

BANK OF ALEX BROWN AND FAMILY HISTORY TOPIC FOR MAY MEETING

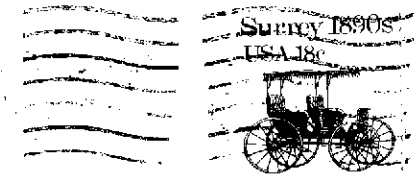
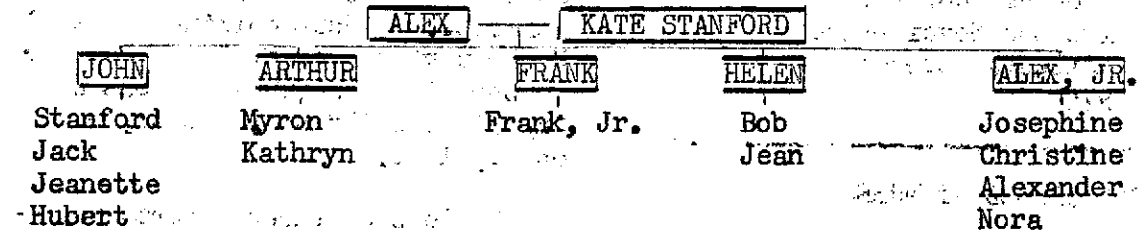
A fascinating saga of the Alex Brown family was shared with the SRDHS membership at the May 18th meeting in Walnut Grove. Frances Brown brought vignettes of the earliest days of the family in the United States and highlights of the founding of the many Brown enterprises: Alex was born in 1849 to parents who had emigrated from Scotland to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and soon moved to Laurence, Massachusetts. When Alex was nine his father died, leaving a widow and six children, who within three years traveled across the country to San Francisco. They returned to the east coast, but in 1866 Alex came again to San Francisco and went into meat butchering and later into fruit and produce supplying. He married Kate Stanford from Placer county when he was 22 and she was 17.

In 1880 Alex, Kate, two children, and Alex's mother, Agnes, moved to Walnut Grove where they lived in the hotel, which Mrs. Sharp sold to Agnes Helen Brown. The Browns took over the hotel, widened their interests by raising two crops of barley on 3830 acres in the Pierson District, established a store with an express office which raised enough capital to start a real bank, and prospered in many other varied endeavors.

The speaker, Mrs. Hubert Brown, provided a "family tree" chart showing relationships through the generation of Alex's grandchildren, of which her husband was one. She also included parts of letter from these grandchildren which underscored the feeling that contrary to Alex's tremendous drive in the business world, he was a "home body."

The history of the Alex Brown family, pioneers of the Delta area, was particularly interesting as it was brought by a member of the Society and focused on the foundations of the local community.

THE ALEX BROWN FAMILY



SRDHS

SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 293
Walnut Grove, CA
95690

Volume III, Issue 2

June, 1981

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY VISITS LOCKE

While on their two-day tour of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the members of the California Historical Society viewed the Dai Loy museum in Locke. Introductory presentations were given by Maryn Whitney, Jean Harvie, and Ping Lee. Refreshments were served at the Locke Christian Center by Kathie Graham and Mrs. Russell Graham. Members of the CHS explored the economic and cultural history of the delta as well as its current needs and issues. Also on their visit the group stopped at the Dutra Dredging Museum in Rio Vista for a discussion of how Chinese labor built the early levees and how levees are maintained today. After a picnic box lunch on the lawn of the Dutra's early 1900's home the CHS busses traveled by ferry to Grand Island to the historic River Mansion.

MUSEUM GREET'S INCREASING CROWDS

The Dai Loy museum has this season already been host to over 2,500 guests, bring the total number of visitors for four years to over 45,000 people. Donations, which are completely voluntary are up from previous years according to records.

Currently Emma Pratt is calling members to staff the site Saturdays and Sundays through November. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ORAL HISTORY NEW PROJECT

HOME-GROWN HISTORY

President Kathie Graham proposed to the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society that new efforts be made to revitalize the lagging oral history program. The Society last year purchased equipment to help with the recording and transcribing of interviews; material is also available with outlines for proper techniques in obtaining the most useful information. A seminar will be arranged when several members would like to have professional instruction on oral history presentations.

Kathie reminds the membership, "Memoirs are here today, but gone tomorrow if not recorded, and we've already lost valuable memories by our inaction." And Rio Vista Fire Chief Simi stated at the March SRDHS meeting, "History is lost as people die. Artifacts cannot tell the whole story. The richness of a story and, for that matter, history, comes by way of personal recollections--without that, a valuable part of history is lost."

Jan Quesenberry, Sally Ooms, and Kandi Korh have offered to seek interviews and begin the task of typing manuscripts. Other volunteers with enthusiasm are also needed. Kathie asks, "Would you like to tell your own story? Or help someone else tell theirs?" Call today to help preserve all our history.

HAMILTON JOINS BOARD

Neil Hamilton of Rio Vista has joined the governing board of the SRDHS. He has agreed to fill the two year term from January 1981-January 1983 which was held by the late Carel van Loben Sels.

Neil is well known throughout the delta area from his involvement in business and community affairs. He has served on the Rio Vista Church Board, for the California Beet Growers' Association, as trustee for the River Delta Unified School District, and in many other positions of responsibility. The Hamilton family has farmed near Rio Vista in the Montezuma Hills and on Ryer Island for many years.

BOOKS SHARED

Clarence Pratt will be depositing with the Sacramento County Branch Library in Walnut Grove a collection of books on the Delta. He would like to share the many volumes he has brought together with others who are interested in the history of the area. These books will be available for reference work in the library.

The Walnut Grove Library has agreed to make shelf space available for other books and documents on the Delta's history and to be a centralized resource.

DO YOU KNOW

Mr. Kenneth E. Ratcliff of Roseburg, Oregon, would like to know if anyone has heard about his family in the Delta. James Norman Gillis and his father, Angus Gillis were known to have been in the Sutterville, Grand Island, and Rio Vista area in the 1850's.

Along with his request for information to the Society, Mr. Ratcliff enclosed two of the deeds his predecessors held--One near Riverside Drive in Sacramento and the other, a "twin house rancho" in Solano County. Anyone wishing to see the deeds may contact Kathie Graham.

Mr. Ratcliff would be very interested to hear from anyone who might recognize the Gillis name. He can be reached by writing to the following address:

138 San Sovci Drive
Roseburg, Oregon
97470

HELP NEEDED AT MUSEUM

Call Emma Pratt to volunteer to staff the Dai Loy and lend your time to support the museum.

MISC.

There have been 26 new member applications in 1981, and four new life memberships this year brings the total to 13. Of the charter members 218 are still active in the organization after five years.

This spring the Pittsburgh School District visited the Dai Loy Museum 12 times. The children have a picnic lunch at Brannan Island State Park and see the Delta towns as part of their planned excursion. Clarence Pratt has been in charge of showing the exhibits to the youngsters. (He reports that the highlight of each visit is the surprise "raid buzzer.")

Among the new projects discussed by the board at the May meeting were a booklet on historic houses with drawings by Locke artist, Chris Spencer and an historic site map. Frank Wilcox volunteered to check into the details for both ventures. A HUGE outline map will be brought to the fall meeting for members to mark the locations of important buildings, events, and enterprises.

The loss of three important society members, Carel van Loben Sels, Lester Holmes, and Mrs. W. H. Thisby, is noted with sadness.