

# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
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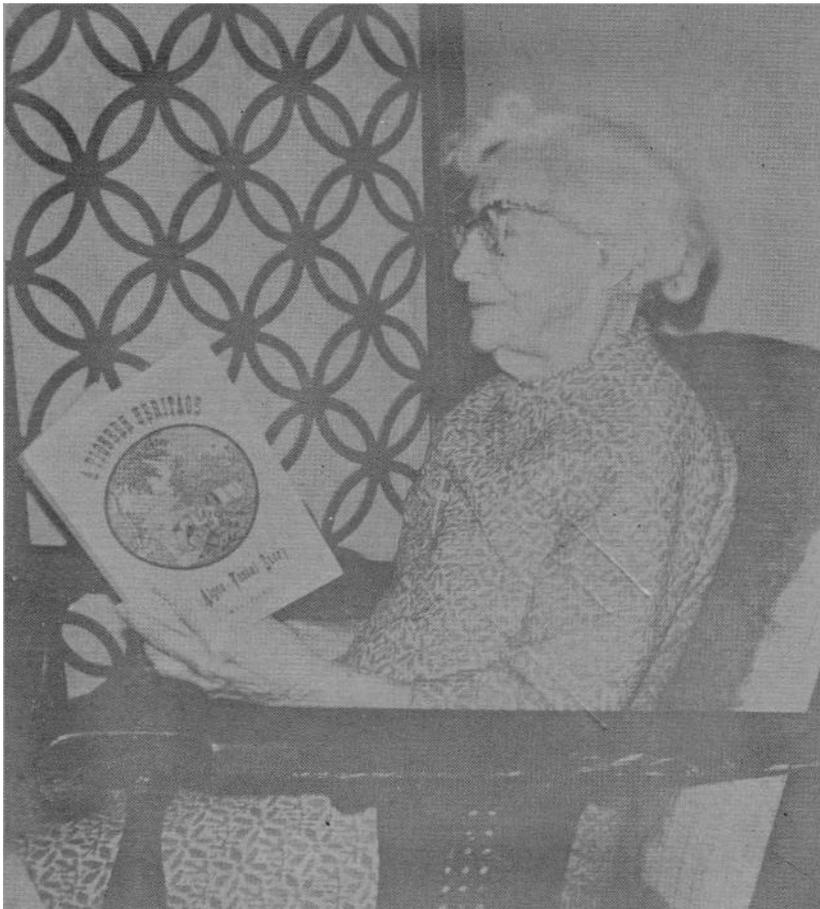
## NEWS BULLETIN

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APRIL, 1973



Miss Oba C. Algeo  
born in 1873 near the  
town of Nicolaus,  
is honored as oldest  
member of the  
Sutter County Historical Society

OUR AUTHOR

Phydellia Murphy Wagner of East Nicolaus, writer of the article in this issue of the NEWS BULLETIN, was born in 1903 near Pleasant Grove on the former "Spanish Ranch." She was one of seven daughters and two sons of Reese D. and Minnie Elliott Murphy. Her father was first foreman of the ranch and afterwards, until his death in 1920, a widely known dairyman of the area.

Following his death, Mrs. Murphy moved to Nicolaus and with the help of four daughters including Phydellia, operated another dairy.

In 1921 Phydellia Murphy married John Wagner, Nicolaus constable and operator of a butcher business. After his death in 1945 she became a clerk in an East Nicolaus grocery; then was a partner in a store in Nicolaus. Later, she was custodian and bus driver for the Brown elementary school in Rio Oso.

In 1950, Mrs. Wagner became postmaster of East Nicolaus, retiring from that position in 1972.

She has one daughter, Mrs. Ronald Tibbitts of Pleasant Grove and six grandchildren.

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A HISTORY OF PLEASANT GROVE

by  
Phydellia Murphy Wagner  
Assisted by Mary Carlin Mulvany

Pleasant Grove is near the Placer county line in south-eastern Sutter County along Howsley and Pleasant Grove roads. Its origin dates back to early times. In 1861 I. S. Ingraham put up a blacksmith shop about one mile south of the site where the town was later built. He sold his property to Charles Bishop in 1865. Bishop kept a grocery store and saloon for two



#### THE REESE D. MURPHY FAMILY

Front row: Zetta, Dorris, Mr. Murphy, Fred, Mrs. Murphy, Zelda, Phydalia  
(author of this article)

Second row: Reese, Jr., Zena, Lela, Minnie

This picture was taken at Verona on Mr. Murphy's dairy farm. At an earlier time Mr. Murphy was foreman of the "Spanish Rancho" of 1200 acres. The ranch extended from Howsley Road south into District 1000 and west to Verona. The picture was taken in 1908 or 1909 by a traveling photographer.

or three years and then moved north at which location the town soon developed. Here he built a little store which burned in 1870 but which was rebuilt nearby and operated by R. B. Pierce. The present Calvin James home is near the site of the first blacksmith shop.

The little village was first known as Gouge Eye. An article in the Sutter County Farmer of November 7, 1890 gives the following account of how the name came to be applied to the town of Pleasant Grove:

"When Pleasant Grove had become quite a settlement a man by the name of Bishop opened a general store there. At the same time a rather rough character, who shortly afterwards proved himself a villain, was hanging about the village. The man, Laws by name, did not have much love for the storekeeper and conceived the idea that he would hurt his trade by talking about him, and so often indulged in his favorite remark 'that anyone trading at Bishop's would be gouge-eyed' that it became a by-word with everyone for miles around."

When the post office was established in 1867 the town was given the name Pleasant Grove Creek, but in 1875 the name was shortened to the present name Pleasant Grove. The name Gouge Eye was not readily lost as is indicated by the following news item in the Wheatland Recorder of December 28, 1877: "A travelling dentist invaded Gouge Eye and hung out the startling sign 2th Pullin."

Charles Bishop was the first postmaster. The mails were carried on the Nicolaus-Sacramento route, to Sacramento on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and arriving from there on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

The postmasters and the dates of their appointment are:

Charles Bishop	August 15, 1867
Samuel A. Salisbury	October 18, 1875
Thomas J. Pierce	April 16, 1883

William A. Goode	June 18, 1894
Thomas J. Pierce	June 1, 1898
Fred C. Pierce	June 16, 1900
Daniel S. Compton	April 26, 1901
Franklin B. Drennon	January 15, 1903
William M. Farmer	January 10, 1905
Milton W. Hogle	March 17, 1906
George McWilliams	December 7, 1907
D. William Chilson	January 23, 1909
Mary Olive Srite	June 30, 1931
Frederick A. Becker	March 26, 1929
Mary O. Srite	June 30, 1931
Frances M. Long	September 1, 1931
Ivernia M. Henderson	October 1, 1931
Jean V. James	December 31, 1957
Harold A. Medstad	July 17, 1971

The educational needs of the area first were served by the Auburn District School built at Pleasant Grove in 1864. After this building was destroyed by fire in 1874, the Trustees, in conjunction with the Grange, erected a two story building across the road from the old site. School was held on the lower floor and the Grange and other lodges met in the hall above. The garage of J. J. Stephenson now occupies the land where this building formerly stood.

Money for the purchase of a bell for the Auburn school was obtained from socials and entertainments by the pupils under the direction of their teacher, Miss Ella Ross. This bell was preserved by interested citizens of the community and is now on display in front of the Pleasant Grove Elementary school.

A report of Auburn School District gives the following statistics: Total enrollment, 81; average daily attendance, 35; teacher's salary, \$751; repairs, fuel, etc, \$70; library, \$38; apparatus, \$10; site, building and furniture, \$34; total expenditures \$903. The land, houses, furniture, library, apparatus, etc. had a total valuation of \$1630. These figures are taken from the report of June 30, 1879. At the time of this report the trustees were Eben Fifield, Alex Donaldson and W. J. Roberts.



COTTONWOOD SCHOOL IN 1901 or 1902

First row: (left to right) Gladys Coppin, Flossie Darrack

Second row: (L to R) George Algeo, Lilly Algeo, Ruth Algeo, Maude James, Sam Coppin

Third row: (L to R) Bill James, Tommy Metcalf, Wray Coppin, Raymond Briggs, Howard Catlett,  
Alton Murphy, Fred Shakelford (teacher)

The building is now on the George Algeo ranch where it was moved in the 1920s after the Auburn, Eagle and Cottonwood school districts consolidated to form the Pleasant Grove Joint Union School.

Auburn school was consolidated with Eagle and Cottonwood schools in 1920 forming the Pleasant Grove Joint Union Elementary School which had at the time an average daily attendance of 109 and a faculty of four. At the present time the enrollment is 134 with a faculty of six.

The Eagle schoolhouse was situated farther south. It was purchased by the Poston family and converted into a residence which is still in use at the original site.

The Cottonwood schoolhouse was on what is now Pacific Avenue near the George Algeo home. The Algeo family purchased the building and moved it to their ranch where it can still be seen. Miss Oba Algeo was the teacher of this school for four years during the 1890's. She and her pupils obtained money from entertainments with which they purchased a bell. Miss Algeo is now almost 100 years of age and is living in Citrus Heights. She is listed as one of the honorary members of the Sutter County Historical Society in the Bulletin of October, 1970. In 1972 she published a book, "A Pioneer Heritage: The Algeo-Vestal Story" which will be a valuable documentary addition to our county archives.

High school classes were first held in the old Auburn school building in 1921 with a faculty of two. Mr. Ray Moss was principal and Miss Aileen Donovan (now Mrs. Lloyd Hudson of Rio Oso) was a teacher. The classes were moved to Ward's store in 1923 but the next year, 1924, became a part of the new East Nicolaus High School of which Miss Donovan was the first principal.

In 1879 the town of Pleasant Grove included one each of the following businesses or services: store, saloon, hotel, boarding house, shoemaker shop, physician, schoolhouse and hall. There were two blacksmith shops and about a dozen dwellings in the immediate vicinity. McKenna's Business

Directory of 1882 lists Phillipe Brothers of Pleasant Grove as manufacturers of windmills.

The California State Gazeteer and Business Directory of 1888 listed the following places of business: Goode and McRae, general store; W. Hart, shoemaker; Keyes Brothers, blacksmiths; Henry Klemp, saloon, livery stable and hotel (formerly owned by F. G. Browning); J. P. Morgan, blacksmith; T. J. Pierce, general store; J. D. Saunders, blacksmith; F. J. Talmes, harness shop; Wit Browning, barbershop.

Dan Compton operated a grocery and general merchandise store at the corner of Howsley and Pleasant Grove roads for many years. His nephew, Dan Bell, carried on a meat business at this location and still makes his home on this property.

South Sutter Grange No. 207 was organized June 13, 1874 by 28 charter members. The first officers were: Thomas Boyd, master; James Jones, overseer; and Alexander Donaldson, secretary. The lodge soon had 145 members but in a few years the membership was reduced to 90. The financial condition was good with property valued at \$500. Officers in 1879 were J. M. McClellan, master; A. L. Chandler, overseer and R. H. McClellan, secretary. The lodge met on the fourth Saturday evening of the month in Grange Hall. It is said that meetings were held "by the light of the moon" because many members came from miles around and moonlight was welcomed for the drive. In later years the meetings were moved to the Odd Fellows' Hall in East Nicolaus. At the present time remaining members are affiliated with the Bogue Grange.

Pleasant Grove Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F. Lodge No. 269) organized December 28, 1877 with nine charter members including the following officers:

Charles G. Roth, N.G.; Amos F. Lyons, V.G.; William Trevethan, R.S.; and A. L. Chandler, treasurer. Other members were Reuben B. Pierce, R. S. Algeo, Francis Heyland, John Burns and M. Del Calmes. By 1879 the lodge had 30 members and was in good financial condition with \$350 in the treasury and owning property valued at \$550. During the year \$25 was contributed to the yellow fever fund. At first, meetings were held every Friday evening in the Grange Hall, but later moved to the Odd Fellows' Hall in East Nicolaus where they are yet held today.

The Defiance Lodge of Good Templars (I.D.G.T. No. 219) was organized December 18, 1876 with a membership of 36 ladies and gentlemen. This order was the first to admit women on equal terms with men. Soon there were 50 members in the lodge with cash and property valued at \$175. The following officers were serving in 1879: Miss Flora McClellan, W.C.T.; Miss Angie McClellan, W.V.T.; Thomas J. Pierce, P.W.C.T.; Thomas W. Trevethan, W.S.; Frank B. Pierce, W.F.S.; and William Trevethan, W.J.

The first religious services were held in the schoolhouse by ministers of five different denominations – Christian, United Brethren, Methodist Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist Episcopal South. Later a thriving Union Sunday School was maintained. Two denominations built churches in Pleasant Grove – Christian and Methodist. These churches were located near the Auburn school on Howsley road. The Methodist building was later moved to the Pleasant Grove Union school and used for a multipurpose room but was torn down in 1972 to make room for a new building. The Christian church building was razed many years ago. It is told by some of the older residents that the two churches were so close together that in warm weather with the windows open the singing of hymns in one church would interfere with services in the other.

One of the largest ranches of early days was the Spanish Ranch. It contained 2000 acres and was owned by State Senator Frederick Cox of Sacramento County. In the 1890's this land was leased by Reese D. Murphy who farmed it for many years. An adobe cellar built by Mrs. Murphy can yet be seen on the ranch. Mrs. Phydalia Wagner of East Nicolaus is a daughter of the Murphys. At one time some of the land of the Spanish Ranch sold for 50 cents an acre.

Over the years the Spanish Ranch has been broken up into smaller parcels. The Pleasant Grove Cemetery is located on a portion of the ranch and is one of the oldest in Sutter County, containing markers dated in 1850. This cemetery is now administered by a district and supported by its own local tax. The school is also located on land formerly a part of the Spanish Ranch.

Freight wagons and passenger stages bound for Nevada County and the Mother Lode area passed through Pleasant Grove. They continued by way of Sheridan and Spenceville to Auburn and Grass Valley and on to the mining districts.

The Western Pacific Railroad ran its line a few miles west of Pleasant Grove and in 1910 a depot was built near the town.

Pleasant Grove has always been an agricultural area with grain (mainly wheat) and livestock forming the principal crops. However, rice has become an important crop in later years. Many ranches which were developed before 1900 are operated today by descendants of the pioneer settlers.

A fire department was organized in the early 1960's. Roy Osterli was the first chief. The farmers of the community financed a firehouse

which was placed on Howsley road in 1963. An efficient volunteer fire crew and a rescue squad are maintained which are valuable assets to Pleasant Grove and the nearby communities.

In 1972 the oldest section of the school was replaced by a new building. This, with a complete renovation of the remaining rooms has given Pleasant Grove a school of which the citizens can well be proud.

A branch of the Sutter County Library was established in 1918. It was first placed in the post office and managed by the postmaster. In later years a building to house the library was built across from the school on Howsley road. Lucille James is the present librarian.

Organizations active at the present time are a 4H Club for young people, a Mothers Club for the school and a Women's Auxiliary of the Fire Department.

There are not many buildings in Pleasant Grove today, but a thriving community exists. The post office serves 646 patrons which covers a large area. Many new homes have been built in the surrounding area, and a number of the old homes built by the pioneers still can be seen on a ride through this country. Highway 70 is only a few miles away. This road joins the community with Sacramento to the south and north to Marysville and Yuba City.

#### A PARTIAL LIST OF EARLY SETTLERS AND SOME OF THEIR DESCENDANTS

John Mahon Algeo was born in Ohio in 1824 and came to Pleasant Grove in 1851. He studied law in Steubenville and was admitted to the Supreme Court in 1844. Mervin Algeo, a grandson is living on the home place.

Sam M. Coppin was born in Toronto, Canada in 1846. He came with his parents to Sacramento and in 1872 to Pleasant Grove. Clarence Coppin,



#### THE COPPIN FAMILY ORCHESTRA

Arthur, Rilla, George, James, Clarence.

In the 1890's the Coppin orchestra played for dances and other social affairs in Pleasant Grove and neighboring communities. Clarence, the youngest member, is still playing the violin at the age of 85. Occasionally he plays for Senior Citizens dances.

a son, owns the home place at present. Two grandchildren, Ellen Thornton and Stanley Coppin are residents of Pleasant Grove.

Louis Franklin James was born near Pleasant Grove in 1860. His parents, Calvin and Mary James came to California in 1852. Descendants residing here are Fred, a son of Louis, and five grandchildren, Calvin, Thomas, Norman and Loren James and Elaine Henton.

Henry Klemp was an early farmer of the area, but in 1882 was operating a saloon, a livery stable and a hotel in Pleasant Grove. A daughter, Effie, who in 1972 was 95 years of age and two grandsons, Roy Richmond and Floyd Trevethan are living here.

John P. Glenn was born in Missouri in 1845 and came to California in 1853. Some years later he settled in Pleasant Grove. Two grandsons, Julian and Thomas Glenn are yet residing in the community.

Reese D. Murphy was born in Missouri in 1863. He came to California with his mother in 1872, settling in Nicolaus. They later purchased a ranch at Pleasant Grove. Mr. Murphy married Minnie Elliott who was living near Riego. She was born at Elkhorn in Yolo County. When she was of school age the family moved to Riego where she attended the Eagle School. Two grandchildren, Stanley Coppin and Patricia Tibbetts reside here.

Nathaniel P. Rogers an early settler of Pleasant Grove has a granddaughter, Hazel Gardner, living in the community.

Joseph Robinett was born in Missouri in 1838 and came to California in 1854. He settled in Pleasant Grove in 1856. His daughter, Sarah Davis (known as Addie) died January, 1972 at the age of 91, having lived her entire life in the same house which was built in 1882, and which is now occupied by her son, Edward. Her other children living here are

Laurence and Elmer and Mildred Coppin and Elsie Stephenson.

F. M. Van Dyke, Sr. moved from Livermore, California and settled where the Clark Van Dyke home is today. He and his two sons, Frank and Clark farmed 3000 acres. Two grandsons, Harlan and Dean Van Dyke live here.

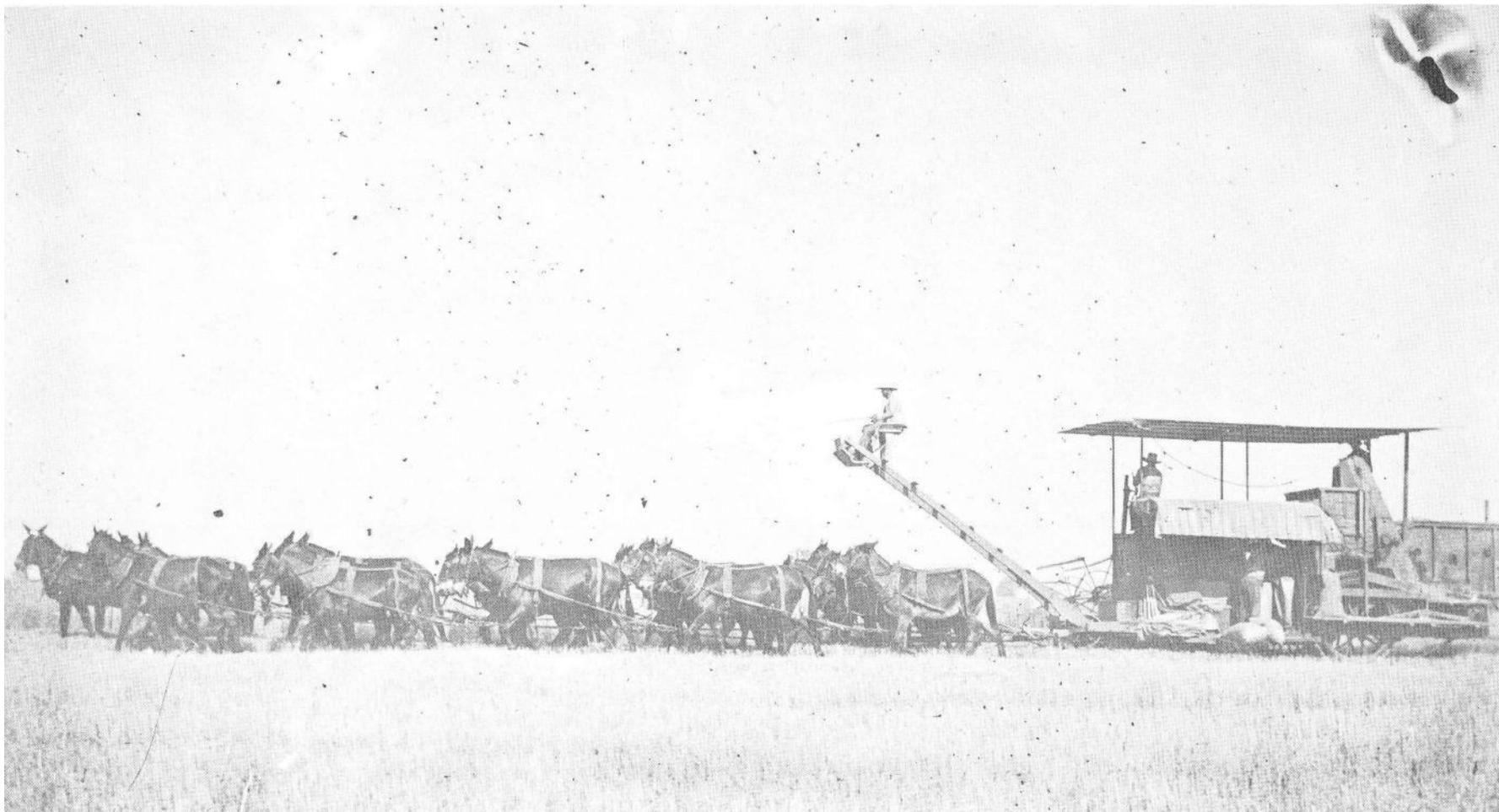
Pete Darrach who came to Pleasant Grove from his native Canada is represented by two grandsons, Laurence and Peter Darrach.

William Trevethan was the first native son of Pleasant Grove, his parents having arrived by covered wagon. One grandson, Floyd Trevethan is living here.

Roger McRae, an early settler has a son Donald still farming here.

Jeremiah Parker was born in Tennessee in 1812. He was born a slave. His owner brought him to California in 1850. In 1853 he bought his freedom for \$600, and later bought the freedom of his wife, Rachael. They moved to Pleasant Grove in 1857 where they acquired and farmed 195 acres and raised a family of two boys and seven girls.

An index and file of all of the past issues of the NEWS BULLETIN may be found in the Sutter County Library and in the Marysville City Library.



#### HARVESTING GRAIN ON THE PETE DARRACH RANCH

This picture was taken in the early 1900's. The ranch is three miles south of Trowbridge. Pete Darrach is identified as the man on the harvester to the right partially hidden by the machinery. This ranch was one of the few in the locality to use mule teams on the harvester. The mules are guided by a single line to the lead mule called a jerk-line.

REFERENCES

Thompson and West, History of Sutter County  
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Appeal Democrat, Centennial Edition, January 23, 1960  
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California Business Directory, 1888

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Valuable assistance was given in finding information by Miss Thelma Neaville of the Marysville City Library and the staff of the Sutter County Free Library.

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In A Dictionary of Americanisms by Mitford and Mathews, 1951, in volume 2 on page 1265 there appears the history of the several uses of the verb, "plug". The authors give quotations of the earliest uses they have found.

The first use of the verb to refer to the act of removing a small bit of a melon to determine its ripeness was found in the Sutter Banner, Yuba City, of August 3, 1876, p. 1, c. 6.

The sentence quoted reads: "Let me plug 'em to find a ripe one?"

The next use was in Pecks Bad Boy in 1883.