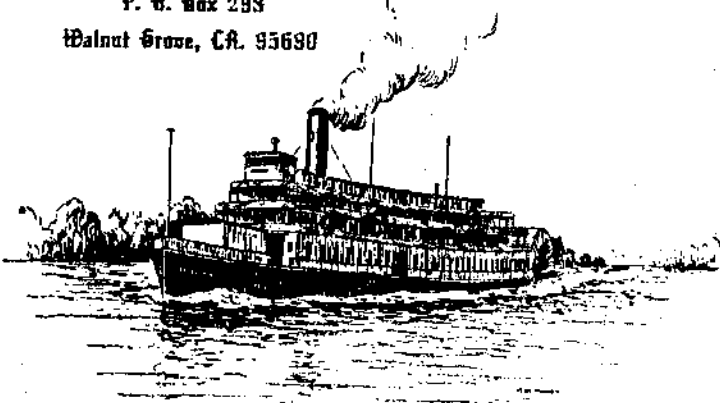


# Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

P. O. Box 293  
Walnut Grove, CA. 95690



SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS      *Volume 6, Number 1*      WINTER, 1985

## ANNUAL MEETING      *Drawings by New Members*

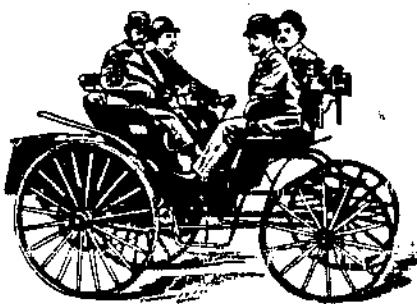
The Annual Meeting of the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society was held on February 2 in Walnut Grove. Maridel Salisburg ably chaired the potluck dinner and serving committee. Amid striking Birch branch decorations, JoAnn Peters' banjo group, "The Banjo Kings", provided the musical entertainment for the evening. New officers elected for the 1985 year were these: Arthur Brown, President; Frances Brown, Vice President; Jan Quesenberry, Recording Secretary; Becky Wheeler, Corresponding Secretary; Doris Waterworth, Treasurer. Directors elected for a two-year term beginning in 1985 are these: Jim Dahlberg, Carol Watson, Carol Gwerder, and Curzon Kay. Those directors serving until 1986 are Chris Giovannoni, Judy Cleever, and Harry Rasmussen. Director Emeritus is Clarence Pratt, and the Ex-officio Director is past-resident, Jim Gaulco.

During the business meeting special recognition was given to out-going president Jim for his two years of able stewardship, and he was presented with the "Delta" book in appreciation. Also receiving recognition were Kathie Graham, editor; Mary Fulster, museum organizer; Yvonne Pylman, publicist; and Art Brown, program co-ordinator. An interesting and nostalgic slide show was presented by Robert James.

The Society's book, *Old Houses of the Sacramento River Delta*, was presented for sale to the membership. The book is a compilation of 29 paintings of selected houses, accompanied by narratives describing the houses' history and architecture, as well as notes on the family background of early owners and builders. A mail order form for this book is included in this issue of the newsletter. Please send check and form to SRDHS, P.O. Box 293 Walnut Grove. Original pictures, purchased by the Society, will later be on sale to the public.

## LOCAL

## NEWS



For those members living outside the Delta, here is information on the December 18, 1984, fire which destroyed a building owned by Bob Jag on Main Street and the Levee Road in Locke. The structure was adjacent to Yuen Chong Grocery Store. Fortunately, there was no wind that evening, and the fire was routinely extinguished by local fire departments, but adjacent buildings were scorched and received some water damage. The building, although inhabited, was unoccupied at the time. Courtland, Isleton, and Elk Grove fire departments responded to the "mutual help" call of the Walnut Grove, F&D. The remains of the building are scheduled for demolition.

Clarence Pratt reported that 12,967 visitors viewed the Dai Loy Museum during the 1984 year. With the prior year's total of 76,859, the museum has welcomed 89,475 visitors since opening in 1978. The Museum will re-open in March. Mary Fulster thanks all members who staffed the Museum during the year. Your support is greatly appreciated--and greatly needed.

\*\*\*The Society welcomed, since June of 84, newmembers Larry and Dorothy Huggett, James and Joan Lloyd, Alfred Aragon, Brian Kestner, Janet Barrett, Sal Histola, and William Swigert.

\*\*\*NOTICE: The telephone has been disconnected at the Society's Walnut Grove office. It was seldom used.

\*\*\*Greg Campbell of California State University spoke at the November membership meeting in Isleton. His topic, "The Portuguese and Japanese in the Pocket Area", received an enthusiastic response which has led to a future tentative speaking engagement at the Buddhist Church in the area.

\*\*\*Bob Heringer, along with son Pete, has organized a display of historic Delta photographs at the Clarksburg Library Activity Room. Short narratives accompany each photo, and many of the pictures will be recognized as having been displayed at the annual Pear Fair. All the negatives are deposited with the University of California at Davis. NL 006-001 P1

:::::French Camp, San Joaquin County, south of Stockton, was a Hudson Bay Company trapping station. Hence, the name. (There was another French Camp near Cacheville, Yolo County, but it had disappeared by 1879.) French Camp was established by the company's California Department which was opened by J. Alexander Forbes and W.G. Ray. In 1845 the headquarters were at Yerba Buena (the early name of San Francisco). About 50 trappers were employed. Some were "free trappers" who purchased their equipment from the company thereby in accordance with the company rules, obligating themselves to sell exclusively to the company. The trappers divided into small parties and trapped the fur-bearing Delta marsh animals in the winter and hunted elk and deer for their own use (tanning for clothing and jerking for food) in the summer. They had few collisions with the Indians. They dealt with the Indians fulfilling any promises made, but also they punished the Indians severely for hostile or treacherous acts. The Indians were never allowed to approach a trapping line or camp site without strict surveillance and permission. The Hudson Bay Company was ultimately responsible for the demise of the central California Indian. (See the article on the Nisenan Indians of the Sacramento Valley in this newsletter.)

:::::The following story of a "Walnut Grove murder" is taken from *Thompson and West--Sacramento County 1880*.

"Troy Dye, Public Administrator of Sacramento County and a Granger...deliberately planned the murder of several people in order that he might reap a pecuniary benefit from administering their estates. On Friday morning, August 2, 1878, A.M. Tullis was found dead in his orchard on Grand Island. Tullis was a bachelor, 55 years of age, and lived alone upon an extensive fruit orchard which he owned. He was reported wealthy; was a close, economical man, and not much a favorite in the vicinity. He had been shot four times, and also struck with some heavy instrument. ...Sheriff Drew received information of a boat answering the description of one seen in the neighborhood of the island about the time of the murder, and from this boat obtained the clue. This clue pointed conclusively to Troy Dye. The lumber of which the boat was made was traced to the lumberyard and from thence to Dye's house, the lumber being identified by the salesman's marks. On the night of August 12, 1878, Dye and his partner, A.F. Clark, were arrested. Edward Anderson, a Swede, who bought the lumber was not found. It was remembered that in the political campaign of 1877 Dye remarked that he could make nothing out of his office unless he hired a killer. Anderson was arrested the night of the 13th; his story contradicted Dye's in several particulars. By the 15th a third party, the notorious Tom Lawton, had not been captured. On August 13 before the arrest of Anderson, Dye signified his willingness to tell all he knew about the affair to the District Attorney, claiming that he was innocent and expecting that he would be protected. He said that he had joked about sending out his "killers" until he came to think of it seriously, and, tried to throw the weight of guilt on Anderson and Lawton. Anderson's confession was given unpledged, and was adhered to in the main. Full details were given of the murder and the steps which led to it. This confession proved Dye to have been the leading spirit and to have also planned similar attempts on other people in the county. In the trial, Anderson's confession was so fully sustained by the other evidence, that it was impossible to avoid a conviction. Dye and Anderson were hanged May 29, 1879, in the county jail yard. Clark was acquitted, the evidence failing to show that he was a party to the affair."

OLD HOUSES OF THE SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA

To order copies of the Society's new publication, introduced at the annual meeting, please use the attached coupon. The book is a compilation of 29 paintings by local artist Chris Spencer of selected houses of the Delta built before 1920 accompanied by narratives describing both history and architecture. Book editor is Kathleen Graham, and associate editors are James A. Gualco and Jan Quesenberry.

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MAIL ORDER FORM

Mail order form to:  
SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 293  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of HISTORIC HOUSES OF THE  
SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA @ \$ 14.50 each. (sales tax & postage included)

Payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



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

At the September membership meeting, Norman Wilson, state archeologist, spoke on "The Nisenan Indians of the Sacramento Valley". The talk was extremely interesting, and many members who attended the meeting requested that a summary of Mr. Wilson's talk be published in the newsletter. Following are highlighted information from the presentation.

During prehistoric times, California was the residence of 10% of the Indians in what was to become the U.S. These Indians were non-agricultural and spoke 130 languages. The Plains Miwok, who inhabited the Delta, spoke Penutian, a language recently linguistically linked to Siberian speakers of the Ural Mountains. Other Penutian speakers were the Maidu, Wintun, Patwin, Costanoan, Yakut, and Nisenan. These Indians never referred to themselves by these modern archeological names, but identified themselves by village names, i.e. Cosumnes, Tuolumne, etc.

In the dawn of prehistory, 100 to 12 thousand years ago, hunting people came to California following the big game of the Pleistocene era. These people were 6 feet tall with long heads and were buried with heads to the west. They possessed high quality tools and occupied the Cosumnes Basin. In the "Early Horizon" years, 2,000 years ago, acorn use was discovered. By this time the Miwok were in place and hunted by spear. During the "Mid-Horizon", 1,500-1,000 years ago, the bow and arrow displaced the spear. By "Late Horizon" the Miwok had learned to effectively use their environment: acorn gathering and storage, fishing, etc. Acorn storage precluded a nomadic lifestyle, as well as starvation myths. The Indian genetic character had by this time changed producing shorter people with rounder heads.

The Plains Miwok homeland was the most densely inhabited area. Villages, spaced about every four miles, tallied 200-500 inhabitants each. Since loyalty to the village was critical, large burying grounds developed. The earliest sites are very, very deeply buried. The sub-tribes were concentrated at Rio Vista, eastern Staten Island, mid Tyler Island, mid-east Grand Island, Walnut Grove, the Pierson District, upper Ryer Island, Onisbo, the Holland tract near the confluence of Elk and Sutter sloughs, Hood, above Hood near the Snook Ranch, Netherlands Road and Jefferson Boulevard near Clarksburg, Beach Ranch, and across the river in the Lisbon District. Generations were roughly 20 years, and these people lived in the Delta 4,000 years, until they were split by the Patwin and Wintun groups and forced out of certain areas.

The village was built around the round house, a religious building occupied by the shaman. The building, 12-15 feet high and 70 feet wide, was built with huge beans. (Such a house was uncovered near Freeport.) The triblets wintered on the river-made silt mounds, navigated tule boats, and were expert swimmers. Taking advantage of the river and the open land, they worked both sides of the waterway for food. Tule roots provided a high protein food, if harvested at the proper time, and acorns were the staple food. They baked clay objects, grew tobacco, burned the native grasses yearly in order to provide stronger growth for basketry, and, to facilitate acorn gathering. They used wooden mortars for grinding due to the lack of available stones in the valley. Wealthy Indians owned fishing sites and special acorn trees, indicating the concept of private ownership. They traded extensively, importing stones, grooved axes, and other items from Arizona and elsewhere. Musical instruments were foot drums, split elderberry stocks, and small flutes; most music was sung. Miwok music was not chorally or rhythmically sophisticated as was that of the Midwestern and Eastern Indians.

Shifting culturally with slow steps towards a more civilized state, the Delta Indians were 200-300 short of achievement when the Spanish incursion disrupted their progress. By 1806 they were aware of the Spanish settlements and missions, but generally were disinclined to cooperate with them. From 1820 constant skirmishes were recorded. The Indians developed a taste for horsemeat, jewelry and hardware which the Spanish and, later, the fur trappers provided. During the 1820's evidence shows the Delta Indians becoming missionized. This is borne out by Mission Delores records which include marriage records for Indian couples which also reveal village alliances. By the time the Hudson Bay Company arrived, the Indians were fairly fluent in Spanish.

In 1823, the Hudson Bay Company employed "Kanakas" (Hawaiians) to trap. The Kanakas introduced malaria, and in one year, 70% of the local Indians were dead. Whole villages died almost at once; even burying the dead became an impossible task. The culture was broken, and those survivors left were unable to re-establish their way of life. The last Indian village was near Elk Grove in the 1870's. They could be identified as they were burying their people in 1912. Those few left filtered toward eastern Sacramento County, eventually intermarrying with the dominant Caucasian population and disappearing as a cultural or genetic force in the Delta area.

Many thanks go to the fine speaker for his informative speech. Additional thanks go to Kathie Graham for her resume.

Be on hand for the next scheduled meeting of the Society for an exciting program.

The Oakland Museum's new Cowell Hall of California History opened an exhibit November 3 titled, "California Dream". The exhibit "seeks to interpret thematically and measure against reality the vision and meaning California has long held for Americans: sun, health, personal freedom, romance and boundless opportunity.

N E W S from  
Further Afield

The Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley purchased through private donations, a major collection of Spanish manuscripts dating from the 14th through 18th century. The 225 volumes cover "the entire spectrum of human achievement" during "Spain's period of global colonization."



A public hearing at the California State Railroad Museum, sponsored by the State Department of Parks and Recreation in early December discussed the possible acquisition by the State of the 33 mile abandoned railroad line between Sacramento and Isleton. Project proposal summaries are available from the Planning Division, Dept. of Parks and Recreation, P.O.Box 2390, Sacramento, 95811. Please send a self-addressed and stamped legal sized envelope. Inquiries about the project may be directed to Stuart Hong at the above address or by telephone at 916-322-8594.

The Sacramento River at Sacramento has been recently designated one of the nation's richest history sources. To date, two major underwater archeological sites have been discovered: "The I Street Site" and "The J Street Site". The areas contain the remains of two 19th century vessels: a sailing ship and a steamboat or barge. The Sacramento History Center, in order to explore the sites, has rented an underwater camera, and anticipation is high that "The J Street Site" will prove to be one of the best marine archeology finds in the nation.

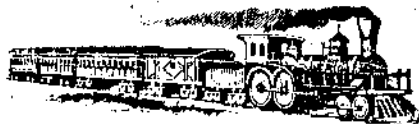
One hundred year-old historic San Francisco law firms were honored by the California Historical Society's "Historic Business Register" program: Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro, 1864; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, 1863; Athearn, Chandler & Hoffman, 1869; Chicering & Gregory, 1877; McCutcheon, Doyle, Brown & Enersen, 1877; Morrison & Foerster, 1864; Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, 1864; Tobin & Tobin, 1854. Not all the firms retain their original names, but all can trace their roots for over 100 years.

The Yolo County Historical Society received tentative approval of a grant from the National Historical Publications and Record Commission for research, recording, and publication. In order to receive the grant, the Society must raise \$14,000.

Restored antique trucks and vans are on display at the A.W. Hays Truck Museum in Woodland. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Telephone to check on dates and times of openings.

The Sacramento History Center, nearing completion in Old Sacramento, has issued a call for volunteers to serve as Docents. Curator Kathryn Gaeddert states that volunteers will be given professional training and instruction and that docents will serve not only as tour guides, teachers, and lecturers, but that there will be opportunities for them to serve in archival conservation, exhibit preparation, clerical activities and many other functions. Training classes will begin early this summer; to get your name on the volunteer list, contact the Sacramento History Center Docent Program, 1931 J Street, 95814, or call 447-2958.

I N F O R M A T I O N   N E E D E D: Bob Heringer, Clarksburg, is searching for additional information on Ezekial Merritt. It is known that Merritt lived with the Indians at the head of Sutter Island across from Merritt Island on the bank of the Sacramento River. He evidently did not live next to Sutter Slough. John C. Fremont mentions him in his autobiography; Fremont either met Merritt at Sutter's fort or he was a mountain man with one of Fremont's



exploration parties. Merritt married a Miwok Indian squaw and had two "half-breed" children. When Fremont went to Sonoma to raise the Bear Flag Revolt, he sent a messenger for Merritt. Merritt was found at his "encampment" covered in mud to discourage the mosquitos. Merritt responded and went to Fremont's aid and was appointed his lieutenant. If anyone can supply additional information, please contact Bob.

The Crocker Art Gallery will celebrate its Centennial in 1985 and has requested a few objects from the Dai Loy Museum to be displayed in the Centennial Exhibit which will open in March. The Board of Directors has agreed to furnish several pieces which will not disrupt the Dai Loy's enterpretive displays.

The Society received donations in memory of Mrs. Birdie E. Rasmussen, mother of Society Director, Harry Rasmussen. *In Memoriam Donation Cards* are available from the Corresponding Secretary, Becky Wheeler (776-1202) and from Treasurer, Doris Waterworth (775-1583).

# BOOKS

- Bailing Dust* (based on author's Delta boyhood)  
Bill Shelton \$14.95  
Camp House Press; PO Box 144 Walnut Grove
- A. Heilbron and Bros.--A Sacramento Story*  
Hermi Jacobs Cassady (with photographs)  
PO Box 8394 Winding Way, Fair Oaks, 95628
- America's Country Schools* (illustrated)  
Andrew Gullifor \$18.95 + 6% tax & \$2.50 pstg.  
The Preservation Press; Preservation Shops  
1600 H St. NW; Washington, D.C. 20006
- America's City Halls*  
William Lebovich \$18.95 (as above)  
National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Indians of California--The Changing Image*  
James J. Rawls \$18.50  
University of Oklahoma Press
- A Companion to California* (reference book)  
James D. Hart \$9.95
- Nuggets of Nevada County History 1848-99*  
Juanita Kennedy Browne \$10.00 incl.  
Nevada County Historical Society  
PO Box 1300; Nevada City, 95959
- The Capitol that Couldn't Stay Put*  
June Oxford \$10.95 + 6% tax  
7777 Canyon Point Lane, San Diego, 92126
- Pre-Marshall Gold in California 1840-8*  
Emil T. Bunje and James C. Kean  
Historic California Press  
11245 Dry Creek Road; Auburn, 95603
- The Lassen Peak Eruptions and Their  
Lingering Legacy*  
Alan Wayne Willendrup \$15.00  
ANCRR  
PO Box 3024; Chico, 95927
- Thinkers and Tinkers*  
(early American men of science)  
Silvio A. Bedini \$24.00 incl.  
Landmark Press  
10324B Newton Way; Rancho Cordova, 95670
- Stockton: Sunrise Port on the San Joaquin*  
Winsor Publication, Inc. \$22.95  
21220 Erwin St.; Woodland Hills, 91365
- Humbugs and Heroes: A Gallery of  
California Pioneers*  
Yosemite-DiMaggio Publication \$9.95  
618 Grand Ave.; Oakland 94610
- Streets of San Francisco: The Origins  
of San Francisco's Street and Place Names*  
Lexikos \$5.95  
703 Market Street, Room 208, S.F. 94103
- Pictorial History of Tiburon: A California  
Railroad Town*  
Landmarks Society \$25.00  
PO Box 134; Belvedere-Tiburon 94920
- Tough Little Town on the Truckee:  
Reno to 1900*  
Great Basin Studies Center \$19.95  
7115 Pembroke Dr.; Reno, 89502
- In the Valley of Bottled Poetry: Napa  
Architectural Survivors*  
The Boxwood Press; 183 Ocean View Blvd.  
Pacific Grove, 93950

- California Farmland: A History of Large  
Agricultural Land Holdings*  
Ellen Liebman \$29.50  
pub. by Rowman and Allanheld
- Shasta Indian Tales*  
Naturegraph Publishers, Inc., \$3.95  
PO Box 1075 ; Happy Camp, 96039
- California Rancho Cooking*  
Jacqueline Higuera McMahon \$14.95  
The Olive Press; Lake Hughes, Ca. 93532
- The Golden Hills of California:  
A Descriptive Guide to the Mother Lode  
Counties of the Northern Mines*  
Allan Masri \$7.95  
Western Tanager Press  
1111 Pacific Ave.; Santa Cruz, 95060
- Ceramic Marks from Old Sacramento*  
Mary Praetzellis, Betty Rivers,  
Jeanette K. Schulz  
Distribution Center-CA Parks and Recreation  
PO Box 2390; Sacramento 94811
- Overland to California with the  
Pioneer Line--The Gold Rush Diary of  
Bernard J. Rush*  
ed. by Mary McDougall Gordon  
\$19.95
- Committee of Vigilance: The San Francisco  
Chamber of Commerce Law and Order  
Committee 1916-1919*  
Stephen C. Levi  
\$15.95
- On the Edge of the World: Four Architects  
in San Francisco at the Turn of the  
Century*  
Maybeck, Polk, Coxhead, Schweinfurth  
\$40.00
- Historic Tales of East Contra Costa County*  
Charles A. Hohakel (former SRDHS member)  
\$5.00 available from author  
PO Box 817; Antioch 94509
- Walnut Creek: Arroyo de las Nueces*  
George Emanuels \$17.95 + \$1.40 pstg.  
Diablo Books; 1317 Canyonwood Court #1  
Walnut Creek, 94595
- Great Piers of California: A Guided Tour*  
\$6.95  
Capra Press  
Box 2068, Santa Barbara, 93120
- Modesto: Images of Yesterday,  
Images of Today: A Rephotographic Survey*  
\$34.95 + \$2.45 postage  
The McHenry Museum  
1402 I St.; Modesto, 95354
- Facing Adversities with a Smile:  
Highlights of My 82 Year Odyssey from  
China to California*  
Chuan-hua Lowe \$15.00  
Available from author at  
88 Castro St; San Francisco, 94114

Book Notes, as well as all newsletter  
material, by Kathie Graham