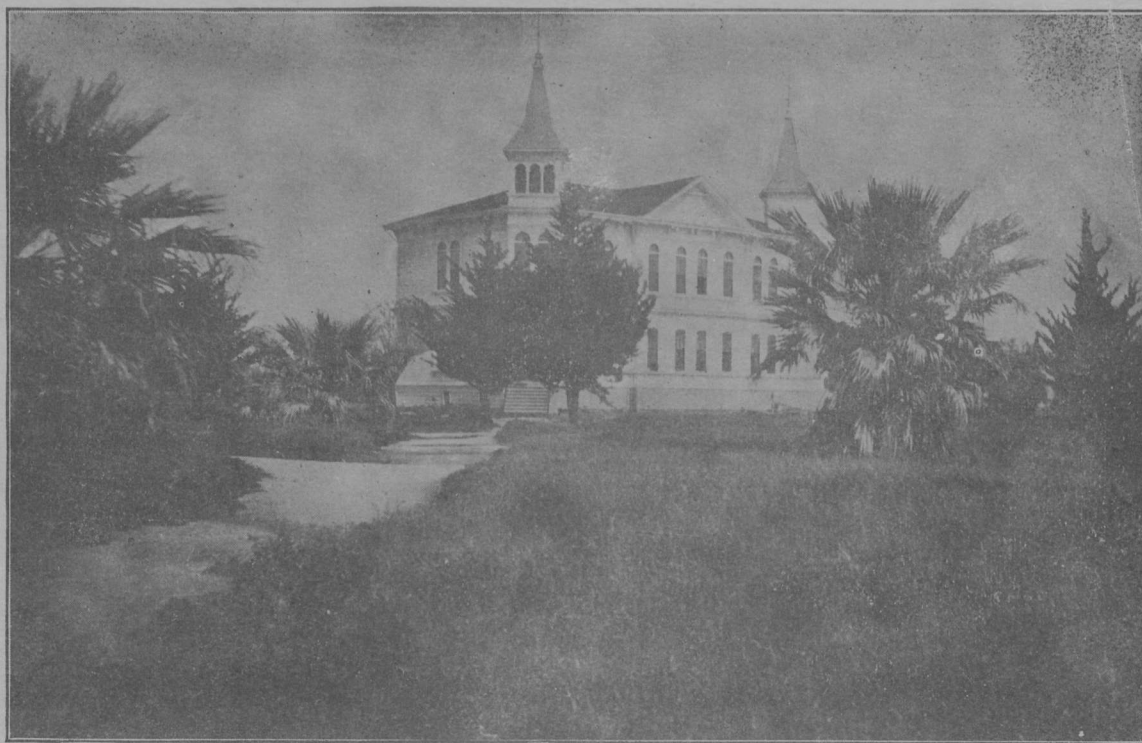


SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. 4 NO. 3

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

JULY 21, 1964



SUTTER UNION HIGH SCHOOL
1894 TO 1913

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SUMMER MEETING: JULY 21, 1964 - 8 P.M.
RECREATION ROOM OF MID-VALLEY SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION
Plumes Street, Yuba City
(Drive in to the rear for parking area)

PROGRAM: Joseph McGie, Director of Special Education, Butte County Office of Superintendent of Schools
Dr. McGie will speak to us on the subject of Indians of Northern California and the new materials which are being excavated by the University of California students near the Oroville Dam construction. New information is being unearthed every day. Dr. McGie is keeping in touch with the work which is going on before the water takes over.

Come out and hear a well informed speaker and enjoy the fellowship of "Sutter County Historians".

Cool refreshments will be served so don't worry about the heat.

THREE PURPOSES ARE FULFILLED IN TEN YEARS

The first issue of the Sutter County Historical Society Bulletin published in November 1954, carried four aims for the Historical Society to strive toward:

1. To collect historical facts and records pertaining to Sutter County.
2. To utilize this material in preparing historical publications.
3. To establish a museum for the display and preservation of this material.
4. To foster good citizenship through the encouragement of interest in local history.

Let us review these aims. The proof that we have accomplished the first three aims is quite evident. The fourth aim we hope we have done something about however, it being an abstract purpose we can never measure just how far we have gone. If interested citizens in our museum project can be used as a measure we have made progress.

The Sutter County Supervisors are deserving of much credit and thanks from the citizens of Sutter County for the interest they have shown and it is to their credit that our Museum will continue to operate as the Sutter County Museum.

We have had several classes of school children visit the museum this spring and plans are being made by many teachers to visit this coming school term. It is never too early to lead children to appreciate their heritage. History is best taught by seeing and living it.

--BERNICE GIBSON
President, Sutter County
Historical Society

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN
EDITORIAL STAFF

Bernice Gibson - - - - -Editor
Irminna Rudge - - - - -Associate Editor
Barbara McBurney- - - - -Typist

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE GROWTH AND
DEVELOPMENT OF SUTTER, CALIFORNIA
1830-1900

by

G. Kimball Epperson
A.B. (Sacramento State College) 1961

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
AT THE
SACRAMENTO STATE COLLEGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere thanks to my committeeman, Dr. John Egan, who made college courses in Journalism as fascinating as possible, for proofreading the thesis; Dr. E. Co Britton for his invaluable criticisms in the study, and most especially Dr. Joseph McGowan who was not assigned to my thesis committee but in his own free time, made many necessary recommendations and checked the final draft for historical accuracy.

I am also very grateful to Mrs. Bernice Gibson, past Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, and Mrs. Irminna Rudge, Sutter County Librarian, for their kindness in assisting me with the collection of vast historical data.

A final word of thanks to my wife, Elizabeth, who generously offered to type the final draft of the thesis-- a record-breaking task that she finished a few hours before the necessary deadline, four times ¹.

Sincerely,

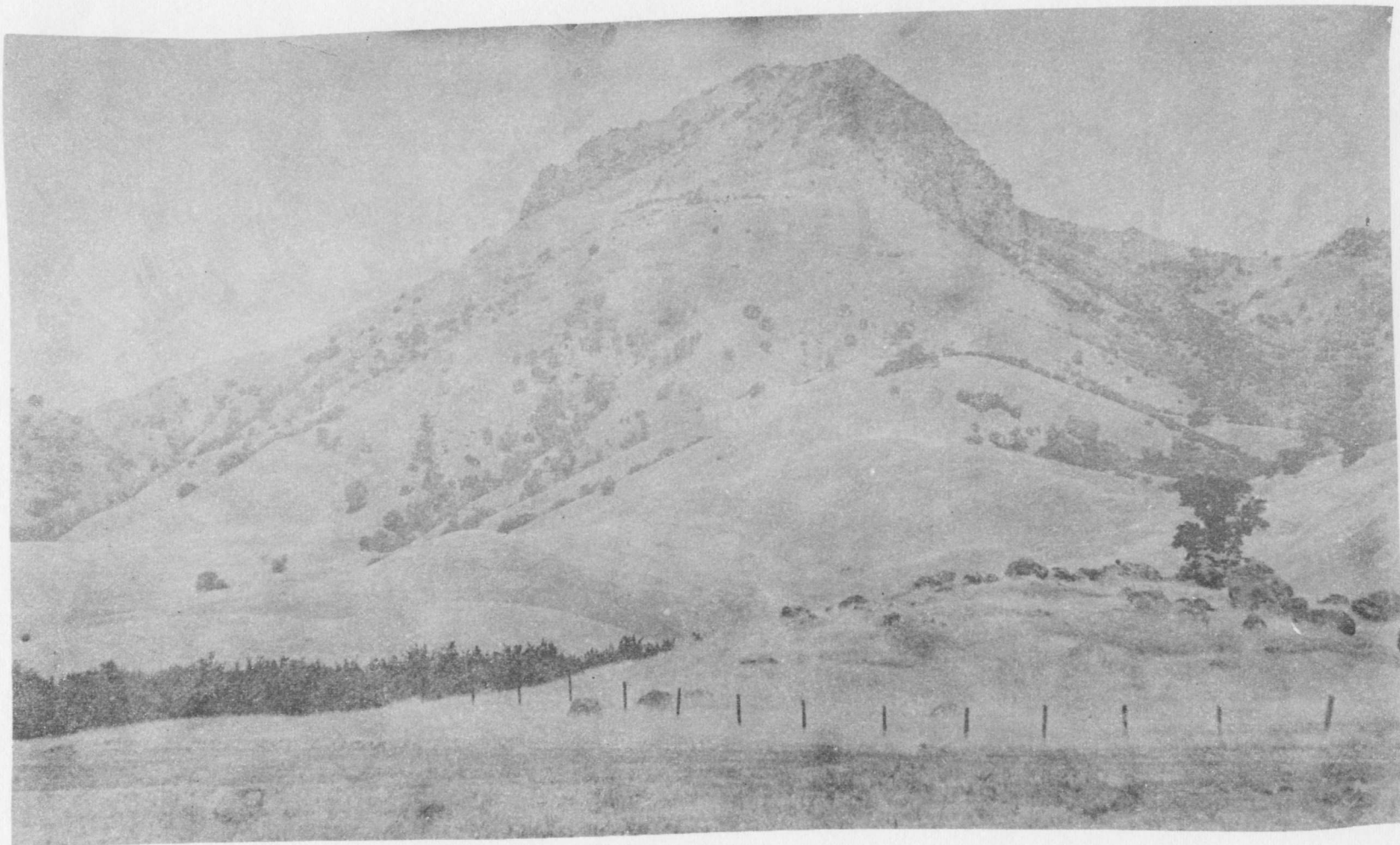
G. Kimball Epperson

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The story of Sutter City, California, a small agrarian community nestled at the foot of the Sutter Buttes, is a story of phenomenal growth and development. The town itself is representative of the basic spirit, resourcefulness, and fortitude that characterized those individuals who were, in actuality, responsible for the expansion and growth of our frontiers.

Local history is an important facet of the study of early California life, and as of this date, no complete study has been made regarding the development and growth of this historical little town. The community of Sutter City is only one of many small California towns rich in interesting and exciting stories that, when carefully pieced together, form the basic foundation for the pattern of life that is lived there today.

G. Kimball Epperson



SOUTH BUTTE PEAK

*THE LONE MOUNTAIN RANGE IS OF VOLCANIC ORIGIN. ITS HIGHEST PEAK IS NOW 2132 FEET IN HEIGHT AND IS THOUGHT BY GEOLOGISTS TO HAVE STOOD 7000 FEET HIGH BEFORE AN ERUPTION EONS AGO. PHOTO BY G. KIMBALL EPPERSON.

CHAPTER II THE SUTTER BUTTES

The Sutter Buttes, rising vertically from the near-level plains of the northwestern part of Sutter County, have provided travelers with a landmark in the Sacramento Valley for more than a century and a half.

Of Undoubted volcanic origin, the Buttes actually constitute an isolated mountain range. They are situated far from any other hills, and encompass an area of 25 miles in circumference. The greatest length of the range is about six miles and it rises steeply in numerous jagged peaks. The highest point is South Butte peak which is 2132 feet in elevation.

1. The First White Explorers

In 1808, Gabriel Moraga became the first known white man to see the Sutter Buttes. His eleven man exploring party took him to the mountain range in the middle of the valley. The Buttes acted as the guidepost for Moraga, the first known white man to venture into the unknown valley wilderness of the vast Northern California region.

In 1821, another expedition was made, this one by boat from San Francisco. Louis Arguello, a Spanish Lieutenant, who later became one of the first governors of the settlement of San Francisco, was in command. Although Arguello's trip was perhaps not so spectacular as Moraga's, he did manage to get within sight of the Buttes.

In 1828, a party of trappers, led by the illustrious Jedediah Strong Smith, trapped in the vicinity of the small mountain range. When Smith tried to reach the Sacramento River, he found an Indian rancheria from which all had fled except one young girl who apparently died of fright from seeing the white men.¹

Smith was followed in 183:" by Michel La Framboise, who opened the trail from the Rogue River in Oregon to the Sacramento Valley. It is believed the French-Canadian, La Framboise, originated the word "butte" meaning small hill.

The Sacramento Valley had been used as a highway leading into Oregon by fur trappers since 1830, but it was John Sutter who was the first to take advantage of the liberal land policy of the Mexican government. Sutter wanted to establish a colony in California and after much negotiating with Governor Alvarado of Mexico, managed to receive a grant of more than 48,000 acres in the Sacramento Valley. A portion of the putter Buttes acted as a boundary line in this particular grant.²

One brigade of the Hudson's Bay Company to reach California and the Sutter Buttes was that of John Work. This brigade of trappers left Fort Vancouver on August 17, 1832 and returned to that post on October 3. 1833. John Work and his party traveled south along the banks of the Sacramento River to the Sutter Buttes, It is recorded in his diary that they remained in the Buttes from December 15 to December 30, 1832.³

1 Joseph A. McGowan, History of the Sacramento Valley, Volume I (New York; Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1961). p. 22

2 Ibid. p. 22

3 Alice Maloney, Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura, (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945). p. 17

In 1846, about the time of the Bear Flag Revolution, General John C. Fremont camped with his military forces within the circling buttes. They camped there from May 30, to June 8, 1846.⁴

2. Origin of the Buttes

Geologists, who have studied the Buttes as the most interesting geologic formations in California, have estimated that from the angle of incline of the eroded outer walls, the volcano originally rose to a height of 7,000 feet.

Another theory advanced is that the Buttes are remnants of an island that existed when an ancient sea covered this part of California. It has been theorized that in the prehistoric period when the Pacific Ocean extended up into the foothills, Smartville would have been a coastal town--had there been any humans around at that time. The saline pockets which still plague drillers of deep water wells in parts of Sutter County are an indication that sea water was trapped and covered in the land upheaval that poured the ocean back from California; however it is obvious that the Buttes' volcanic eruption took place many thousands of years ago.⁵

3. Geologic Change

Geologists estimate that the time of eruption was during the widespread geologic changes when the Alps, the Caucasus, the Himalayas and other towering mountain ranges were rising, and when the continental mountain system, from Alaska to Cape Horn, was developing.⁶

Probers of the past point out that geologic indications place the Sutter Buttes on a direct line between Mount Diablo, a 3,849 foot mountain in Contra Costa County where the Mount Diablo Base and Meridian point was established by early California surveyors, and Mt. Shasta, 14,161 feet in elevation, which dominates the landscape in Siskiyou County. Extensive lava beds and other evidences of volcanic formations are found near Mt. Shasta.

The appearance of marks, fossils, and shells in the Sutter Buttes similar to those in the Coast Range, bears out the theory that an understratum of gravel links them to the westerly mountains. Another theory is that the Sutter Buttes are a million years older than the Coast Range. Yet in 1858, large springs of water which welled up through rock crevices were found almost on the highest summits of the Buttes. The Coast Range was considered the source of this underground supply.⁷

4. Early Explorations into the Buttes

A century ago writers described the Sutter Buttes as having a stunted growth of oaks on the north and east sides, but being barren elsewhere. A girdle of oak and sycamore trees grew in the valley near the Feather and Sacramento Rivers to the east and west. Sloughs with tall growths of tules existed along the northwesterly sides.

4 John C. Fremont, Memoirs of My Life (Buffalo: Miller Orton and Mulligan, 1887). p. 509

5 The Appeal Democrat, January 23, 1960

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

One April day in 1858, Grover K. Godfrey, an explorer and writer of some renown, walked from Yuba City to the top of the Buttes. He traversed the forested river bottom lands and continued to a belt of oak trees at the foot of the Sutter Buttes. At the base, Godfrey found streams of pure water, some of which reached a few miles beyond the hills. In a report to the Marysville Herald, Godfrey commented:

"Other streams traverse the valleys and empty into the rivers; most of the streams are plentifully supplied with fish."⁸

To make the ascent, Godfrey climbed around the east side of the Buttes, where he discovered an abandoned gold placer. He mentioned that wild flowers were on every side, and limpid streams leaped and dashed as he climbed up to the peaks. At one place he found a cascade plunging over a precipice to form a very beautiful lake. "Never before have I seen the like in this country or in South America or in the Islands of Oceanica," wrote Godfrey in an account of his journey.

When Godfrey reached the highest peak, he looked down upon the great Sacramento Valley and its rivers. Godfrey declared that the Buttes presented one main striking feature, which was that of a terrible convulsion. "Here I stood alone, in a strange place," recounted the awed traveler.

5. The Sutter Buttes Provide a Natural wealth

Two decades later, in 1879, historians observed that the groves and flowers of the plains had given way to the ax and plow, and that the streams filled with sporting fish were seen no more. Instead, there were torrents in winter and dry water courses in summer. The large growth of trees that once skirted the mountain sides had been succeeded by a fringe of stunted oak trees and bushes.¹⁰

The evidences of gold mining found by Godfrey were left by prospectors in 1850-51. The Marysville Herald of July 1851, reported:

Butte Hill near the big butte was yielding from \$6 to \$20 per day; the number of miners are increasing daily. A company of Wee men took out a pound and a quarter of gold in one day.¹¹

There was a noticeable lack of water for easy work except in winter months, and gold mining in the Sutter Buttes was soon abandoned.

In 1867, veins of coal were found close to the ground surface of the Buttes. Settlers found the coal usable but of high sulphur content. The Marysville Appeal of 1867 had this to say about the new find:

A good coal mine in the buttes would be of more value to the owners and to our citizens generally than any gold mine in the country. The coal is the genuine article, and for California, the coal is of superior quality.¹²

8 The Marysville Herald, May 17, 1858.

9 Ibid.

10 The Appeal Democrat, January 23, 1969

11 The Marysville Herald, July 24, 1851

12 The Marysville Appeal, April 15, 1867

As early as 1866 oil drillers seeking oil in the Sutter Buttes had discovered the presence of natural gas. Until there was a firm market for the product, not much could be done about its exploitation. A local newspaper in 1867 published an account of a near-calamity at an oil well of Cook, Doty & Company at west Butte. Fuel gas in the well being bored for oil caused a blow-off. The owner was quoted as telling the editor the following:

The other day I went with others to the well to repair the coverings. Our pipe had fallen into the well; the boards covering it had broken and fallen in and we went to fix them. We had to uncover the whole top and then we recovered it and we thought we would try and see if there was any burning gas in it. We put down a three-inch pipe, put a match to it and waited for the result. we didn't have to wait long before an explosion took place, which blew the covering off again and hoisted a worker and myself into the air about two feet, singeing us some but causing no serious injury. We then covered the well and left it.¹³

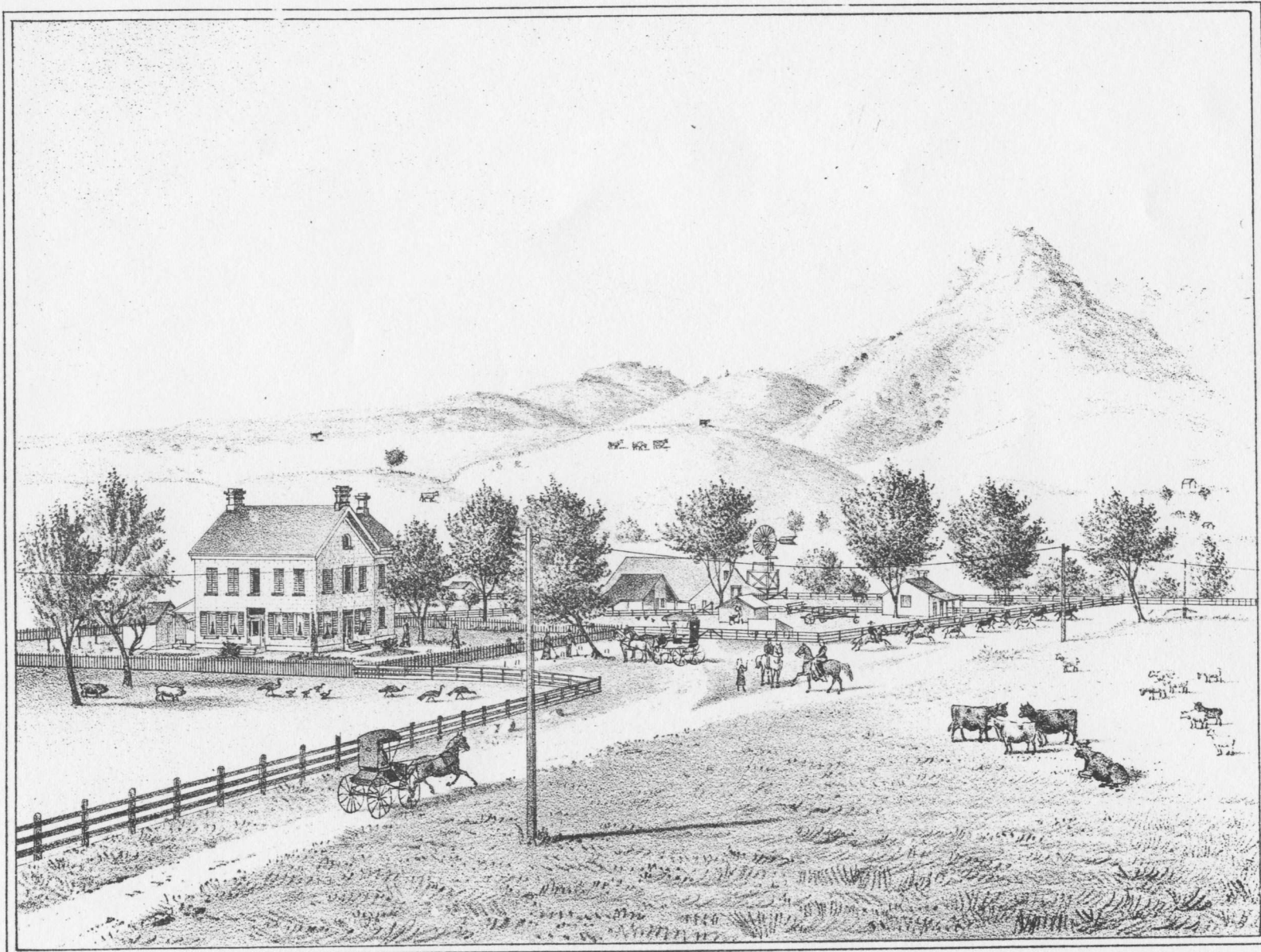
The editor of the paper added the following:

The proprietors of the well have the fullest confidence that they are on the right lead to find oil. The wells ought to be developed. Here is a chance for capitalists.¹⁴

Natural gas was the most important mineral find in the Sutter Buttes. Even today it is pumped from the wells in the lower slopes of the buttes and piped many miles to various homes and industries in the northern part of the state.

13 The Marysville Appeal, February 7, 1867

14 Ibid.



VIEW ON THE RANCH OF **GEO. E. BRITTAN**, 9 MILES NORTH WEST OF
YUBA CITY, SUTTER CO. CAL.



CHINESE ROCK-WALL FENCE

*A CLOSE-UP OF A ROCK-WALL FENCE BUILT IN THE 1860'S BY CHINESE COOLIE LABORERS. THE AREA PICTURED IN THE BACKGROUND WAS A FAVORITE HUNTING AND FISHING SITE FOR THE MAIDU INDIANS WHO ONCE LIVED IN THE REGION. PICTURE BY G. KIMBALL EPPERSON.

CHAPTER III
FIRST SETTLERS

The town of Sutter City and its surrounding area was not a focal point of the gold rush in California during the period from 1848 to 1850. There is no evidence to support any claim of settlement prior the end of 1849.¹

In 1849 Edward Thurman and a partner built a cabin at the east end of the Buttes south pass. The two men who herded cattle, were the first known white settlers in the Sutter Buttes. There were more settlements in 1850, and in 1853, G. E. Britten took over the Thurman land and built a two story home out of the igneous rocks which rested everywhere on the ground. This home, a monument to the ingenuity of the first settlers in the Sutter City area, still stands today.

Before 1853, most of the settlers busied themselves raising cattle, and selling meat, butter and cheese to the Marysville markets. In 1852, many settlers came to the Buttes and occupied the bottom lands and even moved further into the hills. Sheep were raised, and the ground was worked for beans and wheat; however, the many thousands of mosquitoes in the tules and marshes along the Sacramento River drove many of these early settlers away from the Sutter Buttes.²

1. Chinese Coolie Laborers

Mile after mile of rock wall fences are etched across the face of the Sutter Buttes, marking the exhausting labor of Chinese coolies during the 1860's.

Old-timers tell how the Chinese disappointed in the worked-out gold fields, turned to ranchers for work at 10 cents to 25 cents per day. They cleared the grain and pasture lands around the Buttes by piling rocks into neat fence walls.

On the west side of the Buttes is the Rock Wall Ranch, owned and operated by Mrs. Elden Tarke and her two sons. Mr. Tarke told of hearing how his German immigrant grandfather, Frederick Tarke, founder of the century old ranch, assigned Chinese coolies and ox teams to the huge rock-piling jobs.

"The lands had to be cleared and I guess rocks were the cheapest building materials they could get," Mrs. Tarke said, as she viewed the huge stock pens built there 100 years ago by the coolies.³

20 Activities

With work in the fields to be done every day, the life of the

¹ Edwin F. Bean (comp.) Bean's History, and Directory of Sutter County, California (Californian Daily Gazette Book and Job Office, 1867) p. 185

² Marysville Herald, December 20, 1858

³ Interview June 10, 1962, with Mrs. Elden Tarke

settler was anything but dull. Occasional social gatherings were held in the town hall at West Butte, and people from all around came to dance and frolick.⁴ A general store at West Butte supplied the farmers with most of their daily needs although monthly trips to Marysville were made for other supplies. These trips took a whole day because of the slow method of travel and the poor conditions of the roads. When a farmer did have some spare time he could make extra money by shooting ducks to sell at the market. The limit of birds was fifty per day, and it has possible to shoot that many, clean and pick them, and have them ready for the daily wagon which passed through West Butte to pick up the birds.⁵

The main road going from Colusa to Marysville passed through the South Butte Pass, and stage coaches made the trip daily. Ferries were used to get the wagons and coaches across the Sacramento River and Butte Slough.

In the 1850's, the settlers cut wild hay from vast fields or felled the great trees that then bordered the rivers. They sold the wood for fuel, especially to the operators of the river ferry boats. For many years to come, woodcutting remained a prime industry. Meanwhile, the herds of cattle, horses and sheep, increased as they throve on natural pasturage. By 1854, it was said, nearly all the bottom lands along the Feather River were occupied.

The majority of the people contented themselves with agriculture although a few of the settlers sought gold and coal in the Sutter buttes. Gold has never been found in large enough quantities to make its development worthwhile, and the Sutter City farmers realized they had a gold mine in their animals and crops since the area contained some of the richest farming soil in the territory.

CHAPTER IV

THE INDIANS OF SUTTER COUNTY

The Indians of California were culturally different from those that inhabited other areas of the United States. They were known to be peace loving in their nature and never posed as a serious threat to the white settlers.

The Maidu Indians occupied a large area of Central California, and were the occupants of what is now the Sacramento Valley. Their story goes back to the time when the great valleys were covered by an inland sea. When the force of storms of water broke through at the Golden Gate, the water receded. The first of their tribes came down from the mountains to the north on a raft, and landed on what we call the Sutter Buttes.¹

Because the Sutter Buttes were the site of the beginning of the Maidu, the Indians also believed that when a Maidu died, his spirit went to the Buttes, which they called Spirit Mountain. There the

4 Harry Wells, History of Sutter County (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft and Company, 1900).

5 Ibid

6 Marysville Herald, June 10, 1858

1 Jeromy Curtis, North American Indians (Berkeley: University of California Press, 192477-7175)

spirit rested, washed its face in the springs, and set out from its top for "Heavenly Valley," following the Milky Way. He would be greeted there by the Creator who had a basket of choice food which was always full.²

At the top of the North Butte is an interesting rock structure with an altar hollowed out. Toe and hand holds lead up to the resting place which looks very much like an altar. Here, it is said, the Indians watched for smoke messages in the northern mountains. If the message told of a big flood coming down the river, the Indians could move their belongings and families to safety before it reached their locality. Another legend of the Indians is mentioned:

A few hundred years ago, the Indians gathered on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. Night had fallen, but toward the direction on which the sun had dropped was a huge tower of flame reaching skyward in great bursts. By day this same flaming mass could be seen to emanate from mountains in the center of a great sea.³

The "Great Smoking Mountain in the waters to the Setting Sun from here" was the Sutter Butte as it once stood amidst the sea of water covering the Sacramento Valley Plain. The "smoking mountain" probably alluded to natural gas ignited by lightning or brush fires.

After many more years, the waters receded and the Indians made their way out of the mountains to the fertile basin level. Some of them moved into the Buttes where they hunted small game and fished in the many streams that flowed through the Buttes.

1. Indian Version of Buttes' Origin

The Indians, too, have their version of the origin of the Sutter Buttes. Jack Franco, a northwestern Maidu, born about 1845 in the vicinity of the present day Durham, in Butte County, California, told this story:

That night Sky Chief went down into the ground at the foot of the central post of the house and came out at the lake. He went away southward. Nobody saw him go. With his feet he made the Sutter Buttes and there he waited for the son of Nose Talker.⁴

Another old legend gave a different version. It told of an immense and beautiful tortoise who, in its decision to maintain peace in the land, raised the Buttes in the middle of the plain. By doing so, the tortoise hoped to separate contending tribes that were about to make war on one another. Its plan succeeded and bloodshed was prevented. No warrior dared attempt the crossing of the mountains, because the good spirit of the peace loving tortoise dwelt on the summit and had power to strike down any who might disobey its command.⁵

The souls of the dead were believed to go to Estobaiamyamani

2 Bernard Fontana, Sentinels of California's Great Valley (Yuba City, California: Publishers were itinerant and nameless, 1948) p.

3 Ibid., p. 16

4 Minnie Bo Jenkins, The Maidu Indians (Historical Research Association, Vol. XIV). p. 75

(in the center mountain), where one road led westward to the place where lived Sumuini-were (nose talk), the evil one of the two creators; and the other eastward to the home of the good creator, Nen-yepani (Big Chief), or Yakasinyepani (in-the-sky-Chief). The body of this Sky Chief was like gold; in fact, the old people used to say that he was the moon, and his sister the sun. The souls of the peaceful took the eastward road, and those who had killed or fought, the westward. The soul was called either the breath or the heart.⁶

The following is another Indian legend of the origin of the Sutter. Buttes:

The Indian Creator had just finished molding the Sierra Nevada and Coast Range mountains, when, being very satisfied with his work, he dusted his hands off. That dust fell down to the Sacramento Valley to form the Buttes.⁷

2. Colonel J. J. Warner's Account

Colonel J. J. Warner was a member of the Ewing Young trapping expedition which passed through the Sacramento Valley in 1832, and returned in 1833. Warner's description of the Indians was as follows:

The banks of the Sacramento in its whole course through its valley, were studded with Indian villages, the houses of which, in the spring, during the day time, were red with the salmon the aborigines were curing. At this time there were not, upon the San Joaquin or Sacramento Rivers, or any one of their tributaries, now within the valleys of the two rivers, any inhabitants but Indians, among whom we occasionally found one, who had fled from some of the Missions of California. On no part of the continent over which I had then, or have since traveled, was so numerous an Indian population, subsisting upon the natural products of the soil and waters, as in the valleys of the San Joaquin and Sacramento. There was no cultivation of the soil by them; game, fish, nuts of the forest and seeds of the fields, constituted their entire food....

They were experts in catching fish in many ways, and in snaring game in diverse modes. On our return, late in the summer of 1833, we found the valleys de-populated. From the head of the Sacramento, to the great bend and slough of the San Joaquin, we did not see more than six or eight live Indians, while large numbers of their skulls and dead bodies were to be seen under almost every shade tree, near water, where the uninhabited and deserted villages had been converted into graveyards; and, on the San Joaquin River, in the immediate neighborhood of the larger class of villages, which, the preceding year were to abodes of a large number of those Indians, we found not only many graves, but the vestiges of a funeral pyre

⁶ do H. McPherrin, Why Indians Never Crossed the Buttes (Yuba City, California: Publishers were itinerant and nameless, 1945)

⁷ Robert Heizer, The California Indians. A Source Book (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951). p. 20

At the mouth of the Sacramento River, we encountered the first and only village of the stricken race that we had seen after entering the great valley; this village contained a large number of Indians, temporarily stopping at that place. We were encamped near the village one night only, and, during that time, the death angel, passing over the camping ground of these plague-stricken fugitives, waved his wand, summoning from the little remnant of a once numerous people, a score of victims, to muster in the land of the Manitou; and the cries of the dying, mingled with the wails of the bereaved, made the night hideous, in that veritable valley of death. This disease, which swept down the valley of the Sacramento, and up that of the San Joaquin, appeared, so far as I could judge, to be a most acute and violent type of remittent fever...

The fever attacked members of our party, when we were camped upon the San Joaquin, near the Merced River, and nearly everyone of the party suffered from it. Two Indian boys about fifteen or sixteen years of age, one a Columbia River or Oregon Indian, the other from New Mexico, both of our party, died of the fever. The disease presented none of the symptoms of cholera. Its fatality among the Indians, was, in my opinion, in great measure owing to the treatment of the sick, which was to give them a hot air bath in their sweat houses, and then immerse them in water; the immersion was soon followed by death. Excepting the Indians of our company who died, I was the most severely affected member of the day following our encampment at the mouth of the Sacramento River, unable to ride, and as was supposed, to die; but in the evening ; revived, and was able to mount my mule and reach camp ...⁸

It seems to be a disputed question whether the epidemic which prevailed in 1833 was the small-pox or cholera. General Bidwell and Mr. Chana both agreed that it was small-pox. General Bidwell related that several years before he came to this country in 1841, a smallpox epidemic broke out among the Indians of the Sacramento Valley. The disease was believed to have been contracted from the trappers of the Hudson Bay Company. A large number of Indians in the valley were destroyed and whole villages were de-populated. The General stated that he had seen the sites of villages, where no Indians had lived since his arrival in the country, strewn with whole skeletons; in fact, he was able to count from a single standpoint, no less than forty skeletons. A village was mentioned in particular, located on the east bank of the Sacramento at the mouth of the Feather River. The bodies of skeletons were found on the river banks, and under bushes in the woods, as if the sufferers were trying to protect themselves from the ravages of the pestilence.⁹

The fact that the pestilence was small-pox was proven by the Indians who were attacked and had recovered, carrying with them the small-pox marks as evidence. The habit of the Indians when attacked by any kind of fever was to jump into a stream or river, the general result proving fatal from the sudden chill,

8 J.J. Warner Diary (Oakland: Thompson and West Company, 1879). p. 12

9 Ibid.

Mr. Chana, already referred to in this connection, stated that he employed an Indian woman who had passed through the scourge in 1833 and declared that the disease was introduced among them by members of the Hudson Bay Company. She claimed that the company wanted to get the Indians out of the valley because they interfered with the trapping. In order to accomplish their end, the company sent the Indians articles of clothing inoculated with the small-pox disease. Mr. Chana reported that the Indian woman's version was verified to him by trappers whom he met in Saint Joseph, Missouri, before he came here, and it was the prevailing explanation among the Indians and the early settlers, as to the origin of the scourge. 10

Some historians argued the validity of this theory because they felt such inhumanity could hardly exist among members of an organization so fair and honorable in all its dealings as the Hudson Bay Company. Others contended that the Indians, in their ignorance and superstition, ascribed it to that cause because of the jealousy and rivalry that existed between them and the foreign trappers.

3. Sacramento Valley Tribes

The Indian races in the Sacramento Valley region were separated into numerous small tribes whose system of nomenclature was extremely primitive. The Indians were not segregated into tribes, but into villages, each having its own name and head. Sometimes one chief would be more powerful than other neighboring chiefs in physical strength, number of warriors, or hereditary influence, and therefore had authority over the villages near him; such was the case with the ruler of the Hocks. Adam Johnson, Indian sub-agent, had this to say in a report to the Department of the Interior in 1850:

I could discover no distinction in their customs, habits of life, or their general language, which could induce me to think they were not originally the same people. Indeed, their customs and manners of living are, in many respects, almost identical.¹¹

From June to the middle of September, 1850, Mr. Johnson traveled more than eight hundred miles through the Sacramento Valley, and along the banks of the rivers. He visited ten distinct tribes of Indians, besides meeting many wandering families of communities. The following is a list of the tribes Johnson visited in the valley:

The Hocks - Located upon Hock Farm, near the old residence of Captain Sutter, numbering from eighty to one hundred.

The Yubas - Near the junction of the Yuba and Feather Rivers, numbering about one hundred and eighty.

The Olippas - On Feather River, about thirty-two miles above its mouth, comprising about ninety or one hundred people.

10 Ibid.

11 Adam Johnson, Local Indian Tribes of Sutter County (Oakland: Thompson and West Company, 1879) p. 14

The Bogas - A short distance above the Olippas, on the opposite side of the river, including about seventy people.

The Holillipah - At the base of the mountains near the Feather River, about one hundred and fifty in number.

The Machucknas - In the valley near Potter's rancho, comprising about eighty people.

The Cushnas - In the mountains, on the South Yuba, numbering about six hundred people.¹²

Johnson described the Maidu tribe in the Sutter Buttes in this way:

The physique of these natives did not correspond at all with that of the noble warriors east of the mountains. Strongly, though not symmetrically built, their height rarely exceeded five feet and eight inches, a low retreating forehead, black deep-set eyes, thick bushy eyebrows, salient cheekbones, a nose depressed at the roots and somewhat widespreading at the nostrils, a large mouth, with thick prominent lips, teeth large and white, but not always regular, and rather large ears, is the prevailing type.¹³

It was only in the winter months that the Indians needed a dwelling. The general method was to dig a hole in the ground three or four feet in depth, with a diameter of from ten to thirty feet. The ends of pliable willow poles were sunk into the ground around the excavation, and the tops were brought together; the same poles served for walls and roof. If the poles were sufficiently long, the two ends were driven into the ground on opposite sides of the hole and the curve of the willow formed the roof. Mud or sod was then placed over the frame. The smoke from the fire in the but found an outlet through a hole in the roof; the doorway consisted of a small hole in the side, barely large enough for a person to crawl through.

The Maidu men generally wore their hair long, taken up all around and tied in a bunch; the ends being loose, floated out and looked a great deal like a feather duster. To bind their hair they used nets made from the milkweed. They were clean shaven except for beards which were of the goatee style. Head and neck ornamentation was their only covering. This consisted of a string of beads made from spiral fossil shells worn around their necks, and the leg bones of vultures, or small ornamented elders placed through holes in their ears. Sometimes they inserted quills or small bones through their noses for ornament. They also had coverings made from the skins of the wild hare and deer; sometimes they used the coverings for their bodies, but generally they preferred nature's garb.¹⁴

4. The Life of the Maidu's

In hunting game, the Maidus used the bow and arrow for the larger animals, and snares for the smaller ones. They generally crept upon the deer or elk, or lay in wait for them to pass. Sometimes they

12 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 15-16

13 Ibid., p. 17

14 Heizer, op. cit. p. 22

surrounded the rabbits and drove them to the center of the group and captured them in large numbers. Ducks were caught during dark nights in nets made of the bark of the milkweed and wild nettle, woven together, and spread across a stream; the ducks were then slyly driven into them by the Maidus on both banks of the stream. Foxes, coons and badgers were among the meats of the Maidu tribe. Young birds and crows, taken from their nests, were also eaten. The game was cooked without any dressing or cleaning by throwing it directly into a fire. When the outside seemed sufficiently cooked, the bird or animal was taken out and the flesh eaten from the outside until the inner part was found too rare.

The principal game was antelope, which roamed in large bands over the Buttes; hundreds of these animals were often seen in a single band.

The many canals around the Buttes were full of salmon, and the Maidus speared them by the hundred in the clear water. When the canals became muddy, the fish became scarce. The Indians, although unable to see the fish, could tell their position by the ripples made in their passage through the water and speared them with great precision.¹⁵

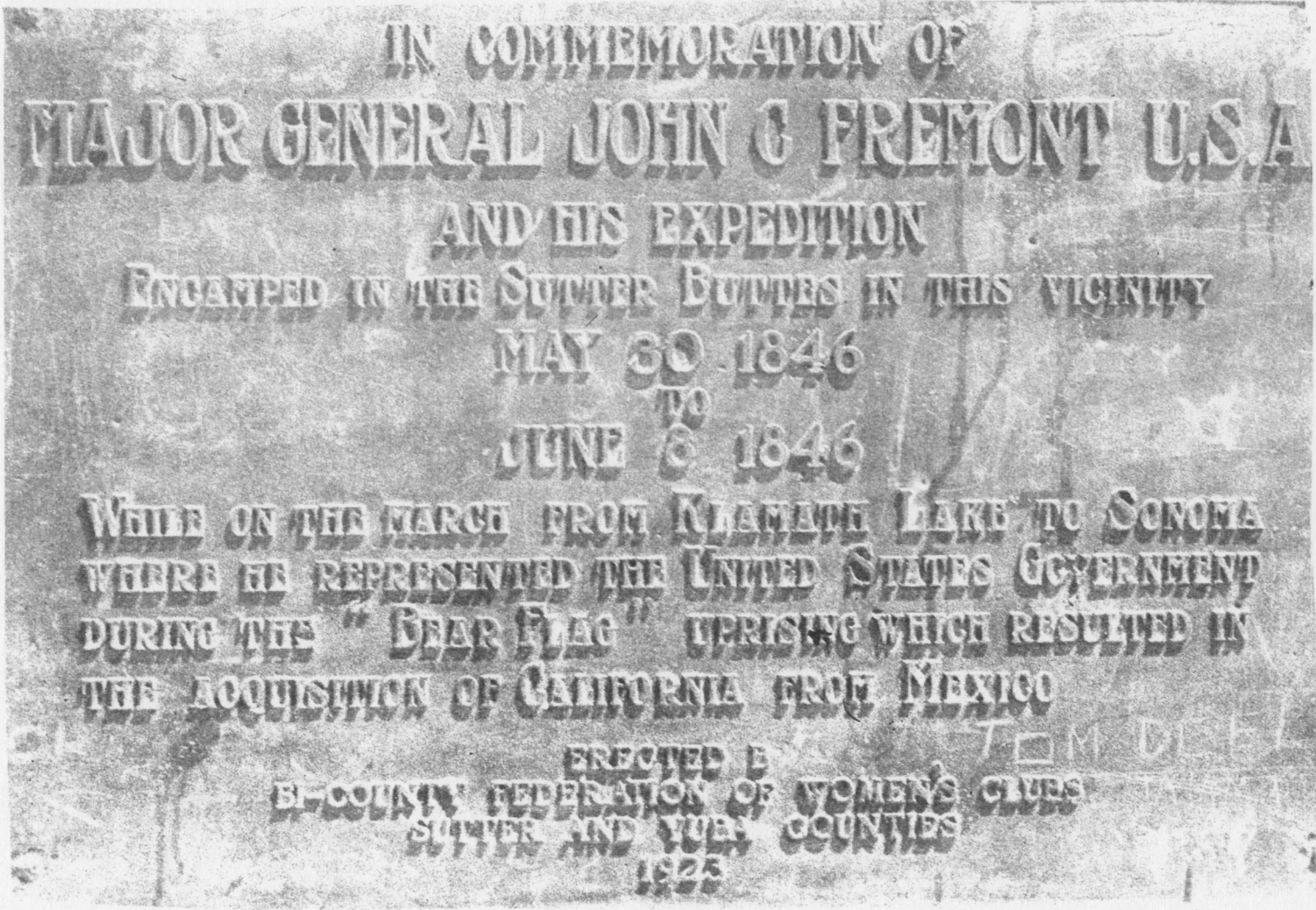
For navigation on the streams, the Maidus bound two logs together and propelled the crafts (balsas) by means of a pole which also could serve as a paddle. They also constructed other crafts by lashing tule weeds firmly together in rolls. These crafts were usually ten feet long and four feet wide. Their weapons for hunting and war consisted of bows and arrows, spears, and clubs. Their battles were never very bloody or long-continued. The general plan was to frighten the opposing forces by yells and outlandish antics and gestures. The Maidu's tools for warfare were models of strength and utility and great care was taken in the selection of material and the making. The weapons were of complicated structure and were made mostly by the old Indians who were unable to take part in the hunts or battles. Johnson stated in his report:

The Maidus were very brave when brought directly in the face of death, although they preferred the ambush to the more open method or warfare. They have an indefinite idea of their rights to the soil, and they complain that the "pale faces" are over-running their country and destroying their means of subsistence. The emigrants are tramping down and feeding their grass, and miners are destroying their fish-dams. For this they claim remuneration, not in money (for they know nothing of its value), but in the shape of clothing and food.¹⁶

Early California explorers had little regard for the Indians of the Buttes and by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Indians, who had once roamed the Buttes freely, were never to be seen again.

15 Jenkins, op. cit. p. 77

16 Johnson, op. cit., p. 16



GENERAL FREMONT'S MONUMENTAL PLAQUE

*THE MONUMENT COMMEMERATES THE ENCAMPMENT OF GENERAL JOHN C. FREMONT, PATHFINDER TO THE WEST. THE MONUMENT IS LOCATED ON THE SOUTH BUTTE PASS ROAD. PHOTO BY G. KIMBALL EPPERSON.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAPPERS

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the Sutter Buttes were occupied and traversed by bands of trappers, some of whom were employed by the many American and foreign fur companies. The first American of record to enter the Sacramento Valley was Jedediah Smith, who trapped for beaver on the east side of the Sacramento Valley between January 28 and April 13, 1828.¹

1. The Hudson Bay Company

The Jedediah Smith party was met with hostility by a group of Indians on the Umpqua River in southern Oregon, but Smith and two of his associates escaped. They managed to make their way to Hudson's Bay Company Headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. They described the Sacramento Valley in exciting terms and emphasized the number of beaver to be found in its streams. Brigades of Hudson's Bay Company visited the valley every year from 1830 until 1844 in search of furs. These brigades, under such men as Michael La Framboise and John Work, usually consisted of sixty to one hundred people, including men, women, and children.

The company's trappers in California belonged to the "Southern Trapping Party of the Hudson Bay Company,"² and were divided into smaller parties composed of Canadians and Indians, with their wives. The trapping was carried on during the winter months in order to secure a good class of furs. The free trappers were paid ten shillings sterling for a prime beaver skin, while the Indians received a moderate compensation for their services as guides. The outfits and portions of the Company's food were purchased from the company. The Hudson Bay Company employed about ninety or one hundred trappers in the state of California. In 1845, a sudden scarcity of beaver and otter in Sutter County caused the company to discontinue their trapping expeditions in the area.³

20 Story of Indian Peter

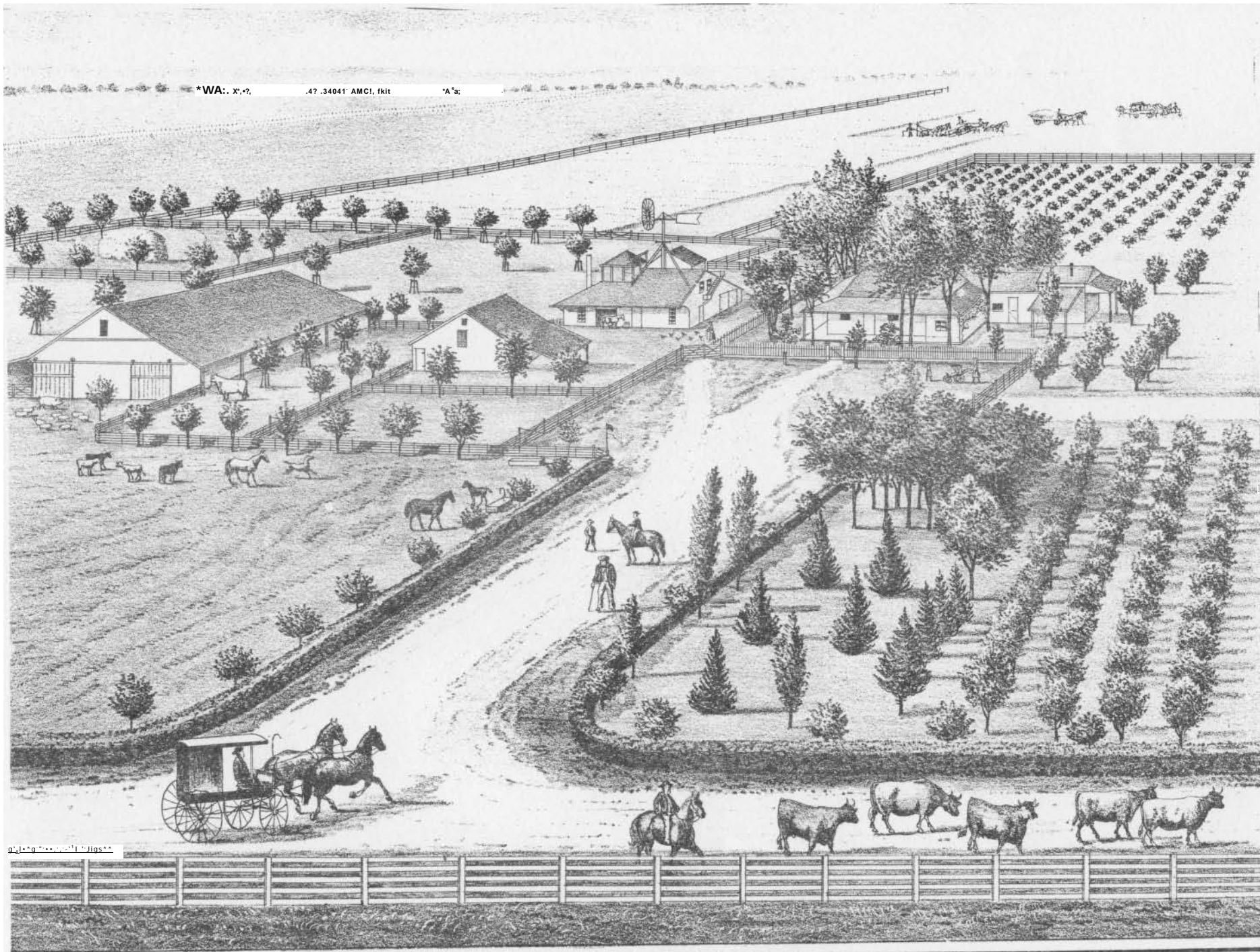
Thompson and West's History of Sutter County described the story of Indian Peter, a Sioux Indian who came to California with the Jedediah S. Smith party in 1828.⁴ Indian Peter once told of two great battles with the Indians. The trappers were defeated in the first battle and the Indians were badly whipped in the second. Peter mentioned that minor skirmishes with the Indians took place most of the time. When the trappers returned, Peter remained because the hunting was better than at any place he had been before. Peter later married a French woman and had three daughters, all being great hunters, especially the eldest who used to go out with her father. She commonly rode upon a stallion when she hunted elk and deer. Peter's

1 Alice Maloney, Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945). p. 14. See Appendix for John Work's account of stay in Sutter Buttes.

2 Joseph A. McGowan, History of the Sacramento Valley, Volume I, (New York; Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1962) p. 23

3 Thompson and West, History of Sutter County (Oakland: Thompson and West Publishers, 18791. p. 16

4 Ibid., p. 17



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VIEW ON THE RANCH OF **W. M. WADSWORTH**. 1120 ACRES, SETTLED IN NOVEMBER, 1859, SITUATED 8 1/2 MILES WEST OF YUBA CITY, SUTTER CO CALA.

daughter even saved his life from the paws of an angry grizzly bear when they were smoking the bear out of a cave:

The fellow came out sooner than expected, was about to leap from a rock upon Peter when a well directed shot from the girl's rifle killed him. Later on Peter went to the Sutter Buttes to shoot antelope, when he was badly attacked by a female grizzly, deprived of her cubs a few days before. She knocked his gun from his hand and seized his head with her paws. In this position, Peter drew his knife and succeeded, after many cuts, in killing her. His head was terribly mangled and the wound never completely healed. He wore a cloth about his head and died a few years later from the effects of his wound, and whiskey.⁵

AGRICULTURE: BASIS OF SUTTER CITY'S ECONOMY

In 1854 the Sutter plains were slowly being improved with farms, but the swamps and tules still comprised about one-fifth of the county and this area remained unused for many years. In 1859, about 17,000 of the total 388,480 acres that comprised Sutter County, were under cultivation. The community soon became known as one of the leading agricultural producers in California.

The early settlers also cut down the large trees that bordered the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, They sold the wood for fuel, especially to the operators of the river steamboats. For many years, wood-cutting remained a prime industry, The herds of cattle, sheep and horses, meanwhile, increased as they thrived on natural pasturage.

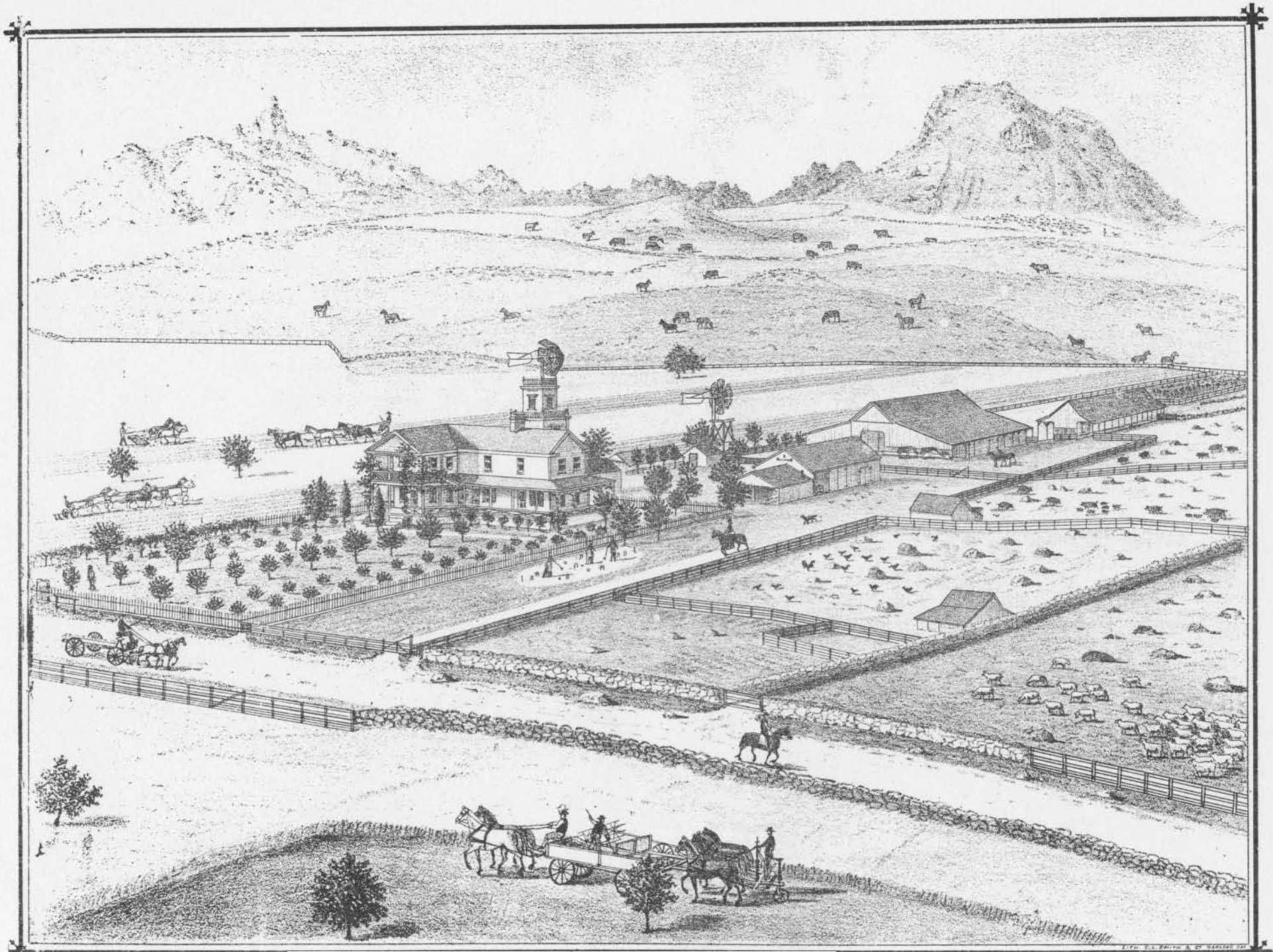
3. Big Grape Crops

In 1860, one of the largest vineyards in Northern California was located in the Sutter area. Table wine and raisin grapes provided a valuable income source for Sutter County farmers for many years. From a few cuttings obtained by a man named William Thompson, who lived in Sutter, the Thompson seedless grape was developed and has done much to make Sutter county famous. This seedless grape of commerce was first grown in Sutter County and its potential value was instantly recognized, and extensive plantings were made as rapidly as cuttings could be procured, Other sections of California adopted this grape, but Sutter county easily held its position as its home and principal producing district in the state.

There were three main factors which reduced the vineyards in Sutter county since 1850; national prohibition that dropped the price paid for wine grapes to almost nothing; attacks on the vines of the plant by a disease called phylloxera and the fact that cling peaches³ and other fruits that were later introduced proved to be more popular.

5 Ibid, p. 17

3 The Appeal Democrat, January 23, 1920



RESIDENCE AND RANCH OF **FREDERICK TARKE** WEST BUTTE, SUTTER, CO., CAL.

1870. C. S. BROWN & CO. SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

4. Other Crops

After the rush and excitement of 1849 and 1850, caused by the gold discovery, agriculture took a new start. Profiting little by the experience of former years, the farmer's progress was at first slow, but advancements were eventually made.

In 1850 a few people had settled in the bottom lands, with the intention of making the area their future home. At that time, a fine growth of oak and sycamore timber skirted the river banks, and in some places extended back upon the plains. The first industry engaged in by the farmers was the cutting of wood for the steam boats on the rivers. Another was the cutting of hay that grew wild and in great luxuriance on the bottom lands. Hay was in great demand in the mines and cities; the immense number of pack and stage animals required to transact business, and transport goods and passengers, made the price of hay reach a high figure. Even as late as 1858, the cutting of wild hay was a leading industry among the ranchers along the rivers.⁴

A few experimental crops of wheat and barley were sown in 1851, chiefly barley, because little faith was put in the ability of the soil to raise wheat. Although large quantities had been previously raised, the farmers in the Sutter Buttes' area were unaware of its possibilities. Until it was demonstrated that wheat could be raised in sufficient quantities and of good quality, flour was brought from Chili, Australia, and the mills in Virginia. By 1856, enough wheat was produced in Sutter County to supply the demand of the settlers and the mills ceased to import wheat and merchant flour. Having accomplished this, the farmers and grain dealers saw no other prospects, and agricultural progress in 1857 was at a stand still.

The idea of exporting did not enter the merchant's minds for they thought the wheat could not stand the journey east or to Liverpool, twice through the tropics and around Cape Horn. The extremes of heat and cold would cause "sweating" and eventual destruction. No attempt was made until 1861 when a group of millers sent a cargo of wheat to Liverpool, taking the chance of losing the whole crop, but determined to try the experiment.

The cargo arrived safely and in excellent condition; the second was sent, and that arrived in the best of order. This established the fact that wheat could be shipped from California and an immediate impetus was given to grain exportation and necessarily to its production. The astonished farmers needed some reason for the satisfactory results attained in these first exportations; investigation and thought gave it.

In the grain producing valleys of Sutter county, from April to October, there is little rain and the heat is intense. From April to June the kernel stands in the ear, ripening and drying. when cut and threshed, it is placed where the sun or hot dry air has free access, and all extra moisture is removed. Nature thus accomplished what had to be done by artificial means with Eastern grain. Agriculture soon became the object of the desires of the settlers, as mining did in former days; all of the state went into farming as fast as land could be located and titles cleared.⁵

4 Ibid

5 Thompson and West, op. cit., p. 85

The growing of vegetables was early commenced in the 1850's and has always been a great industry in the bottom lands of Sutter county, the soil of which was adapted to their growth. Pumpkins, squashes, cabbages and melons grow to a great size, while potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, beans, peas, and all kinds of "truck" vegetables were easily cultivated. The raising of vegetables, except potatoes, was chiefly in the hands of the Chinese, many of whom lived in the Sutter Buttes' area. with their patient industry and economy, they were very successful farmers. The soil was made, by proper, care and management, to yield two, and sometimes three, crops per year.⁶

6 Sutter County From Then Till Now (Sacramento, California: Department of Agriculture, undated)p. 65

SUTTER COUNTY TABLE OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS¹

	1855	1856	1861	1878
Cultivated, acres		8,679	30,646	211,180
Wheat, acres		2,851	8,570	126,520
Barley, acres		4,860	10,340	26,720
Oats, acres		293	175	75
Rye, acres				120
Corn, acres		287	648	2,175
Buckwheat, acres				
Hops, acres				16
Castor Beans, acres				13,000
Potatoes, acres		198	140	525
Hay, acres			1,874	34,181
Horses	1,200	1,723	4,411	4,886
Mules	607	1,061	531	510
Cows		5,621	5,170	3,472
Calves		3,630	3,000	2,177
Oxen		771	891	267
Beef Cattle		8,961	14,102	5,733
Total Cattle	15,180	18,983	23,163	5,135
Sheep	2,521	5,536	30,279	41,884
Hogs	7,235	7,078	10,100	15,567
Poultry		10,495	25,539	28,000
Apple Trees		829	1,281	19,229
Peach Trees		4,098	18,122	11,784
Pear Trees		164	2,044	4,392
Cherry Trees		111	594	594
Apricot Trees		57	1,545	4,983
Fig Trees		234	319	2,924
Almond Trees		56	583	1,706
Prune Trees		12	12	101
Orange Trees				15
Walnut Trees		5	173	1,851
Mulberry Trees				6,839
Grape Vines		45,123	12,1285	850,000
Wine, gallons			3,500	40,000
Brandy, gallons			500	560

2. The First Schools

During the first years of the growth and settlement of Sutter county, the population was composed almost entirely of men. But in the latter part of 1851 the settlers began to bring their wives and children from their Eastern homes. It was then that the need for public schools became apparent. The schools in Sutter county actually began when John A. Sutter provided a small school for children on his Hock Farm sometime in 1850.

In 1853 a school was begun at Nicolaus, approximately 15 miles south of Sutter City, with two teachers and 24 pupils. Vernon had a school in 1857 and by 1859 there were 38 districts in Sutter county maintaining 41 schools, many of which were one teacher institutions.

The schools in this period were actually frame buildings with wooden floors, door casings and windows of sawed oak and oak shakes covering the roof and sides. The buildings had one door and a window on each side.

The furniture in the schools was also made of wood. The seats were approximately eight feet long and were made by driving four wooden pegs, for the legs, into the underside of planks two to three inches thick. Desks were constructed like the seats, but with longer legs.

The books in use were those which each family happened to possess. It is not known what readers were used, only that the student read and re-read the same books during all his years in school.

The students had less freedom and a great deal more discipline than they now have. Whippings with willow switches, rawhide whips were not uncommon then.

The schools usually opened in April or May and ran for five months during the year. Many students had to ride horseback or walk many miles to school. They did not attend in the rainy winter months.³

3. Sutter City's First High School

The desire for a high school in Sutter City had been in the minds of the people in the surrounding districts for quite some time. In 1892, Mrs. J.F. Smith, then of Sutter City, read an article describing the organization of a Union High School District. She gave the article to Mr. William Ellington, also of Sutter City, and he in turn interested a number of others. Among these were R. W. Tharp, d. M. Wadsworth, George Says, and Joseph Girdner, all of Sutter City. A number of outlying districts favored the plan. Accordingly, a petition for an election was circulated, a sufficient number of signatures obtained, and the election was held in the spring of 1893.

Fifteen districts, namely, Union, Washington, Farmer, Slough, Hill, West Butte, Prairie, Noyes, North Butte, Meridian, Winship, Salem, Brittan, and Live Oak joined the Union. The law provided that the Clerk of the Board of Trustees from each district should be a member of the High School Board of Trustees.

³ Lola B. Hoffman, California-Beginnings (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1948) pp. 53-56



THE GARDEMEYER MANSION

*THE MANSION WAS BUILT IN 1888-89 FOR P. D. GARDEMEYER, PROMOTER OF THE PIONEER TOWN THEN KNOWN AS "SUTTER CITY." THE GINGERBREAD TYPE STRUCTURE WAS THE MOST ORNATE RESIDENCE EVER ERECTED IN SUTTER. IN 1893, WHEN MRS. GARDEMEYER AND HER DAUGHTER WERE LIVING IN THE MANSION, A GERMAN REFUGEE NAMED PETER SCHMITT FATALLY SHOT MRS. GARDEMEYER. THE MAN WAS CRAZED BY HIS LOSSES DUE TO THE CORRUPT DEALINGS OF PETER GARDEMEYER. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE APPEAL DEMOCRAT.

Britten district owned a large grammar school building, only a small portion of which was in use. This district offered to deed the remainder of the building to the high school, so long as it used the building for school purposes. In accordance with this agreement, the school was located there, under the name Sutter Union High School.⁴

In September 1893, school opened for the first term with fifteen pupils enrolled. Mr. J. C. Ray, the first teacher, arranged a three years' course of study, which was completed in 1896 by four students: Florence Davis, Hattie Wren, Maude Hawley and William Hoffman. Another years work was added to the course in 1900, and in the same year Sutter Union High School won recognition and was accredited by the University of California.⁷

The high school continued to rent part of the Britten grammar school building until a few years later when Sutter City built its own high school.

CHAPTER X

SUTTER CITY: THE BOOM TOWN

The fruitful slope south of the Sutter Buttes was a lodestone for settlers in the 1850's. This area formed the nucleus for the only "boom town" in the history of the county. The availability of cheap land near the Sutter Buttes, with easy water supply and the comparative shelter of the high-topped hills, provided a combination pleasing to many.

1. Effects of the Civil War

During the Civil War, the settlers near the Sutter Buttes felt strongly the unrest of 1861 and its political problems. Union men and Confederate supporters were at odds, and many heated arguments took place between the settlers whose loyalties differed.

In an interview with Aleta Hill, a resident of Sutter City for many years, it was learned that a group of Union supporters, composed mostly of Sutter City men, erected an 80 foot flagpole on South Butte as proof of their loyalty to the continuance of the United States. While several hundred citizens gathered for the July 4th celebration in the Buttes cheered, the honor guard raised the Stars and Stripes to the top of the pole. Old Glory long flew there unscathed, until it finally was removed as a treasured relic, brought out only on special patriotic occasions.¹

2. Settlements Start

Stock raising was important as a means of livelihood in early Sutter City, along with the growing of grains, and by 1869 the Sutter City district was described in an article published in the Weekly Sutter Banner as "one vast sheep range."²

4 The Appeal Democrat, November 3, 1928.

25 Report on Examination on the Books and Records of Account of the Sutter Unified School District of Sutter County for the Period September 1893, to June 1904 (Sacramento: Lyman, Straine and Company, 1954).

1 The Appeal Democrat, July 4, 1928

2 Weekly Sutter Banner, July 5, 1869

The communities which resulted near the Sutter Buttes included West Butte, at the southwest spur of the mountain; North Butte, later known as Pennington, west of Live Oak; and South Butte, soon to be known as Sutter City. By 1871 Sutter City boasted a hotel, and a post office. The citizens celebrated the completion of each additional building, and people from far and near were invited to hear speeches, dine, dance and even witness a public wedding. In 1887, Sutter City became one of the fastest growing towns in the state, with horizons unlimited.

3. The Birth of "Sutter City"

In 1887, Peter D. Gardemeyer, a sewing machine salesman and agent for a patent farm gate, drifted into Sutter County. Gardemeyer became acquainted with a widow of German origin, Mrs. Herman Erke, who resided on a large ranch in Sutter City. Shortly after Gardemeyer's arrival, they were married and Gardemeyer established himself as a prominent Sutter City resident.

In November 1887, mildly optimistic articles which dwelt on the beauties of the Sutter Buttes area, its economic possibilities and its suitability for a community of homes, began to appear in local newspapers. The first report came from the Marysville Appeal:

Peter D. Gardemeyer is up from San Francisco, and he and several others, are interested in disposing of some land they recently bonded there. He talked very confidently of making a sale and colonizing the vicinity. There the colony is to come from he did not state.³

A barrage of promotion items soon appeared in the daily papers of Sutter County. In an item of November 23, 1887, they answered the question of where the colonists were to come from and also where the money was to come from. The Marysville Herald had this to say:

The New Town Site at the Base of the Buttes. By Monday night's Oregon Express train, ten gentlemen from San Francisco arrived in this city and yesterday morning they were taken to the new town-site of South Butte where they spent the day. They are evidently interested in the syndicate that had bonded and purchased the lands in that section and talk as though they are assured of the success of the venture. Last evening they were at the U.S. Hotel and discussed what had been done and what they calculate on doing. While there, some of the gentlemen leaked some information concerning the prospective colonists.

'We have effected several sales of lots to people who will become actual settlers,' said one, 'We intend to bring out a colony of industrious people of some means and give them a chance to see their way clear to an income before asking payment for the land. Of course they will have to make a partial payment to begin with.'⁴

³ The Marysville Appeal, November 17, 1887.

⁴ The Marysville Herald, November 23, 1887

The Marysville Appeal invited suggestions for a name for the new metropolis, but in the same issue appeared the answer to the question:

"Since the above article appeared in type, the new town has been made Sutter City. je therefore bid a reluctant farewell to South Butte."⁵

Up to that particular time, the matter of money had been neglected and the promoters, A. J. Lyon and Peter Gardemeyer, were given mention in the Marysville Herald:

A. J. Lyon and P. D. Gardemeyer yesterday closed their business with several of those from whom they have purchased lands in and near the new town of Sutter City. They paid over to George Sammy \$15,000 and to Captain Stevens something over \$10,000. Messrs. Griffith and Brittan will receive their money today and also others who have sold recently to the Syndicate.

The going price is \$100 an acre. The 160 acres purchased from George Sammy is not the site of the approximate center of Sutter City. Among the other purchases of land by the Syndicate are the following:

W. H. McPherrin, 11- 4/10 acres, Dec.1887-\$1710 C.C.
Epperson, 78 acres, Dec. 1887-\$7800.

Surveyors began laying out lots and an organized system of roads was built under the direction of the Syndicate. An army of carpenters started building houses while the newly organized lumberyard tried to keep up with the hectic demand for building supplies.

At the close of 1887, the new born community of Sutter City was the talk of Northern California. The Marysville Appeal reported in December .1887:

The Boom continues; in fact it is the talk of the whole county and spreading to all the adjoining counties. Those from a distance seeing the beautiful location for the first time are more delighted with the locality and are investing with the utmost confidence in the future city. The promoters claim that it is the fastest growing community in Northern California .7

A section of land, 640 acres, was purchased by the Syndicate from G. R. Summy. This section was located just south of the Sutter Buttes, in a slightly location, and had been cut up into town lots of 25 to 50 foot frontages, which were offered at \$200 a lot and up. Later, additional lands were⁸ purchased around the original townsite and similarly subdivided and sold out.

5 The Marysville Appeal, November 25, 1887.

6 The Marysville Herald, December 15, 1887.

7 The Marysville Appeal, December 23, 1887.

8 Interview with C. C. Epperson, June 16, 1962.

A railroad from Marysville and Yuba City was projected, rights of way were obtained and the grading for the laying of tracks was done for several miles. It was called the Marysville, Sutter City and Colusa railroad, and Peter Gardemeyer was the promoter.

4. Sutter City's Brick Kiln

During Sutter City's rapid growth, the promoters were slightly held up due to the scarcity of lumber. Peter Gardemeyer soon announced that he had contracted with a Mr. Walker of a neighboring community for the purchase of one million bricks. These bricks were to be used for the construction of buildings, including Gardemeyer's new mansion, in Sutter City. The July 1888 edition of the Marysville Appeal reported

A Million Bricks for use in New Buildings.
The Sutter City people are jubilant over the burning of a large brick kiln there, not because there is anything extraordinary attached to the making of the bricks, but because they are needed in order to push several buildings that have been delayed. The kiln burned consisted of 325,000 bricks and all are of superior quality. Another kiln of 700,000 will be burned in a few days. All or both kilns have been spoken for and will be used in Sutter City,

Mr. Joseph Girdner is making plans for the building of a \$15,000 residence, either on his farm southwest of town or in Sutter City. Finally a new school will be completed in three weeks, or about the first of August, 1888.⁹

5. Sutter City's First School

On August 17, 1888, the school was finally completed and dedication ceremonies were held. Early the same morning a special train arrived in Yuba City. On board were approximately 80 newspaper men and interested investors invited by Gardemeyer to attend the building ceremonies and to examine the town site.

The following week the school opened with an attendance of 100 pupils and two teachers. The school was named after a prominent Sutter City resident, George E. Britten.

6. Sutter City's Dream Collapses

One of the most spectacular promotional stunts that Gardemeyer and his associates staged was a lottery with 300 Sutter City lots as prizes. The drawing was staged on December 16, 1888, and the tickets sold for \$200 each. The grand prize was the lot on which had been erected a hotel building. At least 1,000 people were present to witness the drawing of winning numbers. At the drawing, Gardemeyer, in a wildly applauded speech, announced the early erection of a bank building to cost \$17,000.¹⁰

9 The Marysville Appeal, July 27, 1888

10 The Marysville Herald, December 17, 1888

Amid all of Sutter's wonderful prospects for the future, there were those who doubted Gardemeyer's financial status as well as his personal integrity. The first questionable report was made in March 1889. The Marysville Appeal announced:

P. D. Gardemeyer was in town yesterday and stated that the report was without the slightest foundation and that he could not trace it to any source, but he was confident it was the work of an enemy. He says he was never in a better condition financially than at present and that with the progress of Sutter City, he expects to better his circumstances."¹¹

Within the next few months there were many disquieting rumors. Almost every night, a flood of suits were filed against Gardemeyer on mortgage defaults. On March 2, 1890, Gardemeyer was brought before Justice Arnold in Yuba City and was charged with obtaining money under false pretenses. Mr. Gardemeyer had sold one lot to two persons. He was arrested on \$1,500 bail and the suit was dropped on a technicality. More suits ensued and Gardemeyer was able to escape the charges on technicalities. Some examples of the charges made against Gardemeyer were:

January 30, 1890. Obtaining money under false pretense
June 11, 1890. Charged with larceny
June 20, 1890. Alleged to have sold the same lot to two different parties.¹²

It was later reported that Gardemeyer had sold out all his interests to a Mr. Alpers of San Francisco for the incredible sum of ten dollars. On July 8, 1890, Gardemeyer's bail was forfeited and the townspeople of Sutter were in a state of panic.

7. A Surprise Appearance

The supervisors of Sutter County, on the night of July 24, 1891, were in session at the courthouse. Sutter County was about to build a hall of records and they were there to open the bids. Just as they were about to proceed, a strange little man stood up in the audience and plunged into a surprise speech. The strange man was Charles Alpers, to whom Gardemeyer sold out his interests. Mr. Alpers was accompanied by P.D. Gardemeyer. Alpers lectured the astounded supervisors on the prospects of Sutter City and he assured his listeners that Sutter City was the coming town, and it would grow until it and all of the county around would be one great metropolis. Alpers pointed out that the railroad now under construction was bound to speed this expected growth, but there were greater things in store. Among the industries projected to support the economy of the new town was a crockery plant. Not just a plant, Alpers emphasized, but one of the largest, for in the Sutter Buttes there was unlimited amounts of the finest crockery clay in the country, just waiting to be turned into the best chinaware. To transport all of this crockery to San Francisco, the central distributing point, he and his associates were organizing a

¹¹ The Marysville Appeal, March 29, 1889

¹² Steven Mast, I Love You California (Oakland: The Fontes Printing Company, 1959). p. 146

line of steamers to run between. Meridian and. San Francisco, bearing great cargoes of crockery. Alpers continued stating that it would be a waste of money and a disgrace to build the hall of records in Yuba City when Sutter City, considering its obvious advantages, should not only be the proper location of the hall of records, but the county seat itself.¹³

A reporter of the Marysville Appeal reported the opinion of the board of supervisors:

For a man who had only a ten dollar interest in the county, that being the whole price he paid for the whole of Boomville, and one who up to a few weeks ago did not know that a county by the name of Sutter existed, he was making himself very officious. He never had any but good words for Sutter's prosperity, but we are fast losing confidence in her, especially her boomers.¹⁴

Faced with lawsuits and debts, Gardemeyer fled from the State and was later reported to be in Texas. According to the Marysville Appeal, 1895, he was in Houston, promoting a land speculation in his well known fashion. His partners grew suspicious and decided to investigate him. They inquired and in response received a pointed reply concerning Gardemeyer which stated".... that we will very likely knock Gardemeyer's calculations to smithereens."¹⁵

Immediately after Gardemeyer fled from Sutter City, the residents began to leave. The town lot prices fell from \$200 to as low as 410. Taxes were allowed to become delinquent, and some blocks of lots were bought and put back into agricultural use. The town slowly recovered its morale and within a few months relapsed into the peaceful existence normal to most small towns.

A. J. Lyon, Gardemeyer's associate, continued to sell a few lots in Sutter City, and in spite of Peter Gardemeyer, the town never died. Stephen Hust, in his historical sketch of Sutter County, reported:

"A lot of people have moved to Sutter and built nice homes and they love it there. They are kindly and friendly neighbors."¹⁶

13 Ibid. p. 147

14 The Marysville Appeal, July 25, 1891

15 The Marysville Appeal, September 20, 1895

16 Steven Hust, op. cit., p. 153

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NOTE: The numbers in the parenthesis indicate the number of issues used between the inclusive dates.

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