

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. 4 NO. 6

YUBACITY, CALIFORNIA

APRIL 1965



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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER MEETING, JULY 20, 1965, 8 P.M.

RECREATION ROOM OF MID-VALLEY SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION

Plumas Street, Yuba City.

Program

A motion picture called "'Heritage"

A recent picture which has been produced by the State Division of Beaches and Parks in cooperation with the Division of Architecture. The picture is a documentary film giving the public an idea of how and what is being done in restoration of historical buildings and places.

An important business meeting will follow the picture so please show your interest in our heritage by attending the meetings of Sutter County Historical Society.

Your editor of the Sutter County Historical Society Bulletin offers her apologies for not producing an edition in April. It was impossible to put one together under the circumstances as most of you know. We will try to make up the missing edition by putting one out the first part of September. I would like to express my sincere thanks to our associate editor for all the help she is giving us in the Sutter County Library. If it were not for the library we would not have a bulletin.

Be sure and visit the Museum if you have not done so recently.

CHARTER MEMBER MAKES CONTRIBUTION TO  
OUR HERITAGE

Our readers and membership will be pleased to know that both the Sutter County Library and the Marysville City Library are binding the Stutter County Historical Society Bulletin. These are now a part of their very valuable reference materials on local history.

What makes them especially valuable is that Mr. Earl Ramey, one of our Charter Members, who served our Society so faithfully and efficiently as treasurer from our beginning in 1954 until his resignation in 1962 has completely indexed the Bulletin for our libraries. As each new Bulletin is published, he Immediately makes index cards for it. Any interested person may consult this index by asking to see it at either library at any time.

As the years go by, this index will become more useful and it certainly makes the Bulletin have more value for researchers, genealogists and other interested people.

And, do all our readers realize that our Earl Ramey was the author of the now very rare title of Californiana titled "The Beginnings of Marysville"? This originally was published in the California Historical Society Quarterly, running in three issues in 1938-1944. Later it was published in book form by that society as number 12 in their California Town Histories Series.

Our thanks go on and on to Earl Ramey!

"Old Sacramento"  
A National Historic Landmark

Secretary of the Interior Udall recently proclaimed "Old Sacramento" a national historic landmark. On August 21st of this year appropriate ceremonies will be conducted to recognize this important occasion. Governor Brown will accept the plaque marking Old Sacramento as a national historic area from Secretary Udall. United States Senators Thomas H. Kuchel and George Murphy will be present. Congressman John E. Moss from this area as well as many other state and national dignitaries will be in attendance for this special occasion.

A luncheon will precede the early afternoon dedication. That evening the third annual Captain John A. Sutter commemorative birthday dinner will be held at the Fort. In addition, the Highway 50 Wagon Train from El Dorado County will join us at the dedication and then will go to the State Fairgrounds for festivities and a barbecue.

This letter is to invite you and all the members of your staff and organization to be present to help us celebrate the commemoration of Old Sacramento as an area of national historic importance.

--PRESS RELEASE--

SACRAMENTO BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION - AUGUST 21, 1965

Old Sacramento during the Gold Rush days of the mid-19th century was a hub of activity for Northern California and the entire Pacific Coast. State capital, inland commercial and agricultural center, gateway to the northern gold fields, terminus of river boats, stagelines, Pony Express, telegraph, and transcontinental railroad, Sacramento is a reference point in time. Founded by John A. Sutter, Jr. in December 1848, it is a vital part of the heritage of the Old West.

Many of the buildings which saw the unfolding of history are still standing today in the west end of the city near the Sacramento River. The "Big Four Buildings" - the Stanford Brothers Store and Huntington & Hopkins Hardware Store - where construction of the Central Pacific Railroad was planned, are still located on "K" Street between Second and Third Streets. The B.F. Hastings Building and the Adams Express Company Building housed the offices of the Pony Express. The State Supreme Court and the State Library as well as the offices of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, the first railroad of significance in the West, were also located at one time in the Hastings Building. The Adams Express Company Building also housed the Alta Telegraph Company, California State Telegraph Company, and the Wells, Fargo Express Co. The Eagle Theater on Front Street was the first building constructed as a theater on the Pacific Coast. The Round Tent, connected with the Eagle Theater, was a famous gambling spot during the early days of the Gold Rush. The California Stage Company was located in the Orleans Hotel. The D. O. Mills Bank was the predecessor of the present Bank of California. The City Water Works Building, constructed in 1854, was Sacramento's first City Hall.

During the early 20th century many of these historic structures fell into ruin. The covered sidewalks and porches and much of the decorative ironwork were torn down. The lower end of town became a "skid row" - a haven for transients and migrant laborers. However, by the 1950's people began to recognize the importance of Old Sacramento. Steps were taken to urge its preservation. Studies, during 1958-1964 by the State Division of Beaches and Parks, aided by a \$15,000 grant from the Legislature, advocated several buildings as museums as well as for park and commercial uses. The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Sacramento, with funds from the City, State Division of Highways, and Federal Urban Renewal Administration in 1963 instituted a \$100,000 planning study for its

preservation and development. In January, 1965 the Department of the Interior announced the Old Sacramento had been approved as a National Registered Historic Landmark District.

This August 21, at the Third Annual Sacramento Birthday Celebration commemorating the 126th birthday of the City of Sacramento, the bronze plaque designating Old Sacramento as a National Landmark will be presented. The plaque will be presented at 2:30 p.m. in the Old Sacramento area. The Highway 50 Association's Wagon Train will parade down "K" Street and will be present at the dedication ceremonies. It is expected that Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall will present the plaque to Governor Edmund Brown.

Following the dedication ceremonies, the wagon train will proceed on to the State Fairgrounds where there will be a large barbecue open to the public. There will be folkdancing demonstrations and entertainment. Lorne Green and the stars of the "Bonanza" television program have indicated a desire to attend. The barbecue will be staged by the E. Clampus Vitus.

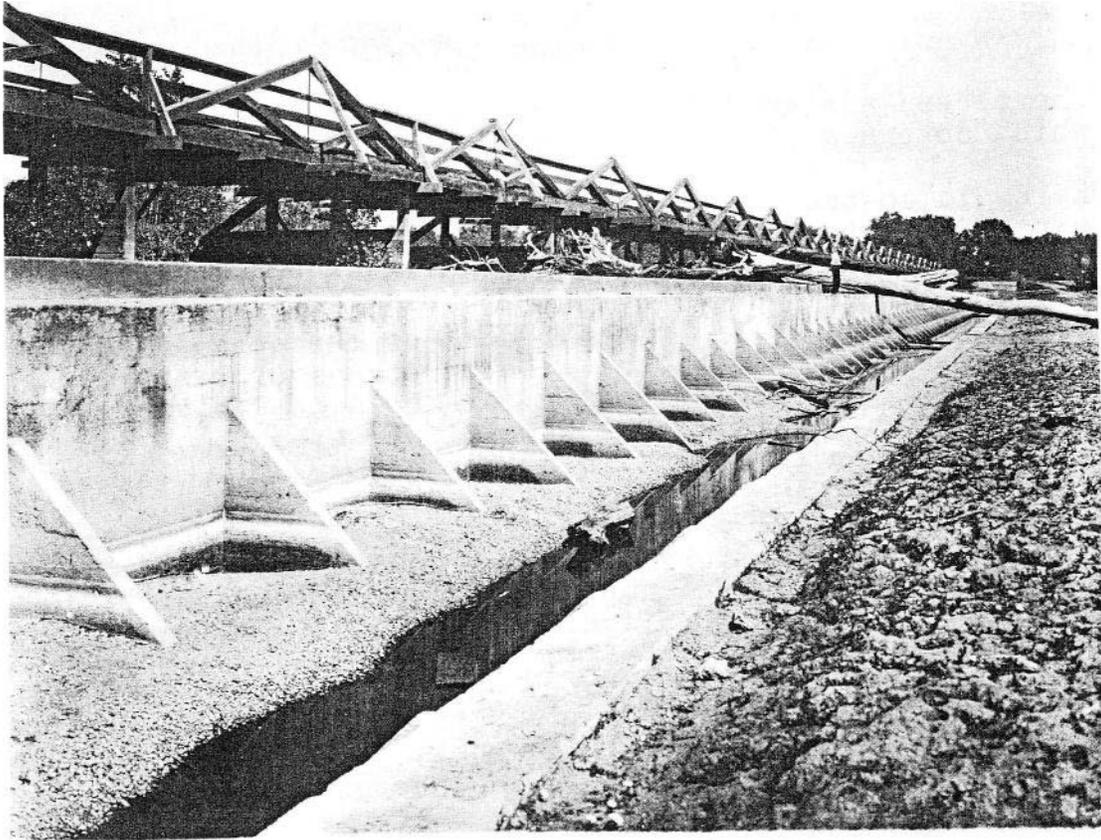
Saturday evening there will be held Sacramento's third commemorative birthday dinner. This will be at Sutter's Fort, 28th and "L" Streets in Sacramento. As the seating capacity at the fort is limited, the dinner will be by invitation only.

Dignitaries invited to attend the Sacramento Birthday Celebration include President Lyndon Johnson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren, Senators Thomas Kuchel and George Murphy, Congressman John Moss, State Senator Albert Rodda, State Assemblymen Edwin Z'berg, Leroy Greene and Walter Powers, Secretary of the Interior Udall, City and County officials, representatives of the National Park Service, Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, the Society of California Pioneers, and state and national historical societies.

The Sacramento Birthday Celebration is being sponsored by the City of Sacramento Historic Landmarks Commission and the California State Division of Beaches and Parks in cooperation with the City and County of Sacramento. The chairman of the event is Mr. E. A. Combatalade. For further information, write him at P.O. Box 2391 in Sacramento.

This year's Sacramento Birthday Celebration promises to be a memorable event.

(Released by the Sacramento Visitor's Landmarks Commission  
May 21, 1965.)



*TISDALE WEIR AND BRIDGE SACRAMENTO RIVER  
SOUTHWEST SUTTER COUNTY.*

## SUTTER COUNTY BEGINNINGS

PRESENTED AT YUBA CITY WOMENS CLUB  
February 2, 1965 by Bernice Gibson

I have been assigned the topic, The Beginnings of Sutter County which covers a wide span of time.

One could go back to prehistoric times and look to the most outstanding attraction geologically speaking of our small county and speak of the Buttes which came about thousands of years ago through great eruptions within the earth, settling mountains of lava and rocks in the middle of the ocean at that time but now in the middle of the wide stretches of plains. That will take us into geological and archeological history on which we will touch a little, but we will direct most of our thinking to the recorded beginning of our county.

Most of my material I am using is this brief sketch is taken from "The Romantic Story of Sutter County" compiled and written by Miss Adah Ohleyer, who was in former years a diligent worker and student of California History and the western Indians. Miss Ohleyer's material was compiled and presented to an evening school class at Yuba City High School in 1930 and '31 and simultaneously published in serial form in Sutter County Farmer. I hope we can collect this material and publish it in book form in the very near future. I feel it is the responsibility of the Sutter County Historical Society to see that the material is made available for future use.

How did Sutter happen to come to this particular area and open it up for settlement?

Let us direct our attention to this strip of land along the Pacific Coast which was quietly being explored and exploited at the same time the Eastern Coast was being settled. Not much is recorded in our history books about those daring. Spanish explorers and adventurers who wandered up our coast in small sailing vessels. In 1542 Cabrillo, and then close upon his heels that daring gallant Englishman, Sir Francis Drake who planted his seal above San Francisco Bay in 1578 and called the country Nova Albion, thus claiming the land for his most admired Queen Elizabeth the I, and when he returned to England he was wined and dined and entertained most royally by his beloved queen.

Plunder and loot was the objective of these Spanish and English explorers but they set the course for later adventurers.

The expedition of Anza in 1775 and '76 is unexcelled for courage and skill and close behind him came Portola accompanied by Father Serra. Portola and his soldiers came on to discover San Francisco Bay while Father Serra, interested in people began

his chain of 21 missions thus bringing; civilization and a Christian way of life to the people he found here.

But soon Americans began to be se<sup>n</sup> upon the California scene and the Mountain men and trappers made their impact upon this great valley. It was one of these Mountain Men, Jedediah Smith, the first American to set eyes on the small mountain range which he called "The Buttes," little knowing he was starting such a name controversy as came about at a later date. Another white man, a Spaniard, Moraga had discovered the Buttes before Smith and called them "Tres Picos." Records show much trapping was carried on along the Feather, Yuba and near Rivers. Many interesting stories have been handed down by these early fur hunters. 1820 is the earliest known records of trappers. Among the stories told of the trappers is one which I think you will like to hear. The story of Indian Peter. Indian Peter was a Sioux Indian and came to California with a company of American trappers in 1825, probably with the Jedediah Smith party. Peter used to relate that they had two great battles with the Indians, in the first the trappers were defeated and in the second the Indians were badly whipped.

When the trappers returned to the East, Peter remained because the trapping was good here. He married a French woman and had three daughters all being good hunters, especially one who often was seen riding astride her horse. Once she saved her father's life from the paws of a grizzly bear which they were smoking out of his cave. He came out sooner than expected and was about to leap from a rock on to her father when a well-directed bullet from the girls' rifle killed him.

One day in 1849 Peter went to the Buttes to shoot antelope when he was savagely attacked by a female grizzly, deprived of her cubs a few days before. She knocked his gun from his hands and seized his head between her two paws. While In this position Peter drew his knife and after many cuts succeeded in killing her. His head was terribly mangled and never completely healed. He ever after wore a cloth about his head and died a few years later from the effects of the wounds and whiskey.

#### THE INDIANS

The Indians were the first Californians and around his life our history begins. He is the great human landmark. We know the California Indian is not the type of song and story, nevertheless he deserves our admiration, our study and our pity. The races of this region and Central California were separated into numerous small tribes whose system of cultures were exceedingly primitive. The segregation of these Indians was not properly into tribes but into villages, each having its own name and head.

Among these villages we have many familiar names such as Yuba, Hock, Yocolumne, Colusi and Olashes. The Indians of our locality had only a crude civilization. Their dwelling places were of the rudest and simplest sort. They were made of grass, tule, brush or bark laid over a light framework of branches and sometimes covered with earth to protect them from the weather.

The physique of these natives did not correspond at all with that of the "noble" warriors east of the mountains. Their clothing was very scant if any at all except for a few ornaments. Our Indians lived mainly upon acorns, pine nuts, wild clover, grass seeds, grasshoppers, game and fish. They had many fairy tales and legends which are very interesting and romantic.

(Another story of its own) There is a tremendous legend of the Sutter Buttes which I am sure many of you have already heard. Some day we will publish a Bulletin on Indian legends of the Sacramento Valley alone.

John A. Sutter, John C. Fremont and John Bidwell, pioneers of the wilderness who came to remove obstructions and prepare the way for those who followed are famous names to Sutter County.

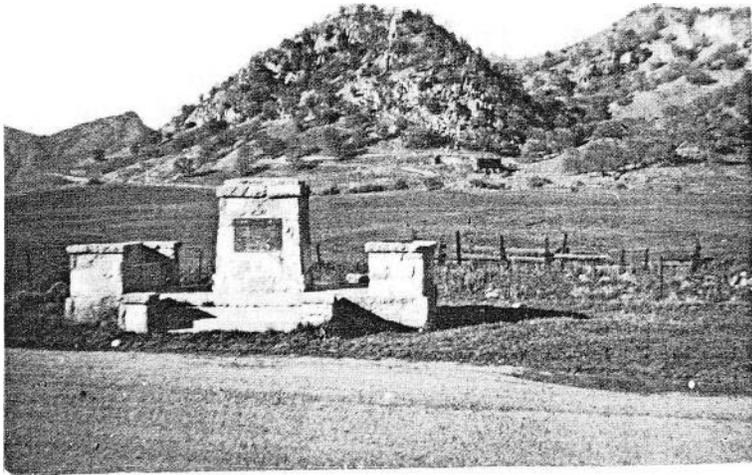
General John A. Sutter was born of Swiss parentage in Kaudern, a little village in the Grand Duchy of Baden the 28th of February 1803. After receiving a common school education, he was placed in a military college at Berne where he was graduated in the year 1823. After graduation he entered the French service as an officer of the Swiss guard and was in the Spanish campaign of 1823-24.

Books have been written on the life of Captain Sutter as he was called when he left the homeland but I shall necessarily have to skip across time to the time when he sailed up the Sacramento River and began to explore the shoreline for the establishment of that Swiss Colony in America the dream of a great adventurer.

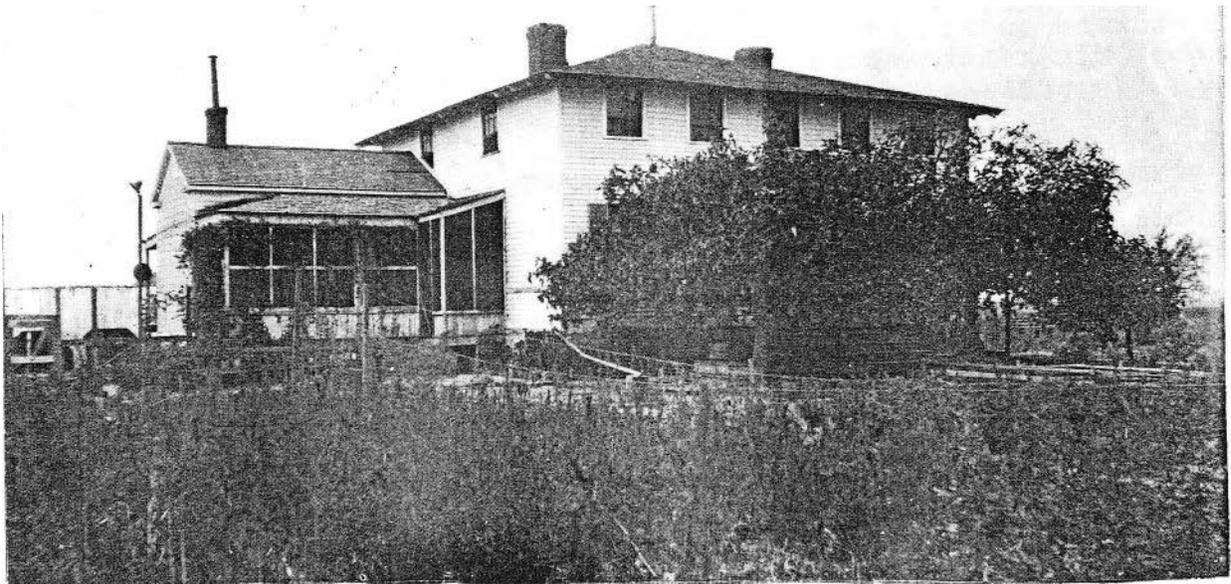
After much ado with the Indians he dropped anchor on the East bank at the mouth of the American River and discharged his goods on the 12th day of August 1839. On the tide waters of the Sacramento with 15 men, 8 of whom were Kanakas, given to him by the king of the Sandwich Islands, he pitched his tent, planted his cannon, established sentinels and laid the foundation for a settlement called New Helvetia, which became peerless in the republic of colonies.

The Sacramento Valley was comparatively unnoticed until after the settlement of Captain Sutter at New Helvetia. He received his grant of land from the Mexican Government in 1841 and had a map made of the land which embraced a considerable portion of Sacramento and Placer counties, all of Sutter the valley portion of Yuba and a little point of Colusa.

The plains between the Sacramento and Feather Rivers were used by Sutter as a grazing range for immense bands of cattle and horses. In the winter of 1841 and 42 Captain Sutter assisted by Nicolaus Allgier constructed an adobe house about one and a half miles below Hock Farm.



*FREMONT MONUMENT PASS ROAD SUTTER BUTTES*



*BRANNON HOUSE "WHITE HOUSE"  
STOOD ON THE FEATHER RIVER  
BUILT BY SAM BRANNON IN 1850  
(DEMOLISHED 1956)*

This was Sutter's first establishment in Sutter County and the first settlement of any kind made in Sutter County. In 1842 a location was made at Hock Farm with the intention of making this his principle stock farm. In 1843 John Bidwell took charge of the farm. He built the house during the summer, the adobes being made on the farm. Boards for the construction of the house were sawed from the cottonwood trees along the river.

General Bidwell remained with Sutter 14 months and during that time planted trees and otherwise improved the spot. When the Mexican War broke the place was left in the hands of Kanaka Jim, whom Captain Sutter had brought from the Sandwich Islands.

During the sprint of 1847 the survivors of the Donner party arrived, many of them remaining at the settlements in this vicinity, among these being the members of the Murphy Family. Many of you know, Mrs. Harry Cheim, a descendant of the Murphy family.

January 28th 1848 a great cry came from San Francisco, Gold, Gold, found in the Sierras! This cry was uttered by none other than the founder of Yuba City, Samuel Brannon. Gold! Gold! discovered on the American River! That cry echoed and reverberated around the world causing the greatest migration the world had ever known since the Crusades in Europe.

The Year of 1849 was the commencement of the era of settlement in the County. Thousands of travelers seeking the northern mines passed over its lands. Towns sprang up, ferries were established and the region became one of note.

One of the first towns to spring up was Vernon and then Nicolaus both being on the route of travel from the water ways to the gold mines. History records that in a very short time there were opened several hotel and boarding houses, butcher shops, blacksmith shops and laundries in each of these towns - even law offices.

But yet to come was the man with the voice which spread the cry of gold around the world, Sam Brannon, the man with the "midas touch" always eager for adventure even to the point of being neglectful of some of his moral obligations.

In July 1849 Samuel Brannon, Pierce B. Reading, and Henry Reading bought some land opposite the mouth of the Yuba River and laid out a town which was to be known as Yuba City. For a time lots sold rapidly but thence a lull in the trade took place because the river proved to be quite an obstacle to trade with the mines. No bridges, no ferries.

In May 1849 Samuel Brannon bought 2 square miles opposite Nicolaus on the banks of the Feather, from Captain Sutter and which came to be identified as the "Brannon Tract." He afterwards built a large dwelling house, planted a beautiful garden and the Brannons entertained in royal fashion in this early day home, later to be known as the "White House" or the Hideout place.

Some of their guests were famous characters of early day life.

General Sutter moved his family to Hock Farm in the Spring of 1850 after eighteen years of separation from his wife and younger children, the oldest son having followed his father to New Helvetia.

He built the iron structure which was known as the Hock Farm Fort but was only used as a store house.

On the second of June 1850 a grand entertainment was given at Hock Farm by General Sutter which was attended by many prominent residents of this county and adjoining ones. About 100 ladies and gentlemen were present as recorded in the Sacramento Transcript, June 4, 1850.

The boundaries of the counties were fixed by the legislature in February 1850. Oro became the first county seat - on paper laid out by Thomas Jefferson Green. Auburn, Nicolaus, Vernon and Yuba City were all aspirants for the honor and expected benefits of the county seatship. Oro enjoyed the honor for a very short time.

There was not a house or building in the town and so the county court was moved to Nicolaus.

Yuba City made a gallant fight for its existence in 1850. Tents were clustered on the river bank, some used for stores, some for saloons and still others for residences. By the end of 1850 Sutter County began to take on a more settled appearance. Early in 1851 Yuba City was still struggling for its very existence, its neighboring village having so many advantages.

(The worm has turned)

On June 14, 1851 the Court of Sessions divided Sutter County into 5 townships, Yuba, Butte, Vernon, Nicolaus and Rear River later to be known, by the order of the Board of Supervisors as Butte, Nicolaus, Sutter, Vernon, and Yuba.

In the early 50's such names as Gelzhauser, a butcher by trade, Chandler and Walker came into prominence. Dr. Chandler was one of the pioneer movers for the levee law and urged the building of bridges across the rivers. The Chandler place later became the Norman Kells place.

Notwithstanding all handicaps Yuba City grew steadily. In 1852 there was one hotel, the Western House, one small grocery store, two saloons, one blacksmith shop, one Justice of the Peace Officer, one post-office, 15 or 20 dwelling houses and a population of about 150.

The churches took a very active and vigorous part in the development of Sutter County but that is a story in itself.

In June 1850, the first ferry was established between the twin cities and 1853 a toll bridge was built.



*RIVER ROAD ALONG FEATHER RIVER*

The County seat became a "traveling salesman" in the period of '53 to '56. Nicolaus, Vernon, back to Nicolaus and finally by the narrow margin of two votes it was moved to Yuba City June 1856.

Steps were taken to provide the County with a Court House and Jail. The present lot was purchased and the building completed and accepted September 18, 1858. The Court House had rough going for a while. It was completely destroyed by fire December 19-20, 1871. Was rebuilt at a cost of \$25,291 and then burned out completely on the inside in the 90's. A crazed jailer set fire to his bedding in the cell in the night.

The Romances of the bridges across the Feather from 1853 to 1955 is another story.

Just to mention a few of the early pioneers of the various townships will bring recollections and familiar names to many of you and to many others nostalgic memories.

Pioneer builders of Yuba Township:

Caleb Wilcoxon, P.L. Bunce, Fred Cooper (father of the Fred Cooper we knew), The Gray Family, Thomas D. Boyd, Clark McQuald, James Littlejohn, James G. Stewart, Benjamin Stoker, The Onstott Family, A.B. Van Arsdale, William Stafford, George Ohleyer and many others.

Pioneer Builders of Sutter Township:

This included the settlers on the Sacramento River which was the only settlement where an attempt was made at colonization. Jack Neal - an old sailor came as early as 1849. George Brittan - 1852, St. Clair Crammore, Dr. Cagan and Stephen Elsworth, Joseph Girdner, Walter H. and John Perdue, I. A. Winship, Henry Best, Theodore B. Hull, A. F. Abbott, James Murray, John Kimball, J. W. Humphreys, Edward Proper, another father.

Toad houses as well as churches made their impact upon our history. One at Colgrove Point became known as the Ten Mile House on the Sacramento River and of course, the now famous "Butte House" on Butte House Road near Sutter Cemetery.

The Native Sons of the Golden West started the Hock Farm picnics May 30, 1884 and they became famous throughout Northern California until about 1900.

Butte. Township embraces the Buttes and the north end of the County. Some pioneer names of that locality were:

Dr. Lee and Cullen Lee settled in the fall of 1850 at the foot of North Butte. M. D. Floyd and Sandy Ingraham, G. N. Smith and E. J. Howard at East Butte in 1851. Dr. William McMurtry, H. S. Graves, W.H. and R. F. Parks, Blodgett, DeCamp, William Doty, R. K. Stevenson, Francis Hamlin and many others.

Meridian was once called Keokuk, a name chosen for the post-office but there being another Keokuk in the State the name was changed to Meridian and the reason is obvious.

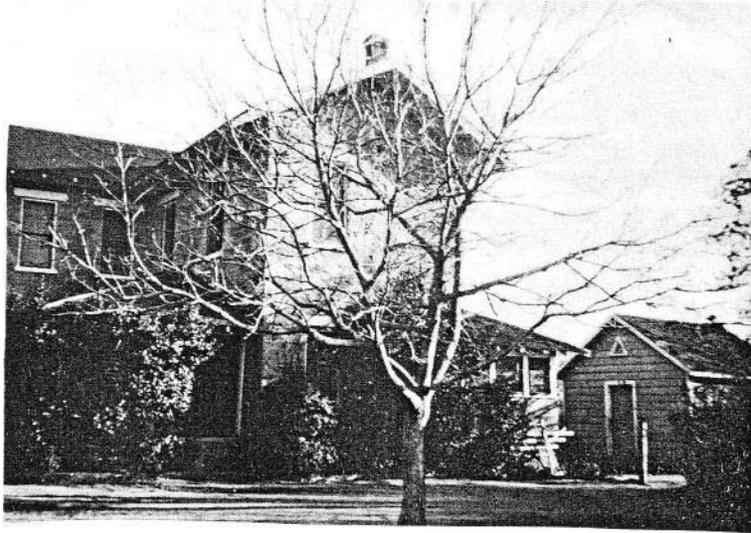
Such names as J. F. Fonts and Rev. A. S. Brown appear on the Meridian roster others to be added later.

Butte Township also claimed such names as F. M. Clyma, Frederick Tarke and Frederick Hoke, William G. DeWitt and G. S. Ely.

The Civil War was quite an issue in Sutter County from the local political issues to the erection of a flag pole on top of South Butte from which the Stars and Stripes were kept flying for many days.

Nicolaus Township claimed such pioneers as Gen. Thomas Green, Kempton, John L. Algeo, Dr. Ousley, J. P. Glenn, S. Jopson, John Schwall, Philip Drescher, Campbell P. Berry and many others.

Much history has been added to the Romantic Story of Sutter County since the pioneer days but we are to confine ourselves to the beginnings today. We have tried to print many of the exciting episodes in the Sutter Historical Society Bulletin for your reading enjoyment and expect to print many more.



*BRITTAN HOUSE PASS ROAD SUTTER BUTTES*