

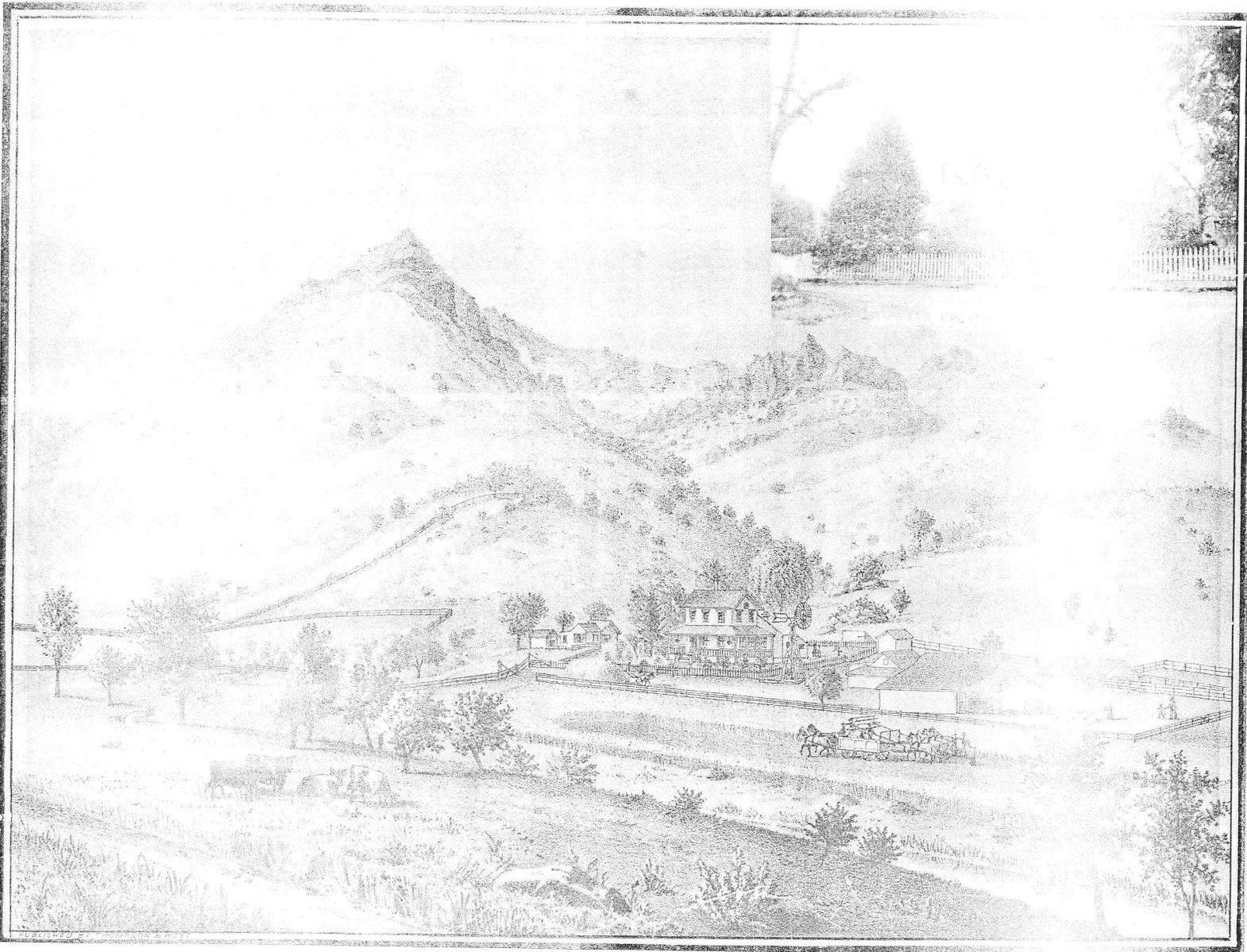
SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

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YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

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VIEW ON MOORE GETTY'S RANCH
IN SOUTH PASS OF THE SOUTH BUTTES, SITUATED 12 MILES NORTH WEST OF YUBA CITY, SUTTER CO. CAL.

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING

February 21, 1956 - 8 P.M.

Board of Supervisors Chambers

SPEAKER: Mr. Carroll D. Hall
Monument Supervisor Division of
Beaches & Parks

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Division of Beaches and Parks of the State of California, notified Noel Stevenson, President of the Society today that tentative approval had been given for a historical marker at the site of Hock Farm. Final approval is anticipated at the monthly meeting of the division next month.

EDITORIAL

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

By- Bernice Gibson
Secretary

Those of us in the business of education are often asked the question, "Why do we study history? We don't care about things that have taken place in the past." People, who have delved into the things of the past find that happenings of the past often reveal things that might take place in the future.

We, in Sutter county, have just come through an experience which might have been made a little easier if we had been cognizant of flood conditions of the past. In Mr. Stevenson's article, he tells us about conditions which happened in the 1861 flood which are parallel to conditions which took place on December 24, 1955.

History does not only repeat itself in disaster, but the spirit of the people today is the same as the spirit of the pioneers. Today, the people of Sutter county have returned to their lives with a spirit and determination to rehabilitate and "carry-on" which can only be compared to the spirit of the pioneers who came here to conquer the wilderness and the elements. They came with a purpose to establish homes and make a better life for themselves and the generations to follow. The homing instinct is still strong in the people of today. Our people were forced to leave in the night and leave their homes to the ravages of flood waters, but they returned with same rigor and determination of past generations, to re-establish and rebuild their homes and businesses.

So long as we have people with that kind of spirit Sutter county will prosper.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLOODS

By-Noel C. Stevenson

From earliest times prior to the settlement of Sutter county, and to a lesser extent since its settlement, the county has been swept by periodic floods. Several years would pass by without any incident, and then a wet season occurred and the weather went on a rampage. The incidence of these floods was not uniform. The violence of the floods varied also. Sometimes the puny levees first constructed channeled the water on to the ocean, but if it rained for several days, the levee system simply could not contain the surging water. As the years passed by the levee system was strengthened from year to year. But in spite of this improvement it is surprising how many floods racked the county before 1900.

1805 - According to information early settlers obtained from the Indians, there was a great flood about 1805, which inundated the entire valley, in which many lives were lost and many Indian villages were destroyed.

1825-26 - An old Indian known as "Indian Peter" still alive when the county was settled related the facts of a great flood in the winter of 1825-26. He stated that the trapping party he was with was compelled to camp in the Sutter Buttes due to the high water, and that the Buttes were full of bears, elk, antelope and smaller game that had taken refuge there.

1846-47 - During the winter season of these years, there was a great flood, which did little damage because there was not much to be injured.

1849-50 - During this period the early settlers received a sample of what they could expect in future years. The streets of Marysville were for a time muddy and almost impassable. The citizens of Yuba City experienced little difficulty because their higher location left them comparatively dry and comfortable. At this early date there was little property that could be injured, therefore there was little loss.

1852-53 - During this winter the country was more or less under water the whole season. The rains commenced early in November 1852 and before they subsided the settlers experienced a major flood. It rained on and off during November and the first part of December. During the last week of December it rained continuously. The rivers were both very high and the water backed up spreading all over the country. Communication from the towns with the outside world and between the farmers, had to be maintained by boats. The flood peak was reached in March 1853. By this time the merchants and farmers had obtained some valuable experience on how to protect their property and the amount of damage was not as high as anticipated. The farmers had moved their stock to high ground and the merchants were doing all of their business on the second story of their buildings. The country on all sides was under water. Yuba City was completely flooded - the only dry spot in town was the Indian rancheria on the bank of the river. Sutter's land at Hock farm was overflowed and water stood on the lower floor of his house. The steamer Governor Dana, coming up the Feather River, could proceed no further than Hock Farm due to the force of the current and was compelled to return to Sacramento. Considerable damage was done to crops previously planted by farmers. The other principal loss was

that of 300,000 feet of logs lying in the Feather River near a sawmill on the bank opposite Yuba City. These logs were carried away by the flood and scattered all over the countryside.

1861 - Although, every few years the water got out of control and flooded the lowlands, there were no disastrous floods until December, 1861. Long and incessant rains ushered in the rainy season, and Saturday, December the 7th of that year the water commenced to rise rapidly in the river. In the Marysville Appeal of December 10th, 1861 the havoc caused by the flood is graphically described:

"Westward one vast water level stretched to Yuba City, where a kindred inundation was raging, the entire town site being under water. Beyond this to the foothills of the coast range there appeared to be no dry land. Northward the plains were cut up into broad streams of water, which were swiftly coursing towards the great sheet of water stretching between the Yuba and Feather Rivers up as far as the residence of Judge Bliss, unbroken except by the upper stories of houses, trees and floating debris. Southward the whole plain towards Eliza was one sheet of water, dotted with trees, roofs of houses, floating animals and wrecks of property of every description. Where Feather River sweeps past Eliza, stock of every kind could be seen constantly passing down stream, some alive and struggling and bellowing or squealing for life. Hare and rabbits were destroyed by the thousands."

The people in the country had to leave everything and flee to high ground for safety. Many who were too late for this, climbed trees and remained perched among branches until rescued by friends. Nearly all of the bridges on the Yuba and Bear Rivers were carried away and drift timber and saw-logs came down the stream in great quantities, some of which were left in gorges thirty feet high when the water fell. The water-wheel in McDonald's mill on Bear River, near the wire bridge, was washed out and carried down stream to Johnson's crossing, a distance of five miles.

(To be continued)