

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENTS NOTES

Now summer is on us and time has flown again as history is always in the making. In January at our annual meeting program Robert James presented an excellent slide show on the Delta History. A big thanks to him, Jim Culbertson, Judy Culbertson and Terry Alchorn for making this event happen. In March Bruce Crawford's program gave us an insight to the writing and publishing of his book "Isleton." Our May program was speaker Jim Kuykendall and his antique bottle collection. This was a very interesting display of bottles along with a narrative description of each bottle.

The Resource Center is moving along well with the cataloging of local history materials. Our oral history program is about to take off with some new oral histories but we are still in need of volunteers to do these oral histories.

On February 19 I attended the Sac Area Consortium in Sacramento. It was a very informative meeting. From this I found that the 1880 "Thompson & West History of Sacramento" was released in CD format. This old book has a lot of Delta home drawings and information in it. We now have it available for a donation of \$15.00. Contact me if you are interested in the CD.

In a sad note, Charles Soderquist author of "Sturgeon Tales: Stories of the Delta" died in March of this year. He was the husband of Jan Goggans. She did oral histories of some of our local residents and authored the pamphlet "The land of Give and Take" on these oral histories. Charles was very interested in our local Delta history and had attended many of our programs in the past. He will be missed. As many of us are aware, our Delta history (Except for the Indians) is relatively short in time compared to the older history of the United States. Yet a lot of history occurred in that time frame when these people settled in the area.

The other day Jim Bates shared his thoughts on this history that is still available from many of our older residents. The thought is that you older residents have a lot of history stored up inside you but no one knows about it. Please take the time to let your loved ones learn about you life. Either write it, tape it or have someone help you make it available for the future. Please take any of your old photos and documents and either describe on the back of them or dictate them to a recorder for identification. So many times we get photos in the resource center with no description of who's in them, the time frame or what they're about. Also any of you of the younger generation please take the time to help your older relatives make this happen, as someday you or your children may want to know the history of your family. Our oral history program is available to help any one who wants to make this happen. Tom

SOCIETY NOTES

The January Meeting was a huge success! C.J. Jensen organized the dinner with the help of Jayne and Terry Alchorn, -and- Robert James slide show was wonderful old Delta pictures from all up and down the area. It ran very smoothly thanks to some electronic help from Terry Alchorn and Judy and Jim Culbertson. Robert's lectures are always A-one. We also elected a Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Board—President Tom Herzog, Vice-President C.J. Jensen, Recording Secretary, Terry Alchorn, Corresponding Secretary, Doris Pylman, Treasurer, Linda van Loben Sels and Directors Jim Dahlberg, Bobbie Collier, Debbie Chan, Esther Koopman, Joe Enos, Kim Sackett, Marshall Pylman and Fran Bates Past Pres.

TUESDAY is now History day. The Resource Center is open most Tuesdays and beginning in September 2004 the General meetings will be held on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of September, November, January, March and May. Board meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of the alternate months. All the Monday holidays were beginning to cause conflicts with our agenda.

On Thursday June 17, the society entertained the Sacramento Area Consortium for their meeting and lunch.

Our September 21 meeting (Yes it is on Tuesday) will feature speaker Jane Wolff author of "Delta Primer."

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WALNUT GROVE 1850-1970

Written by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

This is the continuation of our Towns along the River series. We have completed Ryde, Vorden and Courtland. This is a multi part history of Walnut Grove. Because some of the material is conflicting and some is vague or ambiguous there are sure to be inaccuracies in this article and recollections can be fallible. As with all previous articles, additions or corrections are welcomed. Many thanks in advance to Art Brown, Fran Brown, Barbara Brooks, Marilyn Dye Fisher, "Terry" Salisbury, John Salisbury, Katherine Uda, Russ Graham Jr. and to some who are no longer with us, Bill Berry and Bill Hutchinson among others.--Ed.

At this juncture, the Browns arrived in Walnut Grove. Mrs. Brown's late husband Alexander was born in 1849 the son of John Brown and his wife of Lanark, Scotland, who emigrated to Canada and then in 1839 to Portsmouth, New Hampshire where son Alex was born. Brown a weaver moved his family to one of the great northeastern mill towns Lawrence, Massachusetts and when Alex was nine, John Brown died. Agnes Brown was left with six children, four of whom died in childhood. Mrs. Brown and her remaining two children, Alex and Christine, made two trips to California, eventually settling in San Francisco. When Alex was 12 he left school. While living in the east, he worked as a grocery clerk for four years. In San Francisco, he operated a pork packing business, then a butchering business and finally a fruit and produce business for 5-6 years. In 1871 Alex married Kate Stanford of Placer County a niece of Governor Leland Stanford. Kate was 17 and Alex 22.

In June 1879 the widow Agnes Brown and her son Alex, his wife Kate and their sons John and Arthur arrived in Walnut Grove. Alex described it to his son John as having a two-story hotel building with a wharf in front, a store with Post Office, a blacksmith shop and the John Sharp residence. On the hotel was a large sign "Established by John Sharp 1851." Alex Brown further described the levees as 8 feet high with a long gradual slope to the river and easily eroded. On top of the levee was a footpath and at the foot of the levee was the bridge path/wagon road.

Alex's mother purchased what had been the original Sharp home. She ran the Hotel with her son's help. The family lived in the hotel from 1879 to 1900. Alex went again into the fruit business and opened his general merchandise store. He eventually began extensive farming in the Pierson District and at one time was the largest fresh asparagus shipper in the United States. He farmed 3830 acres of asparagus. Among his employees he was known as "The Boss." In connection with his store, he became agent for the Southern Pacific Transportation Company's steamer line, the agent for Wells Fargo express and agent for the Western Union Telegraph Company. He was assistant Postmaster and conducted a warehouse business, operated the Alex Brown bottling Company and in time managed the Alex Brown Estate Company.

Brown's oldest son John managed the express office in the store. The express office was associated with the

Sutter Bank in San Francisco which was later absorbed by Wells Fargo Bank. He developed primitive banking services, keeping the employees' wages in safekeeping, issuing drafts for the cost of shipping and loaned personal money as he saw fit, with or without security.

The "Sacramento Record-Union" January 2, 1888 commented on Walnut Grove, "This town is a place of considerable importance being a general supply center for a large portion of Grand Island, Andrus and Tyler Islands and a good portion of the Pierson District which converges at this point."

A large wharf opposite the hotel where ships docked daily saw great quantities of farm produce. During the Salmon run, two-three thousand salmon were shipped daily and occasionally, several sturgeon. Coal, mined on the flank of Mt. Diablo at Sommerville above Antioch was unloaded at the wharf. Well known freighters such as the "Apache," "Modoc," "Fruita," and "Dover" stopped at the wharf. and its successor a few hundred yards away Barry's wharf. Passenger packets, "Pride of the River," "Fort Sutter," and "Onward" also stopped while plying the river between San Francisco and Sacramento. Commuter boats were extensively used. The "Oriole" steamed to Sacramento daily and the launch "Lafayette" commuted to Sacramento from Rio Vista via Walnut Grove. The "Captain Webber" commuted to Stockton via Georgiana Slough and the Mokolumne and San Joaquin rivers. Local riverboat captains were Sperry Dye, Robert Sharp and George Thisby.

After trucks took the haulage business away from the riverboats the remaining wharves in the town served major petroleum companies--Texaco, Standard, Associated, Mobil and predecessors Signal and Willard Union was at Locke.

Connecting to other islands were rowboat ferries until at least the 1880s. Sperry Dye operated a rowboat ferry to Andrus Island and Tyler Island crossing the head of Georgiana Slough. John Sharp also operated a ferry--likely across the Sacramento River. Additionally linking Walnut Grove to the east were Millers ferry (Guisti's) across the North fork of the Mokolumne River and the New Hope Ferry, across the South fork of the Mokolumne River. In time all the rowboat ferries were replaced by cable ferries. The cable ferries were fenced with gates at both ends so that livestock could be carried. In summer when the water was low the cables were used to pull the ferry across. In winter the ferry rode the current and used the cable as a guide. The cables rode pontoons, which deflected the water.

Just upstream of the ferry slip the first bridge of Walnut Grove across the Sacramento River was built in 1916. Designed by Strauss Engineers of Chicago, who also designed the Golden Gate Bridge, it was cantilevered, counterweight bascule construction and was the first of its kind built west of the Mississippi. Bets were made that the halves, which were constructed separately, would not meet when lowered. They met and the bridge was opened with great fanfare. The ribbon was cut by Governor Hiram Johnson. The bridge had a wooden deck and extra concrete blocks increased leverage during

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CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION

Bill Stritzell spoke on the California Transportation Company. His study was inspired by the drought and covered the inland river system, water storage and use, explorers native inhabitants and water transportation. There is a lot of material on the systems, storage and some on the explorers, however, finding out about transportation was not so simple. He found "Paddlewheel Days in California" and that gave him his start.

The timeline begins in the 1830's there were no major settlements in the Delta area and few in the Bay area until, John Sutter established New Helvetia. In 1841, his first ship came from his purchase of Fort Ross. The purchase included a small sailing ship which he named "Sacramento." A British mariner, John Gillis, piloted the route from Sutter's Landing (About where the I Street bridge is located) to Yerba Buena (SF). This opened commercial trade on the Sacramento River. In 1848 the discovery of gold caused any kind of vessel to be used to get any and everyone from San Francisco to Sutter's landing. In 1849 steam navigation began on the river. The 219 foot long side-wheeler "Senator" arrived via Cape Horn to make major profits for her owners. In 1850 another side-wheeler arrived "The New World." In 1854 various steam ships and boats plied the waters between San Francisco and Sacramento. Transporting merchandise and people became a very profitable enterprise. The California Steam Navigation Company had a monopoly of steam navigation on the Feather, Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Sailing vessels traveled the swampland routes i.e. the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. In 1866 Anderson Nelson and Nelson E Anderson introduced steam wheeler steamer "Reform," which was not glamorous. In 1869 the cross country railroad was completed and changed Northern California transportation. Goods can arrive overland. The Central Pacific Railroad began investing in California. Within California, in 1871 the California Pacific Railroad was completed from Vallejo to the town of Washington (near Sacramento). Bridges were built across the Sacramento River. In 1871, seeing the handwriting on the wall the California Steam Navigation Company consolidated with Central Pacific Railroad. The Delta had one rail line operation Sacramento Southern. Nelson and Anderson of San Francisco had a good relationship with the Delta farmers. Working with Sol Runyon, Dwight Hollister, and Ruben Kerchival they formed the California Transportation Company a passenger and freight company headquarters in San Francisco. In 1878 during a flood a river steamer hung-up on the left bank 1 1/2 miles above Richland. It smashed up a lot of houses and smokestack terminals and then into the right bank. In 1880 the "Apache" and "Modoc" had a collision. In 1889 the railroad formed the California Navigation and Improvement Company which in 1891 combined with the Union Train Company to headquarters in Stockton. The 1890's river travel combined the river shore, delta lands and plantations Delta farms were a picturesque view. There were four steamboats that collected farm products and one could sit with the pilot - a great show. They stopped at each landing that had a flag raised since there were no

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RESOURCE CENTER

The Resource Center began in a desk drawer at Kathleen Graham Hutchinson's home in Courtland. When the Historical Society rented its first office in the "Bridge Tender," the resource center moved in there. The "Bridge Tender" was a complex created by Meridell and John Salisbury from the old Ford Agency at the west end of the Walnut Grove Bridge. The "Bridge Tender" contained a laundromat, several offices and a meeting room. After a couple of years the Center moved to the Walnut Grove Elementary School's first grade classroom. There was a wonderful opening exhibit of pictures of the Delta area. In the process of removing asbestos and upgrading the venerable old school building to the present "Jean Harvie Community and Senior Center," the Resource Center was gathered up and put in storage thus slowing its development. At any rate, the collection of photos, scrapbooks, interviews and meeting tapes grew.

Many people have been involved with collecting and storing the material. Jim Dahlberg has been an avid collector and we are indebted to all the people who have contributed their collections. During some difficult times, Jerry and Doris Waterworth, Terry and Jayne Alcorn were main supporters of the Center. In the years when volunteers were few, Jean Harvie, Jenny Sheehan, Robert and Jerry James, Carol Watson, Clarice Jonson, Maryn Whitney, Dorothy Hays and Fran Bates held the Resource Center together.

Recently, Bobbie Collier, formerly of the Isleton Museum and Esther Koopman, a highly skilled expert on computers and their applications, has brought the Resource Center into the 21st century of computer technology.

Fortunately our President, Tom Herzog is an avid collector and is a strong supporter of the Resource Center and its needs. There is much to be done in the Center and volunteers are welcome to help us out. If you have an interest in helping, please call Fran Bates at 776-1012. If you want to help but cannot get to the Center, we really love news clippings. Just save the articles that you think will have some historical significance. Let us know what paper you are using so we do not duplicate efforts.

WALNUT GROVE 1850-1970 Continued

winter when the deck became waterlogged. A walkway outside the cantilevers was added later after several near accidents. The walkway was provided by the civic-minded Delta Progress Club. In 1952 the second and present bridge was built alongside the old bridge and the 1916 bridge was dismantled. The old approaches remain. The second bridge over Georgiana Slough was built in 1962. It pivots on a center turntable, as did its predecessor, which in contrast had a full button and strap superstructure replete with cresting frills. Bridges also were built at Miller's Ferry 1904 and New Hope Landing, 1893. All the bridges replaced ferries.

In 1912, the Southern Pacific completed a short line to Walnut Grove ("Sacramento Southern Railroad"), later

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WALNUT GROVE 1850-1970 Continued

extending it to Isleton. The line from Sacramento to Walnut Grove was built almost entirely on high fills and trestles. In 1908, at least five dredges were used to raise the roadbed and to ready water terminal areas for the railroad. The trackage is linked physically and historically with the Central Pacific line of the first transcontinental railroad. Spurs connected with the water terminal stopping points at Hood and Locke. Walnut Grove had a maze of spurs which connected to the packing sheds and warehouses. The McKeen Commuter car built of lightweight steel with a sharp prow and a rounded stern, was self propelled by a large gasoline motor. The car was lit by gaslight and heated by stoves. It carried passengers in the rear and small freight forward. It was discontinued in 1932.

As time moved on Sperry Dye succeeded John Sharp as Post Master followed by Alex Brown, (Mr. McQueen ran the Post Office for him) Dell Brown and Elsie Lauston MacNeil. In 1882 James E. Towne was listed as Justice of the Peace, followed by George Figg in 1893/94 and later by Sperry Dye's son Milo for many years and lastly James Gualco. They presided at the Justice Court in Walnut Grove. In the 1930's Joe Granucci was the Delta highway patrolman and Walt Goodman the constable resided in Courtland. At one time Stanford Brown, John's son was the Notary Public.

Great Western Power Company provided electricity to the west bank of the River, later to be absorbed by PG&E. Alex Brown Electric Company provided electricity to the east bank. The telephone service, in the early days, was provided by Delta Telephone located upriver in Courtland. Youngsters chased the iceman and garbage disposal consisted of tipping the garbage can contents from a landing into the river.

After the Sharps there was no longer a dairy at Walnut Grove. Nearby livery stables were owned by the Giovannoni family and by Charles Davis. Davis later converted his operation to an auto garage.

Rose Figg operated a florist shop in the 1930's. Walnut Grove has had several florists throughout the years both in town and nearby.

In the 1920's and 1930's the local veterinarians were Dr. Mount and "Doc" Hoffman. They specialized in equine medicine. During the Depression Hoffman gave up being a vet and sold insurance. Then he resumed his vet practice after World War II. Among the MD's who served the community over the years were Drs. Hayes, Pallison (a woman), Martin, John Drew 1928/31, and for over 35 years Paul Barnes, for whom the Park is named. Serving the Asian community were Dr. Lee, Dr. Yamao, the midwife Mrs. Suwada and Dr. Akamoto the dentist.

Fire protection was in the early years provided by Alex Browns fire boats the "Fighting Bob" and the "Alex B". Later the Walnut Grove Fireman's Association was formed. The department is a highly trained volunteer unit. There are two fire houses one on each side of the river, in case the bridge is immobilized.

Church services were first conducted by traveling pastors and priests. The churches were in rural areas to be more easily accessible the greatest number of people. In the 1920's Sunday School was held in the Public Hall. Eventually Walnut Grove would have five churches. A Buddhist Church, a Catholic Church, a Christian Science Church, a Presbyterian Church and a Japanese Methodist-Episcopal Church.

Social life and entertainment was primarily local in the early days. The town had an "Orchestra" the "Walnut Grove Orchestra." The Walnut Grove Dancing Club met at the "Brick School" during World War II. The town fielded a semi pro baseball team in the Delta League. Before the 1907 flood Alex Brown and son Alex Brown, Jr. (Allie) operated a race track on Racetrack Road, Tyler Island. Townspeople also attended the dances in Courtland, Isleton and Walnut Grove. The biggest of the year was the Native Sons Ball in Courtland. Party goers recall that "It was always fun to see the gorgeous gowns the Myers girls wore." The Masons, Eastern Star and Rainbow Girls met at Onisbo and later in Courtland. Many in Walnut Grove were members. The School Operetta was a yearly event as were piano recitals. Groups presented amateur reviews, notably the civic minded Delta Progress Club's Annual "Christmas Jinx". Progress Club's Russ Graham Sr. was the playwright/lyricist/impresario/conductor/director. He directed the cast and performed in the yearly revue each Christmas. Tickets were always at a premium. The skits were hilarious musical comedies which cleverly poked fun at locals and local events. Rotary supplanted the Delta Progress Club in 1948. Townsfolk also belonged to The Delta Young Women's Club and the 20-30 Club. In the 1920's a carnival visited town yearly performing on an open space now occupied by the Court/Library building. Once the circus came by accident. The Circus Train was miss-routed to Walnut Grove instead of Walnut Creek. Stranded temporarily, the performers put on a show. Word traveled fast and people from miles around came to see the show and were highly entertained. Once movies arrived, the Imperial/Grove Theater was a focus of local entertainment. One could also see a movie in Rio Vista, Isleton or Courtland or drive to Sacramento or Stockton. To go to Sacramento before paved levee roads was circuitous--usually driving to the Lower Sacramento Road via the Thornton Road or via the Franklin Road. In the fall, football at Courtland High School was always a big draw, as was basketball in the winter.

Walnut Grove, like the Delta, was a Hollywood film making venue. In the 1930's "Showboat" was filmed about 200 yards downstream of the Central Market. Over the years the town was not spared flooding. The big floods came in 1861-62, 1867, 1900, and 1986. However the town was never lost. The original town area settled, "Old Walnut Grove," was on the east bank roughly downstream of the bridge. Early on the mouth of Tyler Slough at Georgiana Slough was closed by sinking a barge and then it was refilled thereby directly linking Walnut Grove and Tyler Island by a land bridge. Many years later when the Walnut Grove-Thornton Road was relocated from the slough levee to the island, a modern industrial/commercial area grew.

On the wide north berm of Tyler Slough was a Chinese Cemetery. Farther north was planned a public cemetery which ultimately became the Sharp family cemetery. Still in use, it is situated in a small oak grove at the end of Sharp Lane. Between the two cemeteries the Donnelly family was interred. Having been inadvertently plowed up, their remains are now interred in the Northeast corner of the Sharp Cemetery in a common grave.

A slaughterhouse was located between the cemetery and what was the lumberyard (now the Lyman Group Ag Chemicals). Alex Brown had bought the Pugh Ranch near Stoneyford, Colusa County where Dick Moore was his foreman and on which cattle were raised. Brown's son Frank, when necessary, drove the cattle to Walnut Grove. For many years this was Walnut Grove's source of fresh meat. Local beef was also custom slaughtered.

At the turn of the century along the Georgiana Slough levee Joe Ballard had chicken sheds and a barge anchored in the slough. The Phipps' had two scows anchored in the slough off of their levee property. Across the levee at its foot were several Dye family houses.

The second schoolhouse built in Walnut Grove still stands, though in dire disrepair. The yellow painted schoolhouse built in 1905 once stood level with the top of the "old levee" and roughly opposite the front door of the "Brick School." The land was deeded to the school by the Sharp Estate. When the "Brick School" was built the yellow school house was moved to its present site. The deal between Mrs. Clarabelle Sharp Lord, a Sharp daughter, and the school district stipulated that the school be surrounded by a 6 foot fence and that the fence must be whitewashed. In total 3.76 acres were ultimately deeded with the added stipulation that the acreage revert to the Sharp Estate if not used for a school. In 1905 the school trustees were: J.L. Kercheval, John S. Brown and R. F. Thisby. By 1925 Brown was still a trustee and Jesse Wise was one of the trustees. Inside the one room school a four foot high potbelly stove was in the center of the room to provide heat. In the early 1920's several children were badly burned by the stove when playing inside during inclement weather. Later the school was used as a manual arts room, then a Boy Scout room and then by Head Start. The green two room building adjacent was for the migrant farm workers children (cannery kids) and was used during the months the families resided in the district.

The "Brick School," built 1924-26, and designed by the distinguished California school architect W. H. Weeks was first used for 8th grade graduation exercises in 1926. The building is noted as one of the best examples of its type of architecture. At the 1926 dedication ceremony, Joe Brooks proprietor of the Hotel, donated the pine tree which stands in the front yard and eighth grade student William Barry ceremoniously planted the sapling during the dedication conducted under the auspices of the Native Sons. The plaque on the building reads "Truth, Liberty, Toleration 1926." Southern Pacific locomotives watered near the backyard. Students tended a vegetable garden on the south side and weeded for physical education.

The Delta Progress Club produced its renowned Jinx skits in the brick school auditorium to raise funds for

school lunches for the underprivileged and other civic needs. The auditorium was also used for piano recitals, by the "Walnut Grove Dancing Club", by Miss Penny's Dance classes and other community groups. In 1942, during World War II the children were transferred to the newer oriental school, located at the present site of the elementary school, which accommodated more children. During the War the "Brick School" was used by the various rationing boards and other wartime services. After the War it housed the primary grades and later was named in honor of Miss Jean Harvie, the longtime principal of the school. She became a teacher at the school in 1928, became principal in 1938 and retired in 1967. The Walnut Grove Elementary School was well known for its music program led by Principal Jean Harvie. They not only produced an annual operetta but won competition throughout Northern California. The Field Act of 1930 retroactively closed the school because it was built before 1930 and not considered to be earthquake proof. It was last used as a school in 1976 and is now the "Jean Harvie Senior and Community Center."

In the early 20th Century, further up the road from the schools Abner Phillips had a carpentry shop and apparently the Phillips a house with garden. All of the above were on the inside of the slough levee. Also on the inside of the levee Tommy "Pop" Cummings operated a blacksmith shop. He relocated to Walnut Grove from Hood. He later moved the shop to the outside of the levee at its foot. With the help of local asparagus growers, Cummings designed and built asparagus equipment for ridging, leveling and sleds for harvest. He also performed general blacksmithing, as did his sons who succeeded him.

At the top of the levee on the outside was the original Alma's Cafe, founded by Alma Scarlett. The remodeled building was originally a service station and garage. After Alma's moved, Riddles Griddle occupied the building for a short time and now, it is an office. A short distance away, on the outside of the levee was Al Kammayers's Tidewater Associated Station and Garage. Al's parents were Danish. His early partner was a Mr. Kroll and the garage was known as Kammeyer and Kroll. It burned in a spectacular fire in the 1960's, with Myron Brown's Cadillac on the rack.

Also sitting on the outside of the levee are two Alex Brown buildings. The Butcher Shop and the "Butcher's House" were restored in the 1980's by Mrs. Hubert (Frances) Brown. The shop was built about 1879. Fred Wicker was the first butcher. He arrived in Walnut Grove from San Francisco in 1869. For a number of years Art Brown ran the butcher shop. In 1927 a sausage works was located in the basement. During that time, the 1920's and 1930's, R. H. Yearnshaw was the butcher and by the 1940's Ray Gilgert was the butcher. The shop was removed in the 1940's to the grocery store. Until recently a tether post stood in front of the shop. Next door was the house in which Art and Amy Brown lived before moving to the bank flat. Their son, Myron then took over the house. The last occupants were "Cap" von Gelderen and his family. He was head maintenance man for the Alex Brown Estate. Von Gelderen's daughter Ada Andraini Barry was Walnut Grove's long time piano

teacher. Across Depot Lane was the Sharp family home and later the home of Sharp granddaughter Clarabelle Lord Salisbury and her family. In 1962 the site became the new Bank of Alex Brown Headquarters. Reed Henderson Assistant Cashier and eldest bank employee cut the ribbon at the opening ceremonies.

At the end of Depot Lane the Southern Pacific Railroad built a new depot in typical Southern Pacific style and painted it sunset yellow with cocoa trim. The building, two stories in the rear, had a loading dock, bay window for the stationmaster, ticket office, Western Union Telegraph office and the Railway Express Agency office. Stairs and ramps led to the rails on the high fill and one spur ran in front of the station at ground level. Fences followed the rails along the outside of the fill. The small original depot built in 1912, was level with the high fill and reached by a long flight of stairs. Regular freight trains hauled grains, sugarbeets, seeds, packed and iced fruits and vegetables. During the pear harvest the train came daily. Although the railroad had a right of way to double track, regular service was discontinued in 1971 and the Placerville local in 1979. A maze of sidings serviced the local fruit packing houses of which there were several: Earl Fruit Co. to be replaced by Blue Anchor, The American Fruit Growers who packed under the Blue Goose label and The Pacific Fruit Exchange. All the sheds have burned except the American Fruit Growers which later Lambert Packers was owned by All-State Packers and it is no longer a packing shed. During the 1930's Bill Hutchinson, Sr. ran the shed. In the late 30's Hod Towne was his assistant and took over in 1940 when Hutchinson took a job in Los Angeles with American Fruit Growers. Produce was shipped east in refrigerated cars "reefers" surrounded by cracked ice. Block ice also was used. A bill of lading specified the hours between icings. Re-icing depended on the ripeness of the produce and increased the shipping cost. River fruit was always the first to arrive at the New York auction. The old Blue Anchor shed burned in March 1987. Also near the depot was a windmill water pump, likely used for watering the locomotives. Blue Anchor, the last packing shed left Walnut Grove in 1996 stating it cost too much to modernize their newer structure on the Walnut Grove-Thornton Road.

Between the Cemetery, American Fruit Growers Shed and the railroad tracks was Noah Adams Lumber Co. office and yard. The Adams family came west from Minnesota via British Columbia. In 1914, the company began business in a store on the levee. In 1922, the lumberyard, new store and planning mill were built. The company, which is no longer in business had another yard in Clarksburg. For several months in the late "70's "The Place Magazine" occupied the premises. The buildings are now part of the Harvey Lyman Chemical Co ("The Lyman Group").

The original Alex Brown Store was located where Valley Oak Deli and the Chevron Service Station are today. It was a general merchandise store and the first Bank was on the right-hand side of the store. The store burned in the first "Chinatown" fire in 1915.

John Brown wrote on the bank's founding "In the old days I had charge of the express office in the store. There were many Chinese in this section at this time who would

come into the express office to ship gold coin to their friends, merchants and relatives in amounts of \$5.00 to \$500. It was necessary for me to wrap each package of gold coin and address it to the receiver. For this service a minimum charge of twenty five cents was charged for each remittance from \$5.00 to \$10000 by me as agent of the express company, and over \$100 there was an increasing scale of charges."

At that time the fruit growers and farmers were financed by commission merchants of San Francisco or representatives of the canneries who offices were in San Francisco. They would send the money up by express to farmers for payrolls in amounts of from \$500 to \$2000 or \$3000 in old coin and the recipients paid the express charges.

So I conceived the idea of selling the people here a draft or check on our San Francisco Bank which was the Sutter Bank, later Wells Fargo, and I charged them just what the express rates for sending the actual coin had been. Then I had the commission merchants, instead of sending actual coin for payrolls, to send the farmers checks which I would cash at a rate of discount equivalent to what the actual express charges would have been if the money had been sent by actual coin.

In five years I had accumulated enough to form the Capital of a private bank, about \$15,000 (1907).

Then I went to my father and told him I would like to start a real bank there in the store to which he had no objection. Later, when I proposed building a separate bank building and incorporating, he strongly objected because he did not want me to take so much of my time away from the mercantile business.

We finally agreed, however, to the bank building and he furnished the money to build it and incorporate, but the original capitalization was formed by the money I made in domestic exchange (1913)." The bank building was built in 1916. Chartered in 1913, it was incorporated as a State Bank with commercial and savings departments. The building is constructed of reinforced steel and concrete. Its front is faced in marble. The interior featured inlaid tile floors and mahogany paneling. "The bank, of course was named by our family in honor of my father Alex Brown;" commented John Brown. The first officers were Alex Brown, President, Arthur A. Brown, vice president, John S Brown, cashier and Alex R. Brown asst. cashier. They were also the first Board of Directors.

"To serve when and where needed" is the Brown family motto. The bank, when the family owned it, was run with a personal touch. Alex Brown's grandson Myron Brown wrote "My grandfather Alex Brown was a part of the Delta from the beginning. All of us have loaned money to our neighbors because we like and trust them. That's how the bank has grown."

Because Walnut Grove was, and continues to be, primarily agricultural, farmers played an important part in the bank's development. During most of the bank's history, farmers' loans were given without much documentation, except on unsecured notes. A loan was not much more than a farmer making a short visit, during which he discussed what his expenses would be during

WALNUT GROVE 1850-1970 Continued

the harvest season. This small informal meeting would end with a handshake and the loan would be complete. (Future of Small Rural Bank)

At the beginning of the Great Depression, John Brown and two of his sons drove to San Francisco and obtained from Wells Fargo Bank, their correspondent bank, cash to pay those customers withdrawing. They returned to Walnut Grove, the boys armed, and backed the car up to the bank, unloaded the cash and paid all withdrawals. The bank, having invested in solid companies withstood the Depression and remained open throughout except for the National Bank Holiday.

The flat above the bank, now the law office of Christopher Lee, was the home of Arthur and Amy Dye Brown who, known for her gregarious temperament often hailed friends from her front window. After John Brown's death in 1952, Arthur A. Brown became president of the bank until his death in 1959. For a time, W.P. Darsie occupied the basement using it as a commodity commission office. (More next month)

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION Continued

railroads they had to use river transport. The sweet spoils of the Sacramento Valley Casaba, watermelons, muskmelons, peaches, plums, cherries, grapes and pears were sold in San Francisco.

In 1902 California Transportation Company made some changes. At that time the Steamer Isleton was a typical sailing vessel design. They brought in a new manager with big ideas named Nelson (son of Nelson Anderson). In 1905 California Transportation bought Union Transportation Company of Stockton. This included 2 steamers. Their route was Delta to San Francisco with some Stockton stops. The "Captain Webber" was sent to Wood Island boat yard and rebuilt with a dining room and panoramic views of the Delta. Riverboat steamship design was changed forever. Competition came from

Southern Pacific's "Apache" and "Modoc" and California's "Pride of the River" and "Captain Webber." In 1907 Southern Pacific invested in the River. On the Sacramento run were the steamships "Navajo," "Seminal," and "Cherokee." The "Iroquois" was mostly on the Bay and relief for the others on regular runs. In 1910 California Transportation Company had the new ship "Capitol City" on the Sacramento River run. "Capitol City" had 4 decks, with luxury accommodations throughout. It could carry more freight and attracted more sophisticated travelers. The design was compared with the "Isleton."

In 1910 there was formed a small organization known as San Joaquin/Sacramento River Improvements including strengthening and widening the Sacramento River from Rio Vista to Suisuin Bay. This work went on until 1920.

On May 8, 1911 aboard the "Capitol City" in Suisuin Bay a drunken passenger shoot the Captain George Bedell who ran the ship to the next dock at Collinsville. The drunk is arrested in Rio Vista and Captain Bedell, hit three times, recovers to serve many more years as Captain of the "Fort Sutter." Later that year the "Seminole" was in a collision in San Francisco Bay and not replaced. The "Fort Sutter" and "Navajo" collided in the fog between Rio Vista and Isleton. Fortunately a minor mishap. 1913 was a record year 212,114 passengers San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton and way landings.

In 1915 the Panama Canal opened and the Panama Pacific International Exhibition opened in San Francisco. Thousands of tourists gave hope for increased river business. A 1916 maritime strike killed hopes for another super summer. Usually there were 13 to 13 1/2 round trips per ship per month. The "Capitol City" made 0 trips (Cost =\$2934), "Fort Sutter" made 0 trips (cost=\$1950), "Isleton" made 3 1/2 trips at a cost of \$ 5050 and the "Pride of The River" made 4 trips at a cost of \$5994 and a total operations loss for the year of \$16500..

Continued on Page 8

SRDHS 2004 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 21.....Board Meeting

June Newsletter

- July/August.....Summer Break
- September 21.....General Meeting
- October 19.....Board Meeting
- November 16.....General Meeting
- December.....Board Meeting

December Newsletter

"The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society publishes the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Newsletter twice a year.

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CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION Continued

In 1918 there was a major change in the rates for transporting crops from their landing to the packing houses. Freight signals were lantern by night and flag by day. Crops were taken to markets and canneries. This was the basis for success for river transportation companies. The prices were raised for maintenance of ships, not for profit. Southern Pacific was charging Regular Landing (Wharf) twenty-five cents, Special (Home) landing \$2.50. This reduced the boat stops. Sometimes one ship took the east bank and another took the west bank with 2-6 hours insignificant to get the produce to canneries. This was the end of fruit delivery.

In the 1920's the Panama Canal became a source of freight. There was an increase in freight from the East Coast. The California Transportation Company's annual report shows San Francisco to Sacramento tonnage bought in \$785,954 in freight. The California Transportation Company bought control of California Navigation Company. In 1927 the two were consolidated into "The California Transportation Company". This company launched the "Delta King" and the "Delta Queen". They sold 650,000 in stocks and bonds earning more than \$165,827 per year. The most luxurious ships on the rivers and were very successful early on. Then came the Great Depression, which impacted river transportation. Increased use of canned goods made shipping fruit to market less rewarding.

In 1930 Southern Pacific withdrew from the river trade, selling their two steamers, the "Navajo" and "Cherokee" to the California Transportation Company. That year they made \$82,500 from freight and \$200,000 from passenger fares. Crew wages were \$400,000 and so they were operating at a deficit.

In 1932 things got worse. River Lines which included California Transportation Company, Bay Transit and Sacramento Navigation pulled "Pride of the River" and "Isleton" from service - no more Sacramento to San Francisco stops.

In 1933 The Port of Stockton opened offering passenger

service. 2/3 of all produce shipped to San Francisco arrived by truck. 1934 saw major union action on the waterfront and a major strike and violence. In 1936, after 9 months out of service, the "King" and "Queen" started up again, seasonally. Then there are more strikes. Cargo decks were labor intensive as were the wharves and warehouses, ramps and elevators. San Francisco was all unionized. The teamsters, the warehousemen and longshoremen each had their territory. Improved equipment did not help. Each deck of the "King" and "Queen" required different equipment. Any union could halt the whole process. California Transportation and River lines had a great working relationship with unions in the early thirties. They became vulnerable to union action through hand lading--it took three days to hand lade a vessel in San Francisco. So unions plus old methods became a disaster. Truckers and longshoremen were in different unions.

During the 1930's Hollywood, producing pictures like "Manderlay," "Mississippi," "Huckleberry Finn" with Mickey Rooney, "Steamboat Round the Bend" and "Showboat" using steamboats filmed in the Delta and on the rivers brought money to the River Lines. The "Delta King" and the "Delta Queen" were the only active boats on the river. Tower Bridge and the San Francisco Bay Bridge strengthened the trucks.

In 1939 the Golden Gate International Exposition opened the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges--there was hope for river tourists as from the 1915 exhibition.

In 1941 the US Navy leased the "King" and "Queen" for transportation around the bay and the River Lines ceased passenger service and saw Navy service during the war.

In 1944 the death of Anderson made a big dent in river transport. California Transportation Company lived until December 1947. The River Lines carried freight until 1963 after the opening of the Port of Sacramento. There are the complex ins and outs of the San Francisco, Sacramento and Stockton river transportation from the gold rush to the 1950's and 60's. A chapter in history most important to commemorate employment, shipping and pleasure trips.

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