

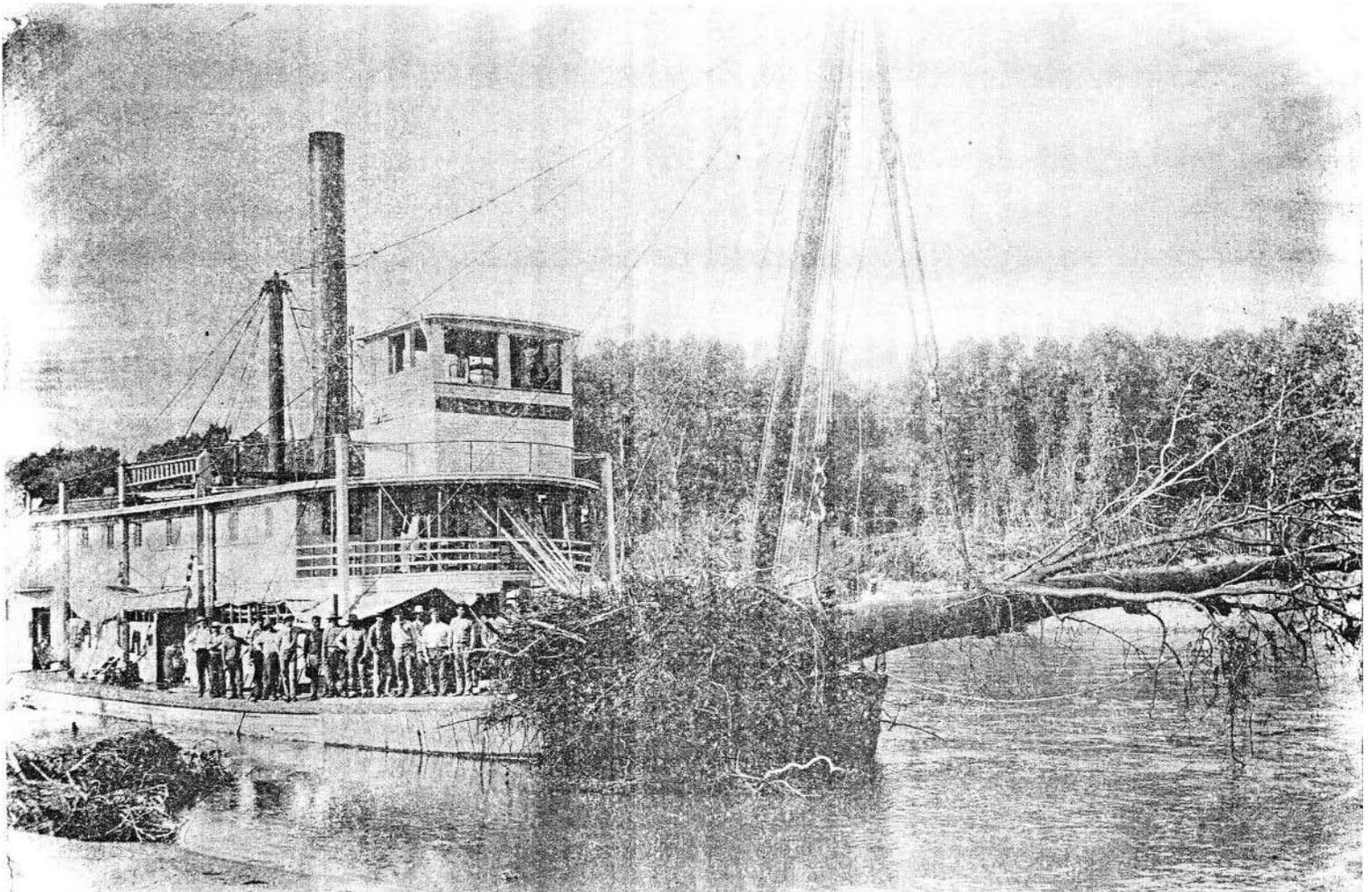
# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. 4 NO. 1

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

JAN. 1964



### SNAG BOAT "SEIZER"

BOAT USED TO CLEAN THE RIVER CHANNEL FOR NAVIGATION.

PICTURE WAS TAKEN NEAR MERIDIAN ON THE SACRAMENTO RIVER.

OWNER MRS. LESLIE E. WOLBERT  
5800 FICHETT LANE  
PARADISE, CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL MEETING OF SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January 21, 1964

MERIDIAN VETERANS HALL

Dinner 7 p.m.

Served b Meridian Church Ladies

Price \$2.25

(RESERVATIONS: Please drop a card to Mrs. Marshall Shields, Meridian, California or call Mrs. Emmett Gibson, 743-3202, Yuba City.)

PROGRAM

Program will be presented by Troop 28 of Boy Scouts of America as a part of their historical requirements for an exploration trip to Summit City, which they made last summer. Scout leader, Mr. Bill Smith, will have charge of the program. Ie urge all members and friends of the Historical Society to come and enjoy a very entertaining and profitable evening. Troop 28 and Mr. Rounds boys will probably be the nucleus of a Jr. Historical Society for Sutter County. The boys will tell of their experiences at Summit City which is an old settlement near Cisco in the Sierra Nevadas.

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SUTTER COUNTY MUSEUM

We hope to have the Sutter County Museum become a reality in Carriage Square in the very near future. We seem to be getting our many problems ironed out and all agreements will be met soon. Mrs. Ida Doty, our museum chairman, is working diligently with the assistance of a working committee. All committees are ready to go just as soon as the contract is signed. Mr. Edward Von Geldern is now working on a design for road signs giving direction to strangers in our midst.

## EARLY HISTORY OF MERIDIAN, SUTTER COUNTY

by Ida E. Doty

The Meridian area is very rich in pioneer heritage; not only the elderly residents but many of the young people can tell of happenings of the early days.

The following are only a few of the highlights of the settling of the Meridian area.

Elmer Code Doty told many of the folklore tales. He would sit and whittle as he talked. He made five trips to the area; two around the Horn and three across the plains before he settled there.

Let us go back in imagination to over 100 years ago. The Sutter Buttes early settling is tied in closely to that of Meridian. For many years south of the Buttes were thousands of acres of tule and swamp lands. This area was a vast lake at several times each year. On the west of this tract of swamp land was established the little town of Meridian. Later with the buildings of levees and the Sutter By-Pass, this tule land was reclaimed and now is largely rich farmland.

During the time of Mexican control, that government encouraged the settlement by intelligent and energetic foreigners as the Americans from the east were called. The native Californians tried to hold them out until about 1846.

The only person said to be able to resist them was Captain Sutter. He used much of the area between the Feather and Sacramento Rivers to graze his huge herds of cattle and horses. Early in 1841, Sutter' home was the only settlement in the entire area but later that year, a settlement was made in Grimes and in 1842 one in Niolaus.

In 1849, as what is now Sutter County area, became more settled. Jack Robinson or Jack Dongaree settled just south of what is now Meridian. Another man settled at South Butte. These were the only two settlements on the Sacramento River above the mouth of the Feather. Meridian did not grow very fast as most people were interested in the mining to the east.

Prior to 1849 only small canoes, whale boats or sail boats could navigate above Sacramento City. The 1850 flood cleared the river channel of snags and debris so that steamers could go as far as Red Bluff.

In 1852, O'Neil built a cabin where the home of Arthur Woods now stands. The M. Nair family located two miles north of there and during that year, many families settled around the Buttes.

Descendants of some of these early settlers still live in or around Meridian. Ely, Wilbur, Burks, Doty, Sullenger, Tarke, Hoke, Woods, Stohlman, Charge and Summy are familiar names.

In the summer of 1852, C. D. Semple built a ferry across the Sacramento River from Colusa to a point above Meridian. Meridian in those days had a great deal of brush containing wild animals. Several grizzly bears were killed.

The Indians who were found there seemed a very old tribe. They were heavier-limbed and stouter than Indians farther east. They were a hairy race, many had heavy beards. Their color was light, wide mouths, thick lips, short broad noses and extremely low foreheads. Some few of them had hair growing down to the eyebrows, Their eyes were almond shaped like the Chinese race. They seemed to be a timid, stupid tribe of Indians. The men and children were entirely naked and the women

and children were entirely naked and the women almost so. They were not at all war-like, were very poor hunters but skillful in catching fish.

They were easily domesticated and did labor for the white settlers. These Indians were there only during the summer, leaving in the late fall.

In 1857, J. F. Fouts established a post office and ferry at Meridian. The town was called Keokuk, later changed to Fouts Ferry. As the town was only 1/4 mile west of the Mount Diablo meridian of the United States survey, the name was permanently changed to Meridian.

A Methodist church was organized in 1861 with 35 members. Also a school had been built. The school was near the river. For some time, the river was like main street-no levees at all. Many buildings faced the river. Trading boats on the river were floating stores.

There were no roads. People just drove anywhere, most travel being done in the big schooner wagons in which they had crossed the plains. There was also, of course, much horseback travel.

The social life was mostly visiting, always staying as all night guests. There were some picnics and also church camp meetings. These were said to have been "hundingers." People came from miles away and would camp for a week or longer. The first church built in the area was at Kirksville.

The early farming was quite primitive, using oxen and home-made plows. An Indian boy would walk ahead of the oxen. The plow was pulled by ropes tied to their horns. A man would guide the plow from behind. The grain was scattered and tree brush was drawn over to cover the seed. It was cut with sickles and even butcher knives. It was threshed by herding cattle and horses over the piled grain.

As early as 1853, both wheat and barley were grown. However, California millers did not use it for several years. Instead they imported grain from Chile and Australia.

In 1862, hundreds of fruit trees were packed in tules and floated up the river to be received by ranchers at the boat landings.

A stage coach road of rock crushed by hand labor was built through the Buttes to Meridian. Chester Reische's grandfather was driver of one of the stage coaches.

In 1864, W. C. Smith laid out and sold town lots. On July 4, 1864, Colusa, West Butte and Meridian people had a picnic and celebrated by raising Old Glory from a Liberty pole on top of the Buttes. Some members of the group stayed there several days to guard the Flag as there was a faction in the area not in sympathy with the Union administration. This flag was kept for many years in the Jones family but was lost in the 1901 flood.

In 1867, Fouts built the first saloon, Jones commenced the manufacture of brick and Burgett built a steam chopping mill for grain and corn.

The Good Templars organized and built a hall. Lodge No. 182 A. & F.M. was formed with Davis, Wod, Doty, Wilbur and Summy being among the 25 charter members.

Long Bridge was built and county roads were laid out following section lines. There were now three ferries across the river. In 1870, Reclamation District #70 was officially recognized. It had earlier been known as Swamp Land District No. 20. It included 6000 acres. There was quite a bit of opposition to the building of levees and twice masked men cut the levee.

By 1878, there was a stage coach each way daily from Marysville to Colusa.

During the 80's and 90's, picnics were big affairs. People would parade with floats, brass bands and fireworks to the Jones place north of town for the feast and dancing.

Then south of town at the Doty grove, was another favorite spot. William Doty had a race track there and those affairs brought out the best buggy horses in the community.

Some of the early settlers of Meridian were adventurers but there were many pioneers who buckled to the job, helping to give the community its step forward.

Each succeeding generation has added to the picture, has built upon the foundations laid by the pioneers of yesteryear. And each has found conditions a bit better by reason of what was accomplished by those before them.

In about 120 years, a great productive community has been created out of a wilderness in which Indians and wild animals were the only living things.

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Appreciation and thanks to Ethel Albertson of Meridian for supplying much of the early day history of the Meridian Area.

Ida E. Doty

ANNIVERSARY OF THE I.O.M. OF MERIDIAN  
Sutter County Banner - May 8, 1869

96 YEARS AGO IN MERIDIAN

The Good Templars of Meridian Lodge No. 97 celebrated their 6th annual anniversary last Tuesday. The meeting was held in the evening at the Lodge room in Meridian. With that true fraternity that should always characterize such fraternities, the Good Templars and Masons have united their means, built and fitted up a Hall at once commodious and tasteful.

It being a "free thing" many outsiders availed themselves of the privilege of seeing the inside of a Templar's and Masonic Lodge. The great features of the occasion, however, was the installation of officers.

The new officers installed by District Deputy, Mr. P. B. Chamberlain were as follows: E. F. Thornbrough, W.C.T., J. Thornbrough, W.R.S., Julia Thornbrough, W.L.S., T. Sandlin, W.V.T., R. A. Moon, W.S., Geo. Moon, W.F.S., W. J. Harris, W.T., J. S. Davis, N.M., Miss Susan Brown, W.D.M., Albert Mitchell, Watson Green, W.C.G., S. H. Moon, W.C., W. A. Thornbrough P. W. C. T.