director joined the Board.

Like us on Facebook!

Check out our website - Suttercountyhistory.org

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

The 2017 dues are payable as of January 1, 2017. Mail your check to the Community Memorial Museum at 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City, 95993-2301 530-822-7141

Student (under 18)/Senior/Library.....	\$ 20
Individual	\$ 25
Organizations/Clubs	\$ 35
Family	\$ 40
Business/Sponsor.....	\$ 100
Corporate/Benefactor.....	\$1000

President's Message

Spring has come to the Sacramento Valley once again. Our plentiful rain has irrigated the Sutter Buttes very well. I think they are the most green I have ever seen them, and they will probably be full of wildflowers this year. I hope you are planning to join us for the Old Fashioned Picnic in the Buttes on Saturday, April 29. You can see the details on the back cover of this Bulletin. The picnic is a potluck, so bring something to share and we will provide drinks, utensils, chairs and tables. Last year we had lots of fried chicken which I think I will bring again this year.

If you like to walk, you can join Joe after lunch for a hike to see the pretty flowers and view. I will sit around the picnic area and share stories of Sutter Buttes history. Last year had some new faces at our picnic and quite a few came back just to enjoy the day. I hope you can join us.

I know that the end of April can be very busy but tell yourself this is the year to see those beautiful Buttes while they are still so green.

Jessica and Sharyl have been very busy at the Museum. If you have not been there to visit recently take some time to stop by and see the art on display. A good day is a visit to the Museum in the morning and lunch afterward. It is a way to introduce friends to our area, especially if you go to the New Earth Market for lunch. They have an excellent salad bar and lunch menu. Also be sure to browse the Museum store — as a member of Sutter County Historical Society and Museum you get a 10% discount.

I hope this season of sunshine finds you healthy and happy.

Sarah Pryor

President

In this issue:

Director's Report	2
Memorials	3
History of the Sutter County Historical Society	4
Women of the Gold Rush	9
Diary of an Average Housewife	17
Calendar of Events	19
Puzzle	20

Director's Report

There is so much going on at the Museum right now, I don't know where to start. In mid-March we hosted Beverly Sheppard, a former Interim Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. She has been working with the Museum Commission on their Strategic Plan, and came out to moderate a Visioning Session involving local elected officials, museum supporters, business owners and potential partners. Attendance was great, and the conversation was fantastic. Many innovative ideas were shared, and the Museum made a lot of new friends. Beverly also gave a public presentation on *The Gift of History*, which was well-attended and very enjoyable.

Beverly's presentation occurred the same night as the feedback session on the Oroville Dam evacuation that was organized by Senator Nielsen and Assemblyman Gallagher, and many of our attendees crossed the street after her presentation to attend the feedback session. We have a survey available at the Museum for members of the public to share their feedback on the evacuation. These surveys will be shared with elected officials at every level who represent this area. Please, if you have thoughts, suggestions or frustrations about how the evacuation was handled, come by and fill one out!

Exhibits have been fast and furious lately – after the *Gold Fever!* exhibit we had the Scholastic Art Awards for a seven-county region. I'm thrilled to share that two students from our region won awards in the national level of the competition. One of them is local and attends River Valley High School. We will be continuing to host the Scholastic Art Awards in the future, so if you know anyone between grades 7-12 who is artistically talented, please encourage them to participate! If you want more information on how to do so, come and visit with me about it. After the Scholastic Art Awards was our annual show of work from River Valley High School students, and currently we are showing the art from Yuba City High School. Opening in late May will be *100 Years: The Sutter County Library*, which we will have on display through mid-August.

The Commission is trying a new fundraiser this year – Dinner Theater! A murder mystery, to be precise. I don't want to give too much away, but the show will be held on June 9, 10 and 11. Tickets will be available soon, so come get them early – you don't want to miss this production!

Finally, as many of you have heard, our fountain out front is in need of repair. Many of you have already responded to my plea to pitch in, but we still need more funds before we can do the work. Every penny counts, and we could really use your help with this!

As always, thank you for everything you do to support the Museum, and the preservation of this area's history.

Jessica Hougen
Director/Curator

Memorials

In memory of **Bob Bryant**

Connie Cary
Sharyl Simmons

In memory of **Debra Bryant**

Connie Cary
Mike & Ann Chesini
Janet Forderhase Gomes
Marilyn "Babs" Lonon
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Smith
Julie Stark
Cynthia Struckmeyer
Sutter Buttes Garden Club
David & Gina Tarke

In memory of **Demesio Conejo**

Rose & Bob Wood

In memory of **James Willard Crowhurst**

Marnee Crowhurst

In memory of **Daniel J. Desmond**

Judith Micheli Boyd

In memory of **Deanna DeWitt**

Richard Farabaugh
Linda DeWitt Fillhardt
Steven Richardson
Carol Withington

In memory of **Doris Doll**

Helene & Michael Andrews

In memory of **Lester "Bud" Doty**

Connie Cary
Sharyl Simmons
Phyllis Smith
Julie Stark

In memory of **Ken Lytle**

Helene & Michael Andrews
Stan & Jeanette Christopherson
Ron Schuler

In memory of **Sue Moore**

Alice Chesini

In memory of **Alfred "Ted" Moroni**

Carmen Frye

In memory of **Suellen Teesdale**

Merlyn Rudge

In memory of **Mary Toyoda**

Alice Chesini
Jim, Marilyn, Frank & Julia
Davidson
Geraldine Lemenager
Bob & Martha Shogren
Mel Tsuji

In memory of **Jane Morris Washburn**

Helene & Michael Andrews

In memory of **Merle G. Weber**

Jim Staas

In honor of **Tony Kurlan**

Russell & Donna Clark

In honor of **Sue West**

Gene & Lisa Robinson
Joyce McKern

Outright Gift

Allen & Kathleen Herr

To support repair of the Fountain

Laura Goble
Kimberly Heisch
Danielle Lavy
Scott Mitnick
David & Meredith Morford
Phyllis Smith
Carol Withington

Celebrate the Sutter County Historical Society

This spring the membership of the Sutter County Historical Society voted to dissolve the organization and merge its resources with the Community Memorial Museum Commission. As we close this chapter in the Historical Society's own history, we thought it fitting to celebrate all the Society has accomplished in its long life.

The Historical Society was founded on May 25, 1954 when twenty-one people gathered to establish the Society. At that meeting they talked about by-laws, a constitution, aims, incorporation and membership. The group held elections, formed committees, and chose an emblem: the Sutter Buttes.

The Society adopted these goals:

- To collect historical facts and records pertaining to Sutter County
- To utilize this material in preparing history publications
- To establish a museum for the display and preservation of the material
- To foster good citizenship through the encouragement of interest in local history

The work of the Historical Society has been important to our local community and culture, and that work will continue under the auspices of the Museum Commission. The Commission will continue the Historical Society's important programs, such as publishing the Bulletin, holding the membership meetings, including the Picnic in the

Buttes, and the conducting research on Century Farms.

A review of over 60 years of Bulletins provides a window into the many noteworthy accomplishments of the Historical Society.

Membership

Starting with the original group of twenty-one people in the Society, we quickly grew and in one year reached a total of sixty-five members. By 1961 there were ninety-two members and in 1962 we established the Honorary life Membership, the Sustaining Membership, and an Active Membership. In 1985, we joined with the Museum to offer our members a dual membership in both organizations with the membership fees shared by the two organizations. Each group retained its own identity, but began working together toward our mutual goals of raising funds for building additions to the museum and the production and distribution of the Bulletin. Membership at the time of the reorganization was 248 and in 2004 our active membership was nearly 400. Today we have just over 300 members.

News Bulletin

Volume I, No. 1 appeared in November 1954; you are currently reading Volume LIX, No. 2. Through a progression of editors and bulletin committees, the Quarterly Bulletin has been a great success. Much of Sutter County's history is recorded in articles published in the Bulletin.

The Carriage Square Museum

An original aim of the Society was the establishment of a museum. Earlier in the Society's history, exhibit

cases in the newly completed County building allowed us to share some of our artifacts with the community. With the completion of Carriage Square (at the intersection of Bridge Street and Highway 99) in 1963, an offer was made by the owner/builder to provide space for a museum. The Society directors signed a lease in January of 1964 and immediately started to occupy the space and display the many pieces donated to the Society. The museum opened on May 17, 1964. Admission was free and the museum was staffed entirely by volunteers. Donated artifacts were organized, cataloged and displayed. Many items were transferred to the new Museum.

Memorial Museum Park to Honor Sutter County Pioneers and Servicemen

In 1971, with the acceptance by the Sutter County Board of Supervisors of a gift from Howard H. and Norma Harter of 4.74 acres of land at the Onstott Freeway (Highway 99) and Butte House Road as well as a donation by Gilbert Williamson, the Society moved ahead in achieving its aims. The Society instituted a special fund for the development of the property to include a park in a "living Memorial" grove and plans to build a community museum began to take shape.

Park development continues to this day. With the establishment of a museum commission came the establishment of a park committee to oversee, and participate in, the development of the site. Volunteers from the Sutter Buttes Garden Club maintain the rose garden and other plantings. The park now has a grove of mature trees, a butterfly garden and a memorial rose garden. All of these

have added significantly to the beauty of the park.

Until the addition of Ettl Hall, the Historical Society held its "Picnic in the Park" membership meeting in the park with a potluck luncheon. The park is used by local residents for weddings, family reunions, picnics and other events.

Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County, Butte House Road

On October 1, 1973, with the establishment of the Community Memorial Trust Fund and the County's acquisition of the strip of land between the existing Memorial Park and Butte House Road, plans were underway for a new museum. Plans for a 4,480 square foot museum were developed, approved by the Board of Supervisors, and with funding assured the groundbreaking took place in September 1974. Construction was by Neves Construction Co. with a bid of \$137,189. The museum was completed and accepted by the County on April 25, 1975.

The museum provided administrative, gallery, work and storage space as well as room for a library and document storage, a reception area and a small gift shop. Moving day from Carriage Square was set for April 24, 1976. In September 1975, a Community Museum Auxiliary was formed. The initial 40 volunteers became an essential part of the museum operation. The Auxiliary assisted as hosts and hostesses, worked with the collection in accessioning and cataloging procedures, and assisted in special museum functions.

With the Museum now operating as a Sutter County facility under the

direction of the Sutter County Board of Supervisors and a permanent museum director, the management and staffing of the Museum was no longer the responsibility of the Historical Society.

Sutter County Historical Society Building Fund

The Society adopted new goals with the establishment of a building fund and a commitment to continue publishing and distributing the Quarterly Bulletin.

By July 1978, it was recognized that the original facility did not have space for storage for the Museum's collection. A proposal was made and approved to build a 1,200 square foot east wing. The money for the expansion came from donations and fundraisers and in 1983 the first addition to the original plan was completed and occupied.

In 1985 it became apparent that the Museum's collection had once again outgrown the current space. Another proposal was put forth to add an additional wing on the west side of the Museum to provide space for exhibits featuring the agricultural history of Sutter County. This project was also approved and donations and fundraising began in earnest to fund this expansion. Early in 1998 the announcement was made that sufficient funds were on hand, or had been pledged, to proceed with the construction of the agricultural wing. Plans were drawn, permits approved and a contract was signed. Extra costs, set-backs and unforeseen hurdles demanded much time and effort to ensure the success of this building project. Finally, the County

accepted the building and the new wing was dedicated on May 16, 1999.

The beautifully designed exhibit in the Agricultural Wing was presented to Historical Society members at the meeting in January of 2003. Precious mementoes of Sutter County agricultural history, such as the Yuba Ball tractor, are displayed, along with a mural of the Hock Farm and vintage farming implements.

In 2003 the Museum opened its patio, which was built with assistance from the Historical Society. The patio is used for museum activities from fundraisers to children's programs. Engraved paving stones dedicated in memory or in honor of individuals, families and organizations are installed in the patio and are still available for sale. The patio is open during museum hours and visitors to the museum are encouraged to visit their paver or to just take an opportunity to enjoy the tranquility of the site. A wrought-iron gate with a Buttes scene decorates the entrance.

In 2011 the Museum unveiled its latest addition, Ettl Hall. While not a Historical Society project, the meeting room was made possible by the generous bequeathment of a long-time Museum and Historical Society volunteer, Dorothy Ettl. Dorothy served on the Board of Directors and as the Society's Treasurer for several terms, and her sister Sarah Pryor is the current Society President. The Schnabel and Dean Patio was added with funds from the families of Randy Schnabel and Shirley Dean Schnabel, also long-time volunteers with the Museum and the Historical Society. Randy was instrumental in the formulation of the Society and served

as President three terms. Their daughter Margit Sands currently serves on the Board of Directors.

Local Preservation Activities

In February, 2003 the Jacob Onstott House was demolished by a bulldozer in the middle of the night. The local historically-minded community was outraged and ultimately the responsible developer funded a survey of local historic properties which was completed in 2007. Although we hired a professional firm to oversee the survey, much of the fieldwork was conducted by volunteers. That same year the Historical Society placed a memorial plaque for the Onstott House at the entrance to River Valley High School, which sits on the former Onstott property.

In January, 2011, after literally years of hard work, the Historical Society celebrated the refurbishment of the doors at John Sutter's Hock Farm on Garden Highway south of Yuba City by rededicating the historical monument marking this historically important site and its newly painted and labeled doors. Many members and other citizens of the area met at the doors for commemorating speeches and the opportunity to recreate a photo originally taken in 1930 at the original dedication of the monument.

Educational Activities

As a way to introduce people to our special mountains, the Historical Society offered the Bus Trip Around the Buttes and a Hike in the Sutter Buttes. People from all over Northern California visited our area and learned about the history and pre-history of the Buttes and Sutter County. In the last few years we have provided an opportunity for members and others to

picnic in the Buttes. Our quarterly membership meetings, open to everyone, showcase a variety of topics of interest to our members and others, and the News Bulletin publishes articles on history of Sutter County and surrounding areas.

For many years, together with the Museum, we sponsored the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest, which promoted the exploration and understanding of our history by fourth and fifth grade students in Sutter County.

In 2010 the Society sponsored a bus tour of the Sutter Basin. The tour started in Robbins and visited the Karnak Pumping Station, the Sutter Basin Growers Co-op, the Hiatt house, the Reclamation District 1500 and Sutter Mutual Water Company office, Wooley's grave, and the Tisdale pumps and fish screen. This popular tour provided fascinating information on the history of the reclamation of this important agricultural district.

The Future

As stated at the beginning of this article, the work of the Historical Society will go on through the work of the Museum Commission, and there will always be opportunities for members and the community to be involved in the identification, preservation and promulgation of important historical events and artifacts in Sutter County. We invite all of you to be active participants as we continue on our journey.

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THOSE WHO SERVE...

Term	President	Vice President	Secretary	Treasurer
1954-1956	Noel Stevenson	1 st Frank Lamb 2 nd Ida Doty	Bernice Gibson	Harold Moore
1956-1958	Honora Laney			
1958	Eleanor Reische	Ida Doty	Bernice Gibson	Earl Ramey
1959-1961	Wm. A. Greene			
1961-1963	Florence Arritt	1 st Mrs. E. Littlejohn 2 nd Dr. H. Medford	Bernice Gibson	Earl Ramey
1963-1964	Bernice Gibson		R. Redhair	
1964-1965	Bernice Gibson		Florence Arritt	
1965-1966	Mrs. T.E. Nason		S. Wilder	
1966-1967	Mrs. T.E. Nason		Jessica Bird	
1967-1969	Howard Harter		Jessica Bird	
1969-1975	Randy Schnabel	James Barr	Jessica Bird	Lola Case
1975-1977	Wanda Rankin	Donald Bielby	Mrs. Roy Varney	Mrs. Keith Lennox
1977-1979	Indra Nason	Donald Bielby	Connie Cary	Wanda Rankin
1979-1981	Randy Schnabel	Donald Bielby	Barbara Rosso	Wanda Rankin
1981-1985	Dewey Gruening	Edward Eden	Dorothy Huggin	Wanda Rankin
1985-1987	Randy Schnabel	Edward Eden	Dorothy Huggin	Wanda Rankin
1987-1989	Edward Eden	Elaine Tarke	Connie Cary	Wanda Rankin
1990	Elaine Tarke	Brock Bowen	Connie Cary	Wanda Rankin
1991-1993	Brock Bowen	Linda Leone	Connie Cary	Linda Leone
1993-1995	Evelyn Quigg	Bruce Harter	Connie Cary	Linda Leone
1995-1997	Bruce Harter	Steve Perry	Connie Cary	Linda Leone
1997-2001	Steve Perry	Audrey Breeding	Connie Cary	Linda Leone
2001-2003	John Reische	Audrey Breeding	Connie Cary	Dorothy Ettl
2003-2005	Tom Crowhurst	Audrey Breeding	Connie Cary & Bonnie Ayers	Dorothy Ettl
2005-2007	Audrey Breeding	Bob Mackensen	Connie Cary	Phyllis Smith
2007-2009	Audrey Breeding	Bob Mackensen	Phyllis Smith	Phyllis Smith
2009-2011	Audrey Breeding	Sarah Pryor	Phyllis Smith	Phyllis Smith
2012-2013	Sarah Pryor	Vicki Rorke	Phyllis Smith	Phyllis Smith
2014-2016	Sarah Pryor	Joe Bouchard	Phyllis Smith	Phyllis Smith
2016-2017	Sarah Pryor	Kim Cupples	Phyllis Smith	Phyllis Smith

Women in the California Gold Rush

by

Prof. David M. Rubiales

Yuba College History Dept. (Emeritus)

Professor Rubiales gave this talk at the Community Memorial Museum on Saturday, February 11, 2017, in conjunction with the Museum's exhibit "Gold Fever! Untold Stories of the California Gold Rush."

In 1846 there were 15,000 Californians of Mexican descent and 100,000 Indians in Alta California. The territory was a distant frontier of the Mexican Republic and the remotest place in the Spanish-speaking world. Of the Native American population, only those living along or near the coast had been missionized.¹

By the end of 1849 nearly 100,000 Americans had moved to the state, half having come by land and half by sea. By the end of the next year California was no longer a territory of the Mexican Republic and instead the 35th state of the United States. For the next three years Americans and other nationalities, including Latin Americans, Chinese and French, along with other Europeans, poured into the new state, surpassing a quarter million gold seekers. Two-thirds of the total were Americans, while the other nationalities made up approximately one-tenth each.

Marysville, strategically located at the mouth of the Yuba River, became the depot of the Northern Mines (Yuba and Feather river systems) and emerged as the third-largest city (behind San Francisco and Sacramento)

in the state. Four steamers per day arrived in the city and stages left each day for Nevada City, Downieville, Oroville and points in between. The bulk of the population was not composed of rough frontiersmen but urbanites and farmers from the eastern United States who quickly transformed what was once a remote frontier into an extension of American society. The 1853 Marysville City Directory contained advertisements for banks; grocery stores that also sold brandies and Havana cigars; furniture stores that sold chandeliers, tableware, glass and crystal; jewelers; and watchmakers; and several hotels and restaurants, including the Hotel de France operated by Henri Videau. This enterprising Frenchman offered a menu that included *poisson en veriete*, *boeuf roti*, and *omelet sucre*. Of course, there were many gambling halls and brothels.

Indeed, in 1853 just about everything was available in Marysville except for one thing: white American women. The ratio of American men to American women was twelve to one. In 1850 a miner in Yuba City lamented, "I don't suppose there are a dozen women anywhere in the vicinity." On Deer Creek, in the gold town of Nevada, later to be known as Nevada

¹ The most inland mission was Soledad, thirty miles from the sea. The last and most northern mission was San Francisco Solano, now located in the present town of Sonoma.

City², a man exclaimed, “Got nearer to a female this evening than I have been for six months. Came near fainting.” In 1872, in his travelogue *Roughing It*, Mark Twain memorialized the frustration that American men in California felt in regards to the lack of women. The following account may or not have occurred, but nevertheless Twain captured the sentiments of the time and place.

In those days miners would flock in crowds to catch a glimpse of that rare and blessed spectacle, a woman! Old inhabitants tell how, in a certain camp, the news went abroad early in the morning that a woman was come! They had seen a calico dress hanging out of a wagon down at the camping-ground — sign of emigrants from over the great plains. Everybody went down there, and a shout went up when an actual, bona fide dress was discovered fluttering in the wind! The male emigrant was visible. The miners said:

“Fetch her out!”

He said: “It is my wife, gentlemen — she is sick — we have been robbed of money, provisions, everything, by the Indians — we want to rest.”

“Fetch her out! We’ve got to see her!”

“But, gentlemen, the poor thing, she—“

“FETCH HER OUT!”

He “fetched her out,” and they swung their hats and sent up three rousing cheers and a tiger; and they crowded around and gazed at her, and touched her dress, and listened to her voice with the look of men who listened to a memory rather than a present reality — and then they collected twenty-five hundred dollars in gold and gave it to the man, and swung their hats again and gave three more cheers, and went home satisfied.

Actually, there were women in California, but they were women of color such as Native American, Latin American and Asian. White male American gold seekers, however, were quite rigid in their ideas about mixing with other races and ethnicities. Interestingly, their pioneer predecessors in the Sacramento Valley, men such as John Sutter on the American River, John Bidwell on Chico Creek and Theodore Cordua on the Yuba River had far fewer reservations about racial mingling, each one keeping Indian concubines for their intimate personal pleasure.³

Ironically, the lack of white women in California meant that for those who had managed to get to the 35th state of the Union there were opportunities not available in their home states. At home in the east, women were constrained by the fixed ideas of a “woman’s place” in society that had developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which began in the late 18th century and was well under way by 1849. Vast changes in

² The creation of the state of Nevada in 1864 caused the town of Nevada in California to change its name to Nevada City.

³ John Sutter arrived in California with a Hawaiian concubine.

production and consumption of goods led to changes both in the countryside among agrarian people and in cities, which grew rapidly with the rise of factory production. Factory production led increasingly to the rise of an industrial middle class. This new group was primarily urban and divorced from agrarianism. Since there was no farm work to be done there was less need for large families and there was also no need for the economic activities that women performed on farms, such as spinning and candle making. Those activities were transferred to factories.

Reflecting the new factory system, a new socio-economic ideology regarding a “woman’s place” replaced the agrarian ideology that was prevalent prior to the end of the 18th century. Historians have labeled it the “Cult of True Womanhood” and it redefined a woman’s place in everyday life. In contrast to the vigorous demands of farm life that were placed on women as well as men, urban women were to be, in comparison to men, dependent and fragile, passive, domestic and not worldly, and asexual. The new ideology also assumed that women were inherently more moral than men. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the leading American philosopher of his era, summed up this ideology by stating

Women should not be expected to write, or fight, or build, or compose scores; she does all by inspiring man to do all.⁴

Godey’s Lady’s Book, the most widely circulated magazine in the period before the Civil War, quite clearly supported Emerson’s views.

⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*, 1841.

Be not led away by all you hear and read now-a-days about the rights of women and their intellectual equality. There is nothing more dangerous for a young woman than to rely chiefly upon her intellectual powers, by her wit, her imagination, her fancy.⁵

The American 49ers brought the ideology of The Cult of True Womanhood to California’s gold fields, but the extreme imbalance of the men-to-women ratio disrupted its practical imposition. Those American women who did manage to reach California were frequently able to break the bonds of forced domesticity and practice what historians term *self-agency*, the ability to realize one’s own agenda or goals.⁶ To be sure, women from the east were still restricted, but not to the degree of their eastern counterparts. In the east women were discouraged from earning money on their own, but in California during the Gold Rush opportunities abounded for a woman to earn her own fortune, if not in the gold fields, then in towns and camps doing “woman’s work.”

Most miners had never cooked nor had they ever done laundry. Both chores were considered woman’s work and back east a man expected a wife or mother, or perhaps a sister, to cook and wash clothes without pay.

In California, however, the men were more than willing to pay for a meal cooked by a woman. Luzena

⁵ *Godey’s Lady Book*, 1844.

⁶ This discussion does not include prostitution. Prostitutes generally did not control their own lives and therefore did not practice self-agency.

Stanley Wilson realized this in 1850 after arriving in Nevada City.

I cast my thoughts about me for some plan to assist in the recuperation of the family finances. As always occurs to the mind of a woman, I thought of taking boarders. There was already a thriving establishment of the kind just down the road, under the shelter of a canvas roof, as was set forth by its sign in lamp-black on a piece of cloth: "Wamac's Hotel. Meals \$1.00." I determined to set up a rival hotel. So I bought two boards from a precious pile belonging to a man who was building the second wooden house in town. With my own hands I chopped stakes, drove them into the ground, and set up my table. I bought provisions at a neighboring store, and when my husband came back at night he found, mid the weird light of the pine torches, twenty miners eating at my table. Each man as he rose put a dollar in my hand and said I might count him as a permanent customer. I called my hotel "El Dorado." From the first day it was well patronized, and I shortly after took my husband into partnership.

Luzena Wilson had joined just over half of the other women in Nevada City (twelve of twenty-three) in providing cooking and boarding to miners. Men were also willing to pay for laundry. This was much more difficult labor than cooking, but also more profitable. An American woman was able to earn \$50.00 – \$60.00 per day washing her male countrymen's

clothes.⁷ Mining would have been even more profitable for a woman, but such an activity was viewed as male work and therefore off-limits. Self-agency had boundaries. Interestingly, white women from the European continent were less affected by the strictures of the Cult of True Womanhood. In 1851 in the mining town of Sonora the following was observed:

A Frenchman and his wife live in the nearest tent, and they dig gold together. She dresses exactly like her husband – red shirt and pants and hat.

Perhaps the most lasting impact of self-agency was from a woman who wrote. Louisa Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe, better known today as *Dame Shirley*⁸, probably made less money than women who worked at laundry or cooking, but she gained lasting recognition through her writing. A "Yankee Lady," Dame Shirley was educated at Amherst Academy, the best education available to an American woman at that time. She arrived in California in 1849 with her husband, Fayette Clappe, who practiced medicine, but most likely without a medical degree. The couple settled in Marysville (south of the city on a ranch) and in June, 1851 Dr. Clappe left for the "diggings." Dame Shirley joined him in September at Rich Bar on the Feather River. While ostensibly observing the strictures of

⁷ One dollar in 1850 would have been worth twenty dollars today, but a pound of coffee sold for \$40.00, a pair of boots for \$100.00, a pound of beans for \$10.00, and a shirt for \$20.00.

⁸ See *The Shirley Letters from the California Mines, 1851-1852*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949. The most recent edition of the Shirley Letters is available at the Museum bookstore.

True Womanhood by not working outside of her and her husband's home, Dame Shirley broke with custom by keenly taking note of the events of the mining camp and jotting down her impressions. She sent her writing to her sister and later published her notes. Shirley reveled in the roughness of the mining camps and was as tough as any man, although she regarded herself as frail and home-loving. In actuality her passion for wandering and discovery completely invalidated the mythology of the cult of True Womanhood. In twenty-three letters, amounting to just under 200 pages, Dame Shirley wrote engagingly of travel, landscape, housekeeping and mining techniques. She also provided vivid descriptions of lynchings, riots and racial prejudice, presenting to posterity observations that demonstrated the dark side of the Gold Rush. Her portrayal of violence necessarily brings about the question as to whether the Gold Rush was more violent and chaotic because there were so few women around to keep men in line.

Dame Shirley wrote both of the exterior life, the outdoor landscape, and interior life, indoor amenities. Her descriptions of landscape between Marysville and Rich Bar revealed a sensitivity in which her emotions embraced nature.

I wish I could give you some faint idea of the majestic solitudes through which we passed, — where the pine-trees rise so grandly in their awful height, that they seem to look into heaven itself. Hardly a living thing disturbed this solemnly beautiful wilderness. Now and then a tiny lizard

glanced in and out among the mossy roots of the old trees, or a golden butterfly flitted languidly from blossom to blossom. Sometimes a saucy little squirrel would gleam along the somber trunk of some ancient oak, or a bevy of quail, with their pretty tufted heads and short, quick tread, would trip athwart our path...

Sometimes we were compelled to cross broad plains, acres in extent, called chaparrals, covered with low shrubs, which, leafless and barkless, stand like vegetable skeletons along the dreary waste. You cannot imagine what a weird effect these eldrich bushes had upon my mind. Of a ghastly whiteness, they at first reminded me of a plantation of antlers, and I amused myself by fancying them a herd of crouching deer; but they grew so wan and ghastly, that I began to look forward to the creeping cross a chaparral (it is no easy task for the mules to wind through them) with almost a feeling of dread.

But what a lovely sight greeted our enchanted eyes as we stopped for a few moments on the summit of the hill leading into Rich Bar! Deep in the shadowy nooks of the far-down valleys, like wasted jewels dropped from the radiant sky above, lay half a dozen blue-bosomed lagoons, glittering and gleaming and sparkling in the sunlight as though each tiny wavelet were formed of rifted diamonds.

After arriving at Rich Bar and settling in she wrote to her sister, describing her living quarters with humor and acceptance, perhaps even seeing a challenge before her. It is also evident that Dame Shirley did not travel light.

The room into which we have just entered is about twenty feet square. It is lined over the top with white cotton cloth, the breadths of which, being sewed together only in spots, stretch gracefully apart in many places, giving one a bird's-eye view of the shingles above. The sides are hung with a gaudy chintz, which I consider a perfect marvel of calico-printing. The artist seems to have exhausted himself on roses. From the largest cabbage down to the tiniest Burgundy, he has arranged them in every possible variety of wreath, garland, bouquet, and single flower. They are of all stages of growth, from earliest budhood up to the ravishing beauty of the last rose of summer. Nor has he confined himself to the colors usually worn by this lovely plant, but, with the daring of a great genius soaring above nature, worshiping the ideal rather than the real, he has painted them brown, purple, green, black, and blue. It would need a floral catalogue to give you the names of the varieties which bloom upon the calico, but, judging by the shapes, which really are much like the originals, I can swear to moss-roses, Burgundies, York and Lancaster, tea-roses, and multifloras.

A curtain of the above-described chintz (I shall hem it at the first opportunity) divides off a portion of the room, behind which stands a bedstead that in ponderosity leaves the Empire couches far behind. But before I attempt the furniture let me finish describing the cabin itself.

The fireplace is built of stones and mud, the chimney finished off with alternate layers of rough sticks and this same rude mortar. Contrary to the usual custom, it is built inside, as it was thought that arrangement would make the room more comfortable, and you may imagine the queer appearance of this unfinished pile of stones, mud, and sticks. The mantelpiece (remember that on this portion of a great building some artists, by their exquisite workmanship, have become world-renowned) is formed of a beam of wood covered with strips of tin procured from cans, upon which still remain, in black hieroglyphics, the names of the different eatables which they formerly contained. Two smooth stones (how delightfully primitive !) do duty as fire-dogs. I suppose that it would be no more than civil to call a hole two feet square, in one side of the room, a window, although it is as yet guiltless of glass. F. tried to coax the proprietor of the Empire to let him have a window from that pine-and-canvas palace, but he, of course, declined, as to part with it would really inconvenience

himself. So F. has sent to Marysville for some glass, though it is the general opinion that the snow will render the trail impassible for mules before we can get it. In this case we shall tack up a piece of cotton cloth, and should it chance at any time to be very cold, hang a blanket before the opening... For my part, I almost hope that we shall not be able to get any glass, for you will perhaps remember that it was a pet habit of mine, in my own room, to sit by a great fire, in the depth of winter, with my window open...

The looking-glass is one of those which come in paper cases for dolls' houses. How different from the full-length psyches so almost indispensable to a dressing-room in the States! The wash-stand is another trunk, covered with a towel, upon which you will see, for bowl, a large vegetable-dish, for ewer, a common-sized dining pitcher. Near this, upon a small cask, is placed a pail, which is daily filled with water from the river. I brought with me from Marysville a handsome carpet, a hair mattress, pillows, a profusion of bedlinen, quilts, blankets, towels, etc., so that, in spite of the oddity of most of my furniture, I am, in reality, as thoroughly comfortable here as I could be in the most elegant palace. We have four chairs, which were brought from the Empire.

No one who participated in the Gold Rush described the intricacies of mining better than Dame Shirley, even

though she herself did not, except for a brief fling, dig for gold.

A company, to which a friend of ours belongs, has dug a ditch about a foot in width and depth, and more than three miles in length, which is fed in this way. I wish that you could see this ditch. I never beheld a natural streamlet more exquisitely beautiful. It undulates over the mossy roots and the gray old rocks like a capricious snake, singing all the time a low song with the "liquidest murmur," and one might almost fancy it the airy and coquettish Undine herself. When it reaches the top of the hill, the sparkling thing is divided into five or six branches, each one of which supplies one, two, or three long-toms. There is an extra one, called the waste-ditch, leading to the river, into which the water is shut off at night and on Sundays. This race (another and peculiar name for it) has already cost the company more than five thousand dollars. They sell the water to others at the following rates. Those that have the first use of it pay ten per cent upon all the gold that they take out as the water runs off from their machine (it now goes by the elegant name of "tailings"), it is taken by a company lower down, and as it is not worth so much as when it was clear, the latter pay but seven per cent. If any others wish the tailings, now still less valuable than at first, they pay four per cent on all the gold which they take out, be it much or little. The water companies

are constantly in trouble, and the arbitrations on that subject are very frequent.

The Shirley Letters were written over a period of fifteen months when the author was thirty-two years old. After their return to San Francisco the Clappes divorced and Dame Shirley eventually returned to the east.

By 1860 the female population in California had increased to 30 percent, most of them white. In the camps of the mining counties, however, the number was only two percent. It took several more years and the advent of rail travel before California's female population reached normal levels and California became a normal society.



*"Woman at Auburn Ravine," 1852 daguerreotype
Used by permission of the California State Library*

The Diary of an Average Housewife

by

Estelle Crowhurst

Estelle Crowhurst wrote a weekly column about her life for the Independent Herald from 1948 until 1969. The Crowhurst family donated a bound copy of these columns to the Museum. The following are excerpts from some early columns.

July 8, 1954 (Family Visits)

One of the wishes of most mothers, I think, is that when her children have grown and flown from the nest, so to speak, they will always feel eager to return. At least, I have always felt that way. And having only boys, I have thought many times how sad it would be, when our family were all grown and had homes of their own, if the boys, as is sometimes the case, should be weaned away from home. So often the wife is happier to return to her own family and forgets that her husband might like to be with his family. But we have been most fortunate.

Our married son, who lives 30 miles away from us, comes home often with his family and they have always led us to believe that they really enjoy being here. Needless to say the grandchildren really love to make their permanent homes with us. Which, I understand, is a natural attitude of young grandchildren.

So we have been, as I say, fortunate. Even though, sometimes when they leave, we heave big, long sighs, lean back in the nearest chairs and admit that we are shredded. When the oldest little grandchild was a baby and they lived in Berkeley, their arrival for a weekend, or a week, was really an event. The car unloading went on

for hours, it seemed to me. With each trip to the car, I would wonder anew where we would put that load. Just try stowing away bassinet, playpen, suitcases full of diapers, plastic pants, clothing of all sorts, sweaters, blankets, bottles and formula ingredients, to mention just a few things.

After a few days in the house with all that extra impedimenta, not to mention the baby and her fond parents and grandparents, as well as the over-fond uncles, I always felt like something that had been through a tornado, and when these two fond parents told us very happily, that they were expecting another baby, I felt as if I had been hit below the belt. I didn't see how we could possibly take care of double the amount of visiting paraphernalia as well as babies.

But when the new baby came, we somehow found just as much room for four as we had for two and then three visitors. And now that there are three little grandchildren, they all fit in just as comfortably. And of course they are all simply darling. Their unbounded pleasure on arriving at Grandma's more than compensates for the hubbub and clutter that seems to accompany their visit.

Although the whole family never comes to stay overnight anymore, since

they now live near us, the girls spend many a long weekend with us and the only unpleasant moment of the whole stay is when they must go home. We promise each other that the next visit will be very soon, and that the current visitor will soon have another turn. The pleasure of the visit is indeed mutual. And I often think when they leave how I used to wonder how on earth we would ever manage when there were two and then three grandchildren to take care of for house guests. We manage just wonderfully.

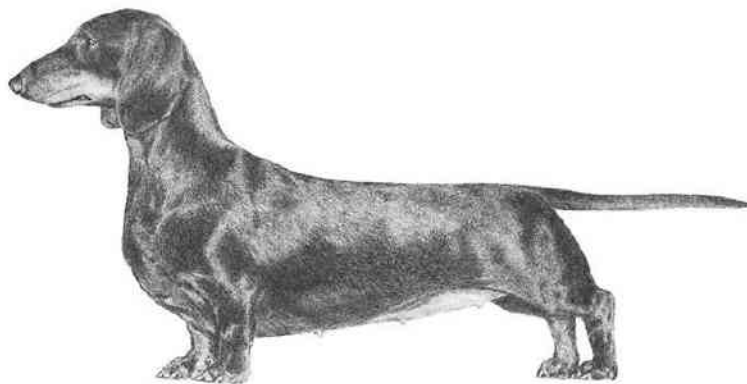
But last Sunday I was really stopped, for a few minutes, at least. I had asked the grandchildren and their parents to come over for dinner Sunday. They arrived before noon, and as usual the girls came running in first from the car. In a minute the parents appeared with the little man, the one-year-old. After much fond mutual admiration, the girls said, "We have Phoebe with us." I thought I must be hearing things. Phoebe is their dachshund, a beautiful sleek little creature, whom they all love very dearly. She was sleek, that is until the last few months. Just a month ago Phoebe presented her owners with nine

beautiful little purebred dachshunds. Up until that time, I forgot to mention, when the family of five came to call, Phoebe always came with them. But since her confinement, of course she had been forced to spend the time at home, like all good mothers, with her family. So you can imagine my surprise when the girls said Phoebe was with them. I supposed of course that they were just leading me on, and said, "How could Phoebe go away and leave her nine little babies without any way of getting their dinner?"

To which they replied, "Oh, we brought 'em all over too."

And so they had. They decided that Phoebe was getting pretty tired of just staying home and taking care of such a big family, and that she needed an outing.

And we had a real nice Sunday. But seven or eight years ago I would never have believed it possible that I could have five or six extra people for dinner, and a visiting dog and her litter of nine pups and be able to say truthfully, if a little wearily, as I fell into bed that night, "Wasn't it a nice Sunday?"



*Courtesy of American Kennel Club
Used by permission*

<http://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/americankennelclub/Smooth-Dachshund.jpg>

Calendar of Events

April

- 23 *River Valley High School* art exhibit closes at the Museum
- 28 Aondreaa the Storyteller performs *Mythologically Speaking – 4 Classic Greek Myths*, 7:00 pm in Ettl Hall
- 29 *Yuba City High School* art exhibit opens at the Museum
- 29 **Picnic in the Sutter Buttes**
Meet at 10:00 am at the Community Memorial Museum
\$10 for members, \$15 for non-members, \$30 for families
See back cover for details

May

- 21 *Yuba City High School* art exhibit closes at the Museum
- 27 – *100 Years – The Sutter County Library* exhibit opens at the Museum

June

- 9 – 11 *Murder at Café Noir* Dinner Theater Fundraiser in Ettl Hall
6/9-10, 6:00 p.m.; 6/11, 4:00 p.m.
- 17 **Potluck membership meeting in Ettl Hall, 11:30 a.m.**

August

- 20 *100 Years – The Sutter County Library* exhibit closes at the Museum
- 25 *Sutter Buttes Calendar* exhibit opens at the Museum

September

- 4 *Sutter Buttes Calendar* exhibit closes at the Museum
- 9 *The History of Hunting in Yuba-Sutter* – 5th Annual Fall Art Exhibit opens at the Museum

October

- 14 **Membership luncheon, 11:30 a.m., location to be announced**

November

- 12 *The History of Hunting in Yuba-Sutter* – 5th Annual Fall Art Exhibit closes at the Museum

Puzzling

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



AUBURN	MARYSVILLE
BUTTES	MONITOR
CARRIAGE	MUSEUM
CROWHURST	ONSTOTT
DACHSHUND	PATIO
DAGUERREOTYPE	PICNIC
DOWNIEVILLE	RAVINE
ETTL HALL	RUBIALES
GOLD RUSH	SHIRLEY
HOCK FARM	TWAIN

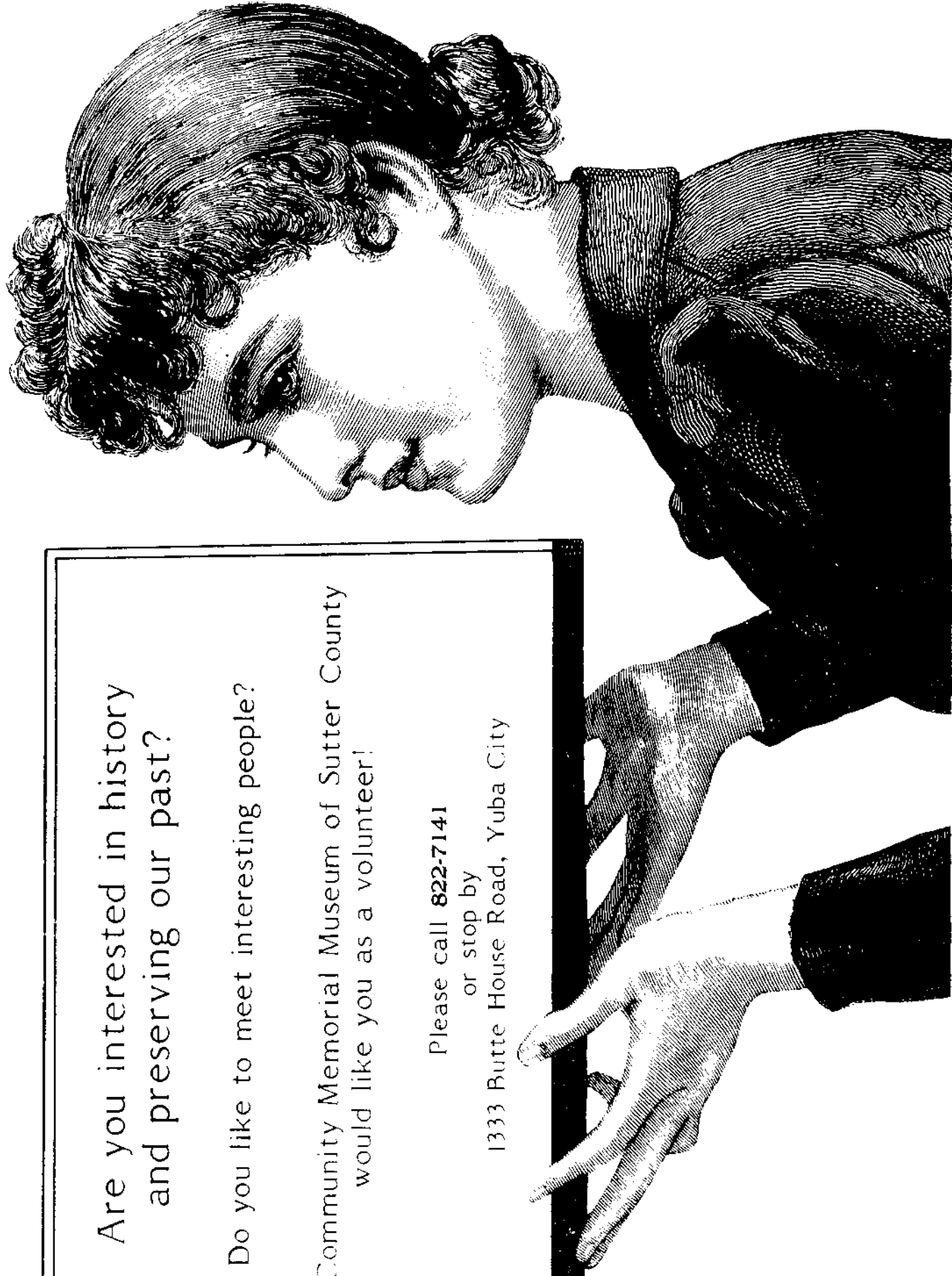
Are you interested in history
and preserving our past?

Do you like to meet interesting people?

The Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County
would like you as a volunteer!

Please call **822-7141**
or stop by

1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City



Picnic in the Buttes

Saturday, April 29, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

\$10 for members

\$15 for non-members

\$30 for families

Bring a dish to share

Drinks, tables and chairs provided

Optional wildflower walk

Meet at the Museum at 9:30 a.m.

1333 Butte House Road

Yuba City CA 95993

For information call Joe at 530-695-2430

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 1004
YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95992

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Yuba City, CA 95991
Permit No. 380