

# Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

"For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past." -Walt Whitman

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 2

DECEMBER 2002

### SOCIETY NOTES

✂ The 29th annual **Pear Fair** was held in Courtland on schedule the last Sunday in July. The auditorium exhibited had some of the Clarksburg Historical picture boards and some ancient pear farming equipment. The Fair has a real community feel and allows local groups to raise money for their projects. We look forward to the 30th on the last Sunday in July 2003!

✂ Oops! We misspelled Pan **van Loben Sels** name for which we apologize. We also discovered that the man we referred to as P.J. van Loben Sels was actually Peter Justus van Loben Sels.

✂ The **September meeting** was held at the Sierra Sacramento Valley Museum of Medical History—a fascinating spot! We were given a super tour by the curator Dr. Bob LaPerriere.

✂ On October 2<sup>nd</sup> we co-sponsored a **bus tour of the Delta**. The tour included walking tours of Isleton led by Bruce Crawford, and Walnut Grove led by Joe Enos and Pete Budnick, with lunch put on by Orilla Del Rio at Paco's. The day ended with a tour of the old Victorian, Rosebud.

✂ Our **November meeting**, held on the 4th, featured Mas Hatano. Mr. Hatano spoke on the Japanese-American experience. The period covered was from the first immigrants in 1886 through World War II. The well-attended meeting presented a wonderful tour of the Japanese American Experience.

✂ Remember When? Anyone who can tell about or has pictures of the **Victory Highway** plaques please call Cathy Hemly 916-775-1238. A group wants to revive the route and plant some trees.

✂ Don't forget the **ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER** on Monday, January 20th at 6:30 pm. Please call Fran Bates at 776-1012 if you can help set up. Don't miss this! You are going to like the entertainment.

✂ We have reprinted the following **booklets** and they will be available at meetings. (Some selections are also available at the Dai Loy Museum. Mail orders will include an additional postage charge.)

*Discover How the Games were Played*  
*Discover the Dai Loy Gambling Hall Museum*  
*Discovering Locke*  
*Discovering the Sacramento River Delta*  
*Discovering Courtland*  
*Discover Paintersville, Vorden and Ryde*  
*Discovering Walnut Grove*

✂ We were contacted earlier this year by Patrick Lernout of Belgium who is researching the World War I US Military Cemetery of "Flanders Field", located in Waregem, Belgium. One of the soldiers buried there is **John B. Casajus of Ryde**. Those with any information on Mr. Casajus are asked to telephone or email Mr. Lernout: 32-56-61-33-41 or PATRICK.LERNOUT@PANDORA.BE✂

### COURTLAND:

#### Part One of a Two-Part Historiette

*written by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson*

**C**ourtland, located in Franklin Township, Sacramento County, was founded in 1871 by James V. Sims and named for his son, Court. Sims was born in Illinois in 1828 and in 1851 left for California with a company of six men. He stopped on the way and kept a lodging house to earn money to continue west. In 1852, he arrived in Sacramento with only his blankets. He then walked to Newcastle and Auburn where he took jobs whipsawing during the summer. He saved \$1500 and loaned it at 5% per month, but his borrower's business soon failed. In 1853, Sims settled in Sacramento County where he purchased 100 acres on the east bank of the river, a mile above Paintersville. In 1856, he married Mary B. Strong, also an Illinois native. They had three sons and four daughters. Sims became one of the early commercial grape growers in the north Delta. In 1872, after the post office was moved from Onisbo to Courtland, he became the postmaster, Western Union Telegraph agent and Wells Fargo Express agent. He held a county supervisorial seat from 1871 to 1874, with the organization of the town of Courtland in 1871.

It's important to note that James Sims has often been confused with Joseph Sims of Union House, located between Sutterville and Freeport in Sacramento County. They both subscribed to Thompson and West's "Sacramento County 1880" and provided biographies for the publication.

Another prominent early Courtland citizen was Benjamin Bates. He eventually owned 730 acres, 600 of which were at the point - Steamboat Landing - on Sutter Island, and the remainder in what became residential Courtland. Born in England in 1820, he emigrated in 1824 to New Jersey with his parents. In 1847, the family moved to New York State and in 1849, Bates trekked to California. The land he owned at Courtland

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extended approximately between Primasing and Bates Avenues, and Riverside and Washington streets (this does not include the land he donated for the schools). The land on Primasing (previously Sequoia) extended to the elementary school. Twenty acres of his land was devoted to orchard and vineyard. Bates was also reported to own \$250,000 worth of San Francisco real estate on Nob Hill.

The third early townsman who figured prominently was Captain Albert Foster. He managed the light riverboats for the California Navigation Company and was promoted to supervisor of their river steamers. He built the first wharf around which community activity was centered until the levee was raised to its existing height. The wharf, "Foster's Wharf", measured 182 feet by 30 feet and included two stores each 25 by 60 feet. The total construction cost was \$6000. In the early years, the famous riverboats "Chrysolopolis" and "Yosemite" called daily. The Yosemite later blew up at Rio Vista with great loss of life. Both boats were operated by California Navigation Company.

During the harvest season, plums, pears, peaches, pink beans and celery were shipped from the wharf. The mail packets "Apache" and "Modoc" called daily, as well as passenger packets, freighters, launches, lighters and hay schooners. When the mail bags were put ashore, the postmaster collected them and placed them "on a hand truck and pushed them to the post office", then located next to Bauer, Miller and Newbert's general merchandise store.

By 1889, the wharf and hotel "Winter House", were owned by Lewis Winters. In the same year Paul Kahn was postmaster, Western Union Telegraph agent, Wells Fargo & Company express agent, and agent for the Central Pacific Railroad steamers. In 1883, Addison J. Bump succeeded him as postmaster.

In 1888, Joseph W. Houston, the Sacramento County Assessor, was listed as owning the "Winter House", general merchandise store (which opened in 1887), wharf and livery stable. Houston was also postmaster from 1887-1900, express agent, telegraph agent, produce commissioner and produce express agent. Houston likely became acquainted with the opportunity offered by Courtland through Sims when Sims held his supervisor seat.

In Courtland's early years, all the commercial buildings were on the wharf and faced the river. Joe Fisher opened a saloon on the wharf in the 1880/90's. By 1890 a pole-shed was erected on the land side of the saloon (over the road), which kept horses sheltered from rain or scorching sun. The shed was in place until about 1917. Fisher, in connection with his saloon, operated "Fisher's Grill room" at the turn of the century. On or near the wharf was an electric shop, blacksmith, barber next to the "Grill Room", one or two general merchandise stores, the "Winter House" with a bar on the ground floor, the I.D.E.S. Hall (Irmandade do Divino Espiritito Santo, a Portuguese religious fellowship) and apartments, and the Peter A. Miller brickyard. Miller, a native of Christianstadt, Denmark, was also a contractor. "Fisherman's Wharf" a collection of small buildings was tucked between Fisher's at the end of the wharf and other riverfront buildings. Perhaps this was the location of the Courtland salmon cannery staffed by Chinese. Fire protection depended on a two-wheel chemical wagon located for easy access by the post office. A water tank tower and self-rotating windmill was situated nearby. The small building next to the windmill served as Henry Isham's butcher shop until 1917.

The Courtland Ferry at the upstream end of town, which was

owned by a group of Courtland merchants, began as a pay ferry running to Merritt Island. By the early 1900's, it cost 50 cents for a car and 10 cents for a pedestrian. The ferry was never kept in good working condition and each time it stopped and started the ferryman (at one time Joe Spriggs - "Uncle" Joe White operated the ferry for 16 years) had to bail water with a five gallon bucket. Notwithstanding operating inconveniences, the ferry ran until 11 p.m. daily and carried large amounts of traffic. It was discontinued in 1924, when the Paintersville Bridge opened.

A "Chinatown", which dated to before 1871, flourished upstream from the Courtland Wharf. It perched atop the low levee and overhung the river. Most Courtland Chinese came from the Heungshan District in Guangdong (Canton) Province and were primarily orchardists. The Chinese regarded Sims as mayor. On December 24, 1879, fire demolished the village. Although rebuilt, the planned clothing factory was abandoned. In 1906, fire again swept the precincts. The Chinese then moved to land inland owned by Demming, Winters and Houston.

Fire and flood were always threats. Courtland, like other river communities was hit hard by flooding after the winter rains of March, 1907. Pictures show townsfolk standing in water in front of the Wells Fargo Office on Foster's Wharf. To combat such floods, the State increased the height of the levees along the river. By 1917 commercial Courtland had moved to the landside and new smaller wharves had been built.

In 1920, Courtland's appearance had changed. At that time a contractor and several carpenter builders came to build the High School, they stayed raised their families and built many of the houses, as well as the Masonic Hall. With the levee improvements, at least four of the riverfront buildings were jacked up and skidded across the levee to the land side. A wide sidewalk at levee height was built in front of them. The gap which separated the river from the buildings remains in the same relative position, the boardwalk bridging it. What remained of Fisher's evidently became the Courtland Docks. Also in 1917, the Native Sons of the Golden West moved their meeting hall from Paintersville to Courtland, occupying Houston's Store. They installed a spring dance floor in the store, which had always been situated on the land side.

Earlier, in 1901 the I.D.E.S. Hall and apartments were moved across the levee. At the time, the Fishers lived in the ground floor apartment but the I.D.E.S. no longer occupied the second floor, which was converted to apartments. Apparently the Fishers had vacated their apartment for a home next to the levee on Magnolia Avenue by 1920. The apartment was converted by D. C. Simpson to a general merchandise store. At the time Simpson was also the Railway Express Agent. In the 1940's the store became a Red and White Store operated by Shirley Hall. By the 1950's a beauty shop occupied a part of the building. The building burned in a fire while undergoing conversion to a private residence.

A few yards downstream from the old I.D.E.S. Hall building was a now-raised building and soda shop. Next was the blacksmith's shop and the Corbin's Shell Oil Company office. Across from Shell's office was their wharf and service station, which after World War II was operated by Toy Farmer. Further downstream below Magnolia Avenue, Joe and Harriet Morgan operated Morgan's Landing and Chevron Service Station. The Morgan's bought the business in 1947, and ran, in conjunction with the service station, a cafe "Morgans", a bait shop, and boat rental and launching service. The bait and

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boat service was housed on the river side of the levee in the old Henry Isham Ice house, which burned in the 1980's.

Upstream, at the other end of town, opposite what had been the original "Chinatown" and on the levee above the new "Chinatown", was the Courtland Associated Service Station, operated by Elmer G. "Babe" Kirtlan. In addition to gasoline, oil and auto accessories, Kirtlan offered "Menlo Root Beer" and other soft drinks. In the 1940's the station changed to Texaco run by Jim Whitmore, and later Chevron run by "Scub" Perodeau. It is now abandoned.

Miller and Jackson's Hotel was moved across the levee to become self-catering hotel-apartments. Situated between Kirtlan's and Miller and Jackson's store, it was accessed by a gangway spanning the gap between the levee and the hotel entrance. Years later the apartment house burned. Bauer, Miller and Newberts changed its name to "Bauer, Miller and Jackson", and by 1925 to "Miller and Jackson" owned by J(acob) B. Miller and D. D. Jackson. Miller and Jackson also owned a wharf and freight shed. The store moved to the Native Sons Hall. In 1920, the N.S.G.W. built their new hall. In 1925, Miller and Jackson advertised among its general merchandise: boots, shoes, clothing, hats, caps, sporting goods, hardware, orchard ladders, paints and oil, Hardie Power Sprayers, cigars, tobacco, groceries and Associated Oil Products. The store was well-known for its good hardware line, and for many years was operated by Bert Schiller, Miller's son-in-law. Schiller was a descendent of early Merritt Island settler George Cornish. He and his wife Ethel, ran the store, assisted through the years by Carrie Hall, Shirley Hall, "Ernie", "Curley", "Smiley" and Josephine Baroni. A big wheel of redskin cheddar cheese always sat under a glass dome on the counter and string was pulled from a spool high overhead. The wood floor was oiled and ceiling fans circulated the air. In the back right-hand corner was the office and D.D. Jackson's tall accountants desk, where a lot of "banking" was done for the local residents. George Oda later owned and operated the market for a number of years. The building now houses the Courtland Market, run by "Toby" Kawahara.

The post office moved next to Miller and Jackson's in the small addition. Adjacent was the Courtland Hotel and Courtland Club saloon and pool hall. It is possible that one of the hotels was the old Winter House. It is also possible that this was another building previously sited at the wharf. It is obvious that it was originally a five-window structure, with a sixth added, perhaps to accommodate the Courtland Telephone Company, said to be near Miller and Jackson's. Or, the phone company could have occupied the post office site. Between the Courtland Club and the butcher shop there was a gap. Owned by Henry and Mywin Isham, the butcher shop began business about 1895. In 1926, an ice house owned by Hart and Stephens of Sacramento was situated on the levee opposite the butcher shop. It possible that Isham's Butcher Shop rented space from Hart and Stephens. By the 1940's, Elmer Fawcett was the butcher, and the shop had installed a meat refrigerator and a refrigerated showcase, but the shop still maintained its butcher's block and sawdust-covered floor. About 1952, both Miller and Jackson's and Fawcett's were robbed and Elmer Fawcett was locked in his meat locker by the thieves. The coolest place in town was said to be Fawcett's meat locker. Fawcett died in 1955. Bert Schiller opened a hardware store on the premises in the late 1960's, after selling Miller and Jackson's to George Oda, who later sold the store to Toby Kawahara.

Next to Fawcett's Shop was the original Bauer, Miller and Jack-

son store building, having been skidded across the levee. Subsequent occupants have been the post office, Rugaards's Barbershop, Eddy Electric, the drugstore, and doctor and dentist offices. The building was at the downstream end of the boardwalk. In 1925, the post office moved next to Miller and Jackson. Hans Rugaard had previously cut hair in the Walnut Grove Hotel and at a riverside location across from the hotel.

After a series of doctors (Morton, Lindsay, Hassett, Gottschauk, Hathaway), Raymond Primasing, a graduate of Creighton University School of Medicine in Nebraska, took over the practice. His first wife was Esther Hathaway, a daughter of the Sacramento Bee Press Foreman. His second wife was Elsie Wiedmann. He remained in practice in Courtland for over 50 years and was well-known throughout the Delta and beyond. On his retirement, Sequoia Avenue, which ran by the High School in Courtland, was renamed Primasing Avenue. He was succeeded by Dr. Henry Go, whom he had delivered in Courtland. Dr. Paul Barnes started in this office and then moved to Walnut Grove.

A near equal number of dentists practiced in Courtland. It was recalled that Courtland had a dentist "very early on". The local veterinarian was "Doc" McClain who lived in a cottage on Sherman's Wharf until the wharf was razed.

The old Miller and Jackson store building burned in a spectacular fire in the early 1940's. The doctor's office, pharmacy and barbershop were rebuilt. Dr. Carles, the dentist, moved to an office in the Native Sons Hall. In 1945, Karl W. "Bill" Westerberg became pharmacist. He presided over the soda fountain, a Courtland hangout, into the 1950's. After 24 years, in 1969 Bill sold the pharmacy to Jerad "Jerry" Stokes, who ran it until 1992 when he sold it to a national firm located in Laguna.

Little remains today of the colorful Chinese settlement which was built after 1906. At one time, there were almost 500 Chinese. Only the Wo Chong Company Store, and a scattering of unidentified buildings now used as private residences, remain. Lin Sen, the first President of the Republic of China, lived for a time on the second floor of the Wo Chong Company. The pavilion where the famous Chinese politician Sun Yat Sen spoke to the gathered Delta Chinese (to enlist their support and secure funds for his cause in China) has been razed. His largest meetings were held in Courtland. Sun was well-known to Delta Chinese long before he was known internationally. Sun and his followers, after several attempts to overthrow the Chung Manchu Dynasty, retreated to the Delta with a price on their heads. He visited Courtland often where his secretary Lou Hou Tung lived. Among the businesses catering to the Chinese were opium dens, gambling houses, brothels, social halls, restaurants, herbalists, bakeries, groceries and lodging houses. Chinese children often acted as look-outs for the gambling houses and when they spotted the sheriff's black car they ran down the levee slope shouting the warning. When tong wars erupted in San Francisco in the 1930's, Bay Area Chinese with a price on their heads infiltrated the Delta Chinese. At one time armed Chinese patrolled as far downstream as the George Smith Ranch. It was well known that Hop Sing tong members were sheltered in Courtland.

The Japanese settlement in Chinatown was distinct and separate. The Japanese were directly behind the levee and the Chinese further back. The only visible remnant of Japanese settlement for many years was the Nishihara Grocery Company, which was destroyed by fire in the mid 1980s. For many years, a large but fading sign painted on the side of the store

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advertised "Neñi" soda pop.

The last time Chinatown burned was in 1930. Thirty-six structures were destroyed. The community had a couple of extinguishers and a few feet of hose housed in a ramshackle building with a sign in front proclaiming, "No Parking Fire Department". After 1930, many residents moved to Walnut Grove Chinatown only to be burned out again a few years later.

The rest of Courtland was mainly given over to residential development, except on Riverside Avenue and the school precincts. The land remained largely undeveloped until the 1920s. Part of Bates's property, when developed, became known as the "Bates and Isham Addition". It roughly encompasses today's Primasing, Bates, Washington and Riverside Streets and Avenues. The "Bates and Smith Addition" roughly covers from the intersection of Washington and Primasing to the school end. Velvet Avenue running parallel to Primasing in this addition was platted and lots laid out, but it was never developed. Eventually Washington Avenue extended to this area. At the end of Washington Avenue (near Chinatown) was the Courtland Movie Theater, the "New Theater". In 1925, the lessee and manager was W. H. Needham (of Isleton) and it was advertised as "the house of features, the only place in town to spend a pleasant evening, the Home of Paramount Pictures showing the best photoplays." A platted street, "Elm" Avenue ran parallel to Magnolia but was also abandoned.

The third Native Sons hall was built in 1920 at Primasing (Sequoia) Ave and Riverside. The Native Son's Parlor and the Native Daughter's Parlor met in the second floor hall. The ground floor was broken into small office space. Over the years, the space was used for a dentist's office, polling place, Well Baby Clinic and the first office of the Bank of Courtland. In the 1950s, the NSGW moved to Elk Grove. The hall was then used for community functions and church services. The building was razed and the land is presently occupied by the Courtland Post Office, and by the North Delta Conservancy, which replaced the County Branch Library. After operating as a volunteer library for several years, a new County Branch Library is being built near the elementary school and should open in early 2003.

The "Courtland Apartments" were built shortly after World War I at the intersection of Harkness and Washington. There was also a small garage with an apartment above near the corner of Primasing and Washington and another apartment house on Harkness near Riverside.

The first volunteer fire company house was built near the old livery stable, which straddled Washington Avenue. Before the Volunteer Fire Department was organized, fire protection depended on two 40 gallon chemical tanks on wheels and one hose car with 300 feet of hose. The equipment sat at the ready near the post office.

In the late 1940s, Washington Avenue was extended to the new school housing development for high school teachers. During this time the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall was built, dedicated to the memory of Dean Hall, son of Leota and Shirley Hall, who was killed in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II. Many years later the building fell into disrepair and disuse and was demolished in a fire department training drill. Across the street is the new telephone office. Nearby at the deadend of Magnolia is the present Volunteer Fire Station and the "new" school district bus maintenance garage.

🦋 *Part Two of this Courtland Historiette*  
will appear in our June 2003 Newsletter 🦋

## Courtland Historiette Footnote:

### BERT E. HART

Sarah Ethel MacLeod, "Ethel" was born in 1888 in Vankleek Hill, Canada. We know nothing of her schooling or early years. On January 27, 1910 she was working as a telephone operator when she married Bert E. Hart in Reno, Nevada. Her scrapbook indicates her great pride in her Scottish ancestry and contains many articles about Bert.

Bert E. Hart was born January 21, 1880 in Neillsville, Wisconsin. He served in the Army during the Spanish American War. He started his career with the local telephone company in Neillsville as a ground crewman at \$1.25 an hour. In 1904, he moved to Seattle as wire chief and trouble shooter. In 1908, he came to Sacramento to demolish the old Sunset Telephone and Telegraph building. Sunset had long distance toll lines and was the forerunner of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph. He also worked briefly in Stockton, Fresno and Susanville. Somehow he got to Reno (Ethel was there) and then after they were married they went together (in the caboose of a freight train during a three-day blizzard) to Quincy, California. Bert worked as manager and repairman for \$100 a month. Ethel worked 10 hours a day as operator for \$60 a month. They were there 6 years, two or three of them in little log cabins.

The Freeport Telephone Company started in 1889 and became the New Freeport Telephone Company with lines that extended to Rio Vista. Their stockholders were river farmers. In 1917, the name changed to Delta Telephone and Telegraph and the office moved to Courtland. Howard Kercheval, General Manager, hired Bert Hart from Quincy. The telephone building in Courtland was located on Riverside Street next to the Isham residence near Magnolia Avenue. It was a three-story building. On the ground floor was the equipment, and on the middle floor (entrance) were the offices and a kitchen. The top floor had an apartment for the manager and his wife, and several rooms for telephone operators who were guaranteed room and board. Ethel worked as everything from clerk to operator to bookkeeper. In 1937, the telephone company moved into the Courtland Bank Building and Ethel retired.

The Harts moved to Sacramento in 1940. Bert moved up the ranks and was President of Delta Telephone and Telegraph during his last five years. He retired at age 80 in 1961, when General Telephone bought Delta. After 63 years of telephone work he still hated to leave! He was a low handicap golfer, a member of the Sutter Club, Telephone Pioneers Club, Elks Lodge in Wisconsin, and the Spanish American Veterans Association. He died April 1, 1963 in Sacramento California. His funeral and burial were in Neillsville, Wisconsin.

After Bert's death, Ethel remained for a while in their home at 1100 N Street. She then moved into a convalescent home on Folsom Boulevard, where she lived for 30 years. She confessed to having moved in a little too soon. She was often "news", as when she swept the Folsom sidewalk or celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup>, 103<sup>rd</sup>, and finally her 104<sup>th</sup> birthdays. She had always been philanthropically generous. The Courtland Community Church got a check every month until her death. She left a million dollars to the City of Sacramento to be used for Senior Citizens; that is why the Sacramento City Senior Center on J Street is called the Ethel MacLeod Hart Senior Center! Ethel MacLeod Hart died October 13, 1992. She is buried in a cemetery in Canada, near her parents and Vankleek Hill. 🦋



## September Meeting:

### Dr. La Perriere on Pioneer Medicine

written by Carol Watson

On Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, a stalwart group of SRDHS members journeyed to the Sierra Sacramento Valley Museum of Medical History where Dr. "Bob" La Perriere related events of Gold Rush medicine. The Sacramento Medical Society was formed in 1868. It is the oldest medical society in California. The following are notes from the program.

Medical science of the 1800's was rather primitive, marked by the use of herbs and other plants. Bleeding and blistering were used to release humors, not unlike the Indian Shamans. The patient's symptoms were treated; not the disease. An 1825 description given by a man with dropsy and fever told of excruciating pain, bleeding and purging, and derangement, and many years later he had the scars of the eight blisters to remember the siege. The patient regarded the disease as a punishment. Doctors had to use their taste and smell for diagnosis. Today doctors treat the disease because they have found the cause of many diseases and can treat them as well as the patient.

Earlier people practiced medicine with little or no training. Ministers of the Gospel gave medical advice simply because they were educated. In 1760 it took 4 years to complete medical school in the United States and entrance was often based on the ability to pay. Many practiced medicine from having apprenticed it, others got experience and first aid training in the Army. There was a wide difference in their competency. The regulars or Allopaths won out over the irregulars, which included the Thompsonians, homeopaths, eclecticists and hydrotherapists.

The Thompsonians held that if you were diseased, you needed heat. Air, Fire Water and Earth were the four elements that they tried to control with tiny pills. They used herbs and provided books of home remedies. Around 1840, homeopathy began to replace the Thompsonian thinking. Homeopaths felt that "like cured like" and tried to use small amounts of substances that reproduced, and hopefully reduced the symptoms of the disease. The simple little pills without side effects were a pleasant, if ineffectual, treatment. Medical kits were supplied to homes and people were advised to consult homeopaths for only serious diseases. In 1842, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote a critical article about the Homeopaths, which did not seem to deter the self dosers; their wares are available in health food stores today. Eclecticists, as their name implies, borrowed from the other practitioners and used a book full of symptoms and various elixirs like Lydia Pinkham's to cure them. Hydrotherapists, as the name suggests, used water to cure all ills, through any and every orifice of the body. They also believed in exercise and sunshine.

During the Gold Rush anyone with medical experience practiced medicine. 6% of the people died on their way to California across the plains, and many more died soon after their arrival. No one maintained their former health. Descriptions of the drinking water explains some sources of the common - intestinal- intestinal problems. The water was said to contain moss, pollywogs and dirt among other things. It was advised to boil the water to remove the minerals—one of those right ideas for the wrong reasons.

Amputations were common; they had a 50% success rate.

Compound fractures were usually amputated. The death rate for unamputated compound fractures was 100%, so the 50% chance seemed reasonable. In 1876, California passed an anti-quackery law that did away with much of the shadier aspects of the practice of medicine. Appendectomies were first introduced in 1890

Scurvy claimed a lot of lives, as did infectious diseases. Accidents - as being run over by a wagon or a firearm mishap, drowning while crossing a ford, or perhaps encountering a grizzly bear - were also killers. Phrenology was practiced, as well as the use of electricity. Available drugs included laudanum, morphine and calomel.

At the time of the Gold Rush, California was known as the most healthful territory anywhere. However, when Sacramento jumped in population from 2000 to 10,000, the tent cities with their poor sanitation and over-crowding brought on typhoid fever, rheumatism, encephalitis and TB.

Sacramento was an early victim of flood, fire and disease. In 1850, the ship New World brought news of California's newly-acquired statehood, but also brought a passenger who staggered onto the levee and died of Cholera. The disease had a very sudden onset - headache, blue skin, cold, weakness and general misery. 50% recovered. The Sacramento doctors were most noble; they stayed and fought the disease with quinine and calomel, and they also died.. The doctors, of whom there were about 50, ranged in age from 23 to 47. Residents panicked, and four out of five left the city, leaving behind sick relatives. Of the 90,000 who arrived during the Gold Rush, one out of five were dead within six months. Business came to a standstill, and even some of the gambling halls closed. Medical fees were very high during the Gold Rush, compared to the 1890s and early 1900s.

The medical museum was very interesting. On display were medical instruments from various periods. Some of them resembled medieval torture instruments. One good thing for sure: needles used for shots have gotten a great deal smaller.

During these early days the Delta had medical help: veterinarians, druggists, dentists and barbers all practiced medicine. The evening was very interesting, "Dr. Bob" most entertaining, and the museum sobering. In case you missed the show, the museum, located on Elvas Avenue, is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Our thanks to Tom Herzog for arranging the program and to Fran Bates for coordinating transportation. 🍷

## GET MORE INVOLVED WITH THE SRDHS!

*We have lots of needs ...  
including (but not limited to)  
Officer Positions and  
Resource Center Staffing,  
and would love to hear from you,  
whether you have a lot  
or just a little time to give!*

Please call our President, Fran Bates,  
at 916-776-1012 for information.



## SRDHS 2003 SCHEDULE

Meetings are typically held on third Monday of each month. Tentative schedule - Subject to change.

January 20 .....	General Meeting/Annual Potluck
February 17 .....	Board Meeting
March 17 .....	General Meeting
April 21 .....	Board Meeting
May 19 .....	General Meeting
June 16 .....	Board Meeting
	June Newsletter
July / August .....	summer break
September 15 .....	General Meeting
October 20 .....	Board Meeting
November 17 .....	General Meeting
December .....	Board Meeting
	December Newsletter



## WANT TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THIS GREAT PUBLICATION???

Then make sure you pay your 2003 dues!

Use this form, or one of our handy dues envelopes...

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- I'm paying ANNUAL dues for the following year(s):
  - 2003       other: \_\_\_\_\_
 \$25 a year for Individual/Family/Business Membership
- I've enclosed \$150 to become a LIFETIME member.
- I'd like to register as an Honorary Member. (FREE to those members 80 years and older)

Please mail this form with a check payable to the SRDHS to:  
 SRDHS - Membership  
 PO Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

### Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

## January General Meeting & Annual Potluck

Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at the Jean Harvie Community Center

Featured Program:

# “STEAMBOAT ‘ROUND THE BEND”

...A showing of the Will Rogers classic.

Family and friends are welcome to this classic and very popular SRDHS event!

Please bring food for 10.      A - I: Salad      J - O: Dessert      P - Z: Hot Dish

Call Fran Bates at 916-776-1012 for more information.

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society  
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 Walnut Grove, CA 95690

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