

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM
1333 Butte House Road
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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

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Yuba City California

April, 1955

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Society will be on Tuesday, April 19, 1955, at 8 P.M in the Supervisors' Room at the Sutter County Court House.

The principal speaker of the evening will be Mr. Allan Ottley, who is supervisor of the California Section in the State Library. Mr. Ottley will speak about Sutter County historical records in the State Library.

BE SURE TO ATTEND

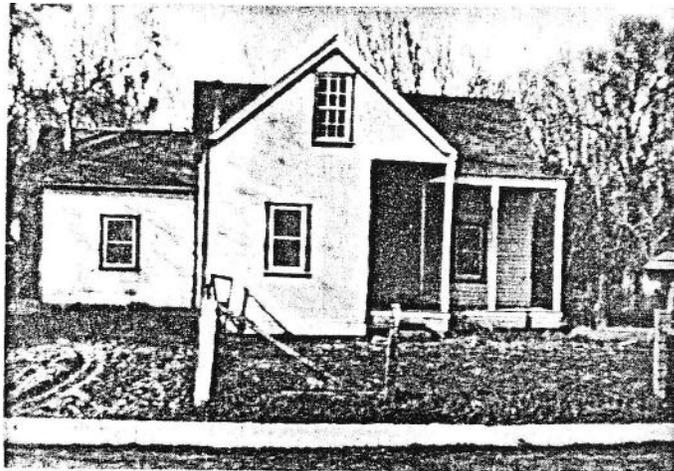
President's Message

The Sutter County Historical Society celebrates its first anniversary this month. Less than a year ago the historical society was merely an idea in the minds of a few persons who later became the incorporators and first directors. From this small beginning we have progressed to the status of a corporation, the publishers of a bulletin, and a membership of 65 persons.

Our program for the coming year should include the following activities:

1. Membership. Each of us should take a personal interest in obtaining new members.
2. Historical markers. There are many spots of great historical interest in Sutter County which should be marked. Many of these are not known to us due to insufficient research. The Division of Beaches and Parks of the State of California will furnish the markers free of charge if the historic place proposed to be marked is of importance.

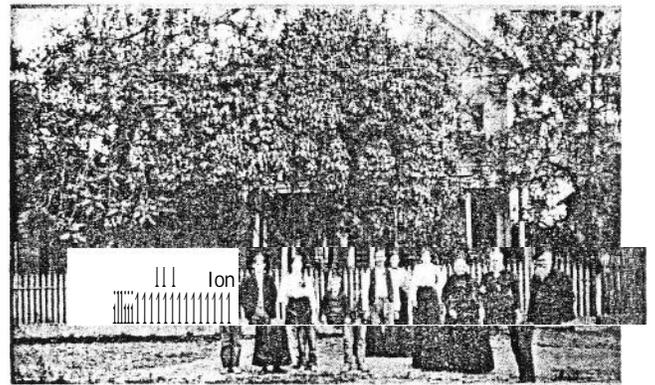
County Seat



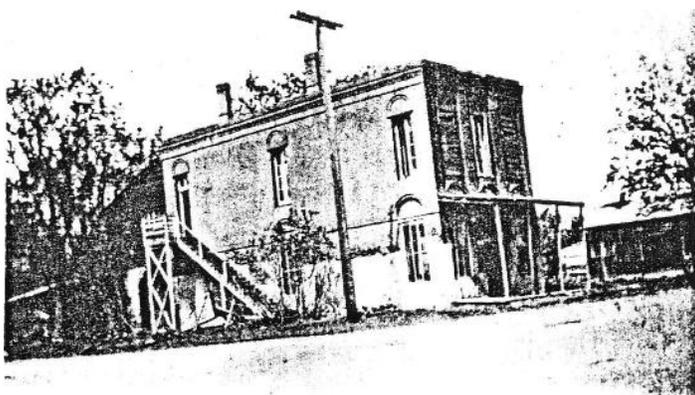
First County Government



American House



Bell House



7)-



Street Scene

3. Research Program: We should commence research in old newspaper files, official records, and other sources to obtain facts for the purpose of marking historical spots and for data needed for a county history. This information should also be made available to the schools, churches, Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations. We should also proceed with the plan to tape record the reminiscences of our elder citizens.
4. Publication of a modern history of Sutter County. The existing histories of this county are incomplete and out of date. The active research program described above will supply the material for publication.
5. County Fair exhibit. Last year our exhibit at the County Fair was visited by hundreds of people. This year with more time to plan we should excel last year's record.
6. Conference of California Historical Societies. Our society should affiliate with this organization for obvious reasons.

= = Noel C. Stevenson

THE STRANGE CASE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON RIDEOUT

By Noel C. Stevenson

On June 13, 1852, the Daily Alta California printed a few lines about a shooting in Sutter County. Of course, a shooting was common event in the unsettled times of the Gold Rush period. But this shooting was different so it merited a full paragraph in the leading city newspaper.

George Washington Rideout was a resident of Marysville. A few days before the newspaper account referred to above, he stopped at the Bellview House located about five miles south of Nicolaus for a drink. The proprietor, W. F. Hoories, formerly of Missouri, proceeded to serve his thirsty customer, who became abusive when he found that Hoories did not have the brand of liquor he wanted. After a brisk exchange of words between the two men, the proprietor ordered Rideout out of his tavern. Rideout continued his insulting and abusive language and refused to leave the premises. Mr. Hoories picked up his gun and attempted to fire at the troublemaker, but there being no cap on it, it did not go off. Rideout then pulled his Colt revolver and fired, the ball striking the proprietor in the left side, inflicting a mortal wound.

Rideout was quickly captured, conveyed to Nicolaus, the County Seat, where a mob siezed the culprit and was about to hang him. However, a few citizens with cooler heads persuaded the mob to permit the law to take its normal course. In the meantime, Rideout was confined in a government vessel lying in the Feather River to await trial before the Court of Sessions.

A Grand Jury returned an indictment for murder on June 12, 1852. Rideout entered a plea of not guilty, and the trial commenced immediately. The jury was empaneled and the prosecution put on its case consisting of the testimony of four witnesses. The defendant called one witness and rested his case. The jury, after hearing the arguments of counsel for both sides, retired to consider its verdict.

Up to his time the mob had been in the background. As the jury continued to debate the fate of the defendant, the people became more restive. The spectators who had favored lynching Rideout had adopted a slogan: "Hang him while the sun shines." The jury had been out so long that the sun began to set. Apparently the mob considered its slogan and decided that the jury had had enough time for deliberations, and headed for the court room in the American Hotel. Leaders of the mob stepped up to the defendant, who was seated between two deputies, and told him that his time had come. No resistance was offered as they seized the defendant and led him from the court room by his collar.

The lynching of the defendant is described in a local county history: "Rideout was taken to a large tree in front of Jacob Vahle's residence. A rope thrown over a limb, one end fastened around the prisoner's neck and the other seized by about fifty men, who, as the last rays of the setting sun shed their light upon the scene, ran the murderer up and fastened him there. The whole court including the jury adjourned to witness the execution. Rideout had a Spanish wife. She was clinging to his neck when through her arms the body of her husband was jerked aloft. Thus they did hang him "while the sun was shining."

There is an account of Rideout's trial in the original minute book of the Court of Sessions in the custody of Geraldine Hall, County Clerk of Sutter County. It is brief and sketchy, but does contain what is probably the only official record of a lynching of a defendant in the state of California. After recording the retirement of the jury to consider its verdict, the clerk of the court wrote as follows:

"And now comes the mob being impatient of delay, the jury not having as yet agreed upon their verdict being led on by E. W. High and seized and forcibly took from the custody of the sheriff the said prisoner, Washington Rideout and having dragged him out of the court house, escorted him to the first convenient tree and hanged him by the neck till he was dead. The court was then adjourned till the next term in course."

That was Sutter County justice of the Gold Rush days. Crime committed: June 10th. Hanged: June 12th. Reported in the newspaper: June 13th. Surely the administration of justice was swift, sure, and sometimes just.

References:

Daily Alta California, June 13, 1852, 2-3

Delay, Peter J., History of Yuba and Sutter Counties, 1924, pp. 238-239

Minutes of the Court of Sessions of Sutter County, June 12, 1852, pp. 88-89, in the custody of the County Clerk of Sutter County

CALIFORNIA FOLK LORE SOCIETY

Place: Chico State College, Chico Time:

May 13 - 14, 1955

Among other speakers, Mr. Noel Stevenson will speak on Early California Law

More publicity on this meeting will be forthcoming at a later date. Come April 19th and hear all about the history of Sutter County.