

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM
1333 Butte House Road
P. O. Box 1555
Yuba City, CA 95991

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. 4 No. 4

Yuba City, California

October 15 1964



GRACE CHURCH, WALTON AVE., SUTTER COUNTY.
1964

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FALL MEETING - OCTOBER 20 - 8 P.M.
MID-VALLEY SAVINGS & LOAN RECREATION ROOM
PLUMAS STREET, YUBA CITY

PROGRAM: Legislation for Preservation of History
of California

SPEAKERS: Walter Frame - First Vice President of
Conference of Historical Societies of
California and Legislative Chairman for
the Conference

The Preservation of Old Sacramento
Walter Halset - Vice President, Region 5
and Chairman of the Heritage Commission
State of California

Hospitality Committee: Chairman: Mr. and Mrs. Howard
Harter, Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Urbans, Mr. and Mrs. Earl
Brownlee.

OLD BOOK CLASSICS, CHILDRENS BOOKS NEEDED AT MUSEUM

Many requests have been proposed to our Museum Chairman,
Mrs. Ida Doty, that we place a collection of old books in the
museum for people to browse through and enjoy. By old books
we do not mean just old uninteresting books that are dilapidated
and unfit for handling. Books of any early publishing date
which have historical material, early day pictures and those
which contain some of the classics are always interesting. Even
the format and style of printing is of interest to browsers.

We would appreciate contributions for our bookshelves
which are being set up in the museum.

Our Society will be meeting October 20th. Would you
please bring in any old books you may wish to contribute to
this project for the museum. Our Museum Chairman will be on
hand to receive them and record the donor.

HISTORY
OF
HISTORICAL GRACE CHURCH
OF SUTTER COUNTY

By
Miss Marjorie Rose

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN
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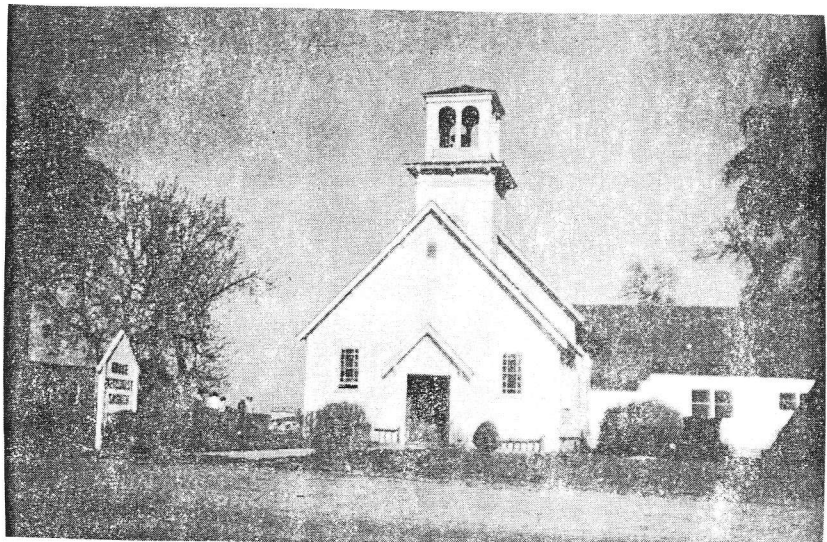


ORIGINAL GRACE CHURCH
O'BANION CORNERS
ERIC NELSON FAMILY IN FOREGROUND

Grace Church
1924



Grace Church
1954



HISTORY OF GRACE CHURCH AS GIVEN
MAY 31, 1953
By Marjorie Rose

The Building Of The Church

In the fertile valley of Sacramento, the County of Sutter, lies a community of people, long called O'Banion Corners; so called down through the years for a family named O'Banion who in the 1850's settled on the land that formed the cross in the roadway.

Some of this land later was sold to others with farsighted vision. Soon there was builded a school on the southeast corner of the crossroads, and a blacksmith set up his shop on the southwest corner just opposite, while on the northwest some years later, a hall was built by the Good Templars, a hall named Independence. This hall later burned down and was never again erected. Some of the people of the community met on Sundays in the school building. But the urge for their own place of worship burned in their hearts like a passion until in eighteen hundred and eighty-four the Farmers', the Coats' and the Kimballs' headed a list of donors to build Grace Church at the Corners. Many names appeared on this list whose descendants still are attending the services held in this building. Such names as O'Banion, McAlpine, Bailey, Proper, Carpenter and McVey, Johnson, Ford, McVey, Murray, Kirk, Elwell and Palmar, Soderlund, Olson, Way, Nelson, Hull and Wilson, Gray, Bruce, Ury and Harris, Davis, McLaughlin and Heiken, White, Schmidt, Clark, Wilson and Hutchinson. The names in this record are given in the order of the original listing.

Also there appeared on the list, business names of Yuba City and Marysville; Cornell, Harkey and Deaner, Bell, Jones, Simpson and Cohn, Dougal, Weiland and Ohlyer and Weeman, Wilcoxon and Keyser, Stabler, Duncan and Van Arsdale, until the contributions reached the then very tidy sum of two thousand one hundred and sixty-six dollars.

With this money on hand, the building was started and finished and ready for dedication in eighteen hundred and eighty-five; but the money had not quite covered expenses and according to Methodist discipline the building could not be dedicated until the last nickel was paid on the indebtedness. In order that the service could proceed, two good men made up the deficit: one hundred dollars each from L.P. Farmer and W.A. Coats; the latter lovingly called "Uncle Billie" by everyone in the country. The church first was under the jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal, South of the Yuba City circuit, but later became and is still so known as Grace Methodist Church at the Corners.

Revivals

Frequently there were held a series of revival meetings at which a number of souls were added to God's growing kingdom. Some of these fell by the wayside, having joined under undue insistence on the part of the visiting pastor, who walked through the congregation seeking out sinners repentant.

One such instance caused great commotion among those that evening assembled when he placed his hand on the shoulder of one burly blacksmith, John Sandguist. In tones sepulchral he asked, "Don't you think you've worked long enough for the devil?" And John, misunderstanding his meaning came forth with a bellowing answer: "I work for Eric Schmidt, the blacksmith, the best man in all of this country." Now many of the good brethren complained that the blacksmith disrupted their meeting, when on Sunday morning, the ring of the hammer falling on sharpening plowshares would sound out its insistent tones above the chant of the choir. Now be it enrolled on the records of God that many a farmer church-goer brought plowshares on the way to the church with an added request to the smithy that they be ready to take home as soon as the church was dismissed and he, being poor and large familied, would agree to accommodate the brethren only to be denounced from the pulpit as the devil's most perfect example. Who, we wonder, in God's sight was the blacker for the occurrence?

Now in the early days there was a spring pond on the Proper property where converts were cleansed of their sins and immersed in the cool crystal waters. Long since this spring has dried up and no longer immersion is practiced.

The First Funeral

The first funeral ever held in the church was that of Ed Proper, Sr. who passed away suddenly, and was buried in the far away West Butte cemetery. Two days were required for the mourners and friends to accomplish the journey, made worse by a raging north wind that harrassed the snail paced procession. Reverend Tallman officiated at the rites, since he was the supplying pastor.

Sunday School, The First Christmas, Graduations

At Christmas the Sunday School held a party with a play the highlight of the evening. Two present members of Grace Church were in that play that evening; Josephine Schmidt Rose Anderson and Orva Coats Trowbridge Keith. Graduations also were held in the church, sort of reciprocal gesture to the schoolhouse across the road, where services first were started. Frankie Carpenter Coats recalls that her class was so graduated. The Sunday School from its inception

was under the lead of Mr. L.P. Farmer until in nineteen hundred and two he was no longer able to function, at which time the post was taken by our much loved Alfred Nelson who continued in this position 'til his death in nineteen hundred forty-eight. Forty-six years of faithful and continuous service. Since that time Elliot Meyers has capably filled the position. A few words of praise are due Mr. Meyers and his good helpmate Edith, coming here in nineteen hundred and twenty-one, they have labored long and most faithfully in every organization of the church, giving most generously of time as well as money. Here they brought up their children and taught them to be ever steadfast to the tenants of all that is good to be found in a true Christian family. Elliot asked to be released from his duties as Sunday School Superintendent, and so will be followed in June of this year by a younger man, Raymond H. Kimmerer.

Interesting things are told of the early days of the Sunday School, among them how the Gray family walked four miles twice every Sunday to attend in the morning the Sunday School and worship service and again at night to be present at the evening service. Where are the sturdy souls today who would do this for their Saviour? Finding it difficult even to drive that distance for the gospels exorting.

The First Wedding

The first wedding ever held in the church so far as can be remembered was that of Miss Etta Kimball and the Reverend Everett M. Hill. Reverend Hill was a Methodist minister with his first charge at the city of Tracy to which the young couple went after a short honeymoon. Etta was the eldest daughter of John and Thankful Kimball, and an elaborate wedding was planned with some two hundred guests in attendance. Five ushers there were in swallow-tailed coats, one of them being Will Mangels, who had come as a very young boy to make his home with the Kimballs. Etta Schuler, now Etta Ott, and her classmates who had graduated that year from Gaither, served the guests in the Kimball home where was held the grand reception. This was the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five.

Preachers

There have not always been preachers to fill the pulpit full-time. Many were the years when some pastor from Yuba City, Sutter or elsewhere traveled the long miles through the cold blasts of winter and the searing heat of summer to preach to the thirsty souls who dwelt in the then grain farming community.

As far back as the records go, which is to eighteen hundred and sixty seven, Reverend Edwards entered the names of members upon the church record. The first of these being W. A. Coats, "Uncle Billie", who came on profession of faith. Reverend Edwards has been followed since then by the Reverends Stanton, Kelsey and Tallman, Mahon, Few,

Patterson, McHenry, Thomas, Randell, Needham and Currin, Smith, Beaver, Ramsey and Woodward, Wilson, Page and Western, Saunders, Sprinkle and Bockman, Williams, McCann and Sweet, Knudsen, Dougherty, Morton, Johnson, Vinyard and Magnuson. Down through the years, other names will be added to these faithful servants. During Reverend Dougherty's ministry the parsonage had its beginning. Somewhat because the young minister had picked for himself a helpmate. He labored early and late helping to prepare the home for his loved one bringing her there as a bride in nineteen hundred and thirty-five. Also during his pastorate a basement was dug beneath the church building, making a kitchen and social hall which has served many a useful purpose. While Reverend Vinyard was pastor, the sanctuary had a general modernization. And when it was completed, a great day of dedication followed. This was the year A.D. nineteen hundred and forty-five.

Sometime after this dedication, the church was almost destroyed in an early Sunday morning fire that started below the bell tower. Valiant efforts of pastor, neighbors and firemen succeeded in quelling the outbreak. Everyone felt it was God's hand that saved the much loved structure. This brought to the mind of many that in the very beginning a steeple raised its point to heaven, a sign for the passing peoples to think of their Heavenly Father. But the top had to be removed because of weakening timbers and became the bell tower, as it now stands before us.

Reverend Magnuson felt the need of a place for small children and mothers and so there was erected on the front, what is commonly called "The Bawl Room". At that time the entrance steps were enclosed which was a great improvement, especially on rainy days when people are wont to linger and visit.

The Grace-Barry Union

On March twenty-nine, nineteen fifty-three the Barry Church and Grace were united bringing together two communities long closely associated. The afternoon service was not unlike a wedding ceremony. Presiding Elder "Butch" Calloway pronouncing the words of union. Mr. Louis D. Baun gave the "bride" as it were in marriage while Mr. Wayne Johnson accepted the responsibilities in the name of Grace Church. Tears there were, and smiles, as there always are at any wedding. The unification brought into Grace Church eighteen names to add to its roster. Four of whom choose to become members of the Yuba City congregation. The Barry Church is being moved to a place on the Grace Church corner under the charge of a moving committee of which Frank Willard is chairman. The church and its social hall will become a part of the original building, providing a place for meetings and a group of much needed classrooms.

Pulpit Furniture

Soon after the church was erected, three pulpit chairs were donated by Mattie A. Pealer, a sister of Edward E. Proper, Sr.

These chairs are still in use, very much admired for their Gothic beauty, and were upholstered not long ago by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Willard. A pulpit also was given but by whom cannot be remembered. And it too, was refurbished by Will Mangells and his late wife Alice. An organ supplied the music at the very earliest church services, but somehow the money collected never reached the proper parties and soon Mr. Scofield appeared to cart away the new organ. Somewhat later a piano was secured from one of the pioneer families and for many years was played by the talented Luella Bailey. In recent years, two pianos have been acquired for classrooms and still two more have been provided by the union of Grace and Barry. One of these originally the property of the L.D. Baun family. A cross and two candlesticks for the altar were given by the Vinyard family in memory of their eldest son, Virgil Eugene, whose life was snuffed out as he ministered to the wounds of his fellows in battle. Carrying neither firearm or sword, he was killed on a mission of mercy. His body lies far away in France, with his buddies of World War II.

In nineteen hundred and forty-eight, "Cap" Schmidt presented two large flags which later were dedicated to the memories of all the pioneer settlers. More recently there has been installed a very fine loud speaker system, given to the church for its betterment by Frank E. and Nellie Williamson Willard.

Organizations

Early in the annals of the church, a Ladies Aid was organized. Sewing being done for the needy and for various orphanages. Near the close of the nineteenth century, the Fred Finch Home in Oakland was founded and many were the garments sewn and sent to this worthy project. Down through the years, this church has contributed toward the upkeep of this orphanage. The Ladies Aid changed its name some years ago for another - The Women's Society of Christian Service seemed to more nearly cover the many and various things that the ladies had undertaken. However, because of the long and unwieldy name it had taken, it generally is referred to at all times as just plain W.S.C.S. The Wesleyan Service Guild also became a part of this organization. Many present day grandmas and grandpas remember the Epworth League meetings held each Sunday evening in the church for all the youth of the countryside. This too, has given way to a series of group organizations known by the letters that stand for their different age groups, all with the letter M to identify them as Methodist flowers. A unique group was formed in this church in January of nineteen hundred and fifty-two; only oldsters could belong, the youngest being just under sixty. Though younger than this, Reverend Magnuson and wife were automatically members. They choose the euphonious name of the Friendly Folks Fellowship. The young adults group in its early conception had a vision of a beautiful churchyard, so trees were up-rooted and lawns planted to add an inviting touch to the picture. Shrubs were planted by various donors and a curb installed on the south line. Walks to the church were

provided, much appreciated in rainy weather. Two of the original eucalyptus trees planted by Mr. Farmer were left to adorn the corners, along with two palms nearer the church that Mr. Kimball had planted. Thus the old and the new joined forces to make a peaceful surroundings.

Generalizations

This church has a record the envy of many a church in large cities because there have gone from its doorway three men who are now in the ministry. Two of these men are Edgar and Donald A. Nelson, sons of Alfred and May Lovejoy Nelson, descendants of Eric and Elna who were among the original donors. These parents and grandparents are now at rest in the Heavenly Kingdom. Thus there is carried afar a spark of the pioneer settlers, for Edgar has a large church at Sonora and Donald Alston one in East Oakland. Also there has gone from this church another boy, Vincent Rutherford, son of Delia and the late J. Frank Rutherford. Many a time had this father supplied in our little church pulpit, giving a sermon replete with thoughts to be carried homeward. His son is now carrying on in a city in Kansas, blessed with a wife and three small sons for a family.

Many others there are who have left their mark upon Grace's front doorstep; members and friends and visitors, and a flow of presiding elders. Time and space will not permit that each one be now remembered, but their deeds are recorded by God in the great book He keeps in Heaven. We who are gathered here should go on the highways and byways proclaiming the story afar of this church at O'Banion Corners, founded in love and endowed through the years with a thread of the Saviour's own garment of sacrifice; still carrying on the traditions of the little white church at the crossroads. May it ever live through the years a simple and enduring emblem of God's gift of love and service to this once pioneer country.

Conclusion Written Five Years Later

The Barry Church addition gave much needed room for the Sunday School as well as providing a hall where banquets were served to help cover expenses. A ten dollar dinner was given in the Bogue Country Club House to help toward financing the start of the project. Elizabeth Schuler headed the dinner committee with her usual efficiency, making it one of the most talked about events ever held in the community. Many people gave of their time to the driving of nails and to painting until the unit was in a usable condition. A new kitchen was furnished adjoining Barry Hall on the north wall, this the especial pride of the Women's Society of Christian Service. A refrigerator was given to the cause by the Mas Oji family, and the Cornwell's gave the large double sink so useful at dinners. Here let it be noted that the Frank Cornwell family through the years had consistently given many and various gifts to help further the cause of Grace Methodist. They and their children had served as

officers of the church and its organizations leaving a stamp of God's kindly love on the pages of Grace Church. Each fall a harvest festival was held with Mas Oji, the chef, at the fire pit to barbecue the steaks to a turn while the ladies served other delectables. Gaily decked booths for plants, fancy work and other items gave the scene a country fair setting for the programs that followed. About this time Mr. Mengells gave an organ for the sanctuary in memory of his wife, Alice, and her sister, Estelle Larramore, daughters of two of the original founders, Mr. and Mrs. L.P. Farmer.

Tragedy struck the home of the Al Flanagans when their son, Everett was killed in a highway accident as he was returning on furlough for a visit to his family. A silver baptismal bowl in his honor was purchased with memorial money, and in his memory his parents donated a piano for use in the Sunday School. Many new hymnals were purchased as memorials for various people; all of these gifts adding up to a fuller and richer church life.

The Flood

Then came December of nineteen hundred and fifty-five driven with rains that soaked the mountains and valleys. Day after day it rained, and then on December twenty-third the heavens opened up in a downpour that momentarily halted the traffice. Rivers already swollen to danger levels surged ever higher and higher with the turbulent runoff until at noon on the twenty-third, Marysville was ordered evacuated. Over the radio came calls for men, sacks, shovels and equipment and the battle was on to save the levees if possible. Reverend Magnuson and his good wife, Marie, made cookies and pots of hot coffee which the Reverend took to the men at Star Bend who had labored for long hours in the rain and the cold against what looked like a loosing battle, until at twelve ten on the morning of December twenty-fourth the levee gave way at the Gum Tree just south of Yuba City. Marie had made two more huge pots of coffee but before Ray could get them delivered, word came of the break at the Gum Tree. His father and mother were with them and they took off in their old Pontiac roaring up George Washington Boulevard closely followed by the minister's family, their new Ford sedan doing seventy miles an hour but unable to overtake Gram and Gramps Magnuson! All reached safe ground, beating the wall of water by about twenty minutes. At the church the water rose higher and higher until it stood at a level of eight feet and two inches at the outside door of the narthex. When the water receded, mud covered a scene of destruction. Still on the stove in the parsonage were the two pots of coffee held fast by their weight although three feet of water had stood aboe them. Then came the day of decision when some forty ministers and Bishop Tippet gathered to help with the cleanup. One look at the pastor's study and they came up with the answer; "into the fire" they said, and so the bonfire was kindled. Through sanctuary, Barry Hall and Sunday School rooms, the cleanup went forward; hymnals piled with the remnants of five pianos and other furnishings.

Friends helped with the parsonage and other rehabilitation, while members of churches throughout the conference came to render assistance, one person particularly from Lodi, doing many days of faithful service in trying to pump out the basement. But the ground was so soaked with water that try as he might all that was pumped out by day, seeped back in during the night hours. As always a touch of humor came to lighten the sadness. Upon the church lawn had stood the Christmas scene in lifesize of Joseph, Mary and Babe which at night was lighted by spot lights. After the flood had passed, Mary and the Babe were found in a peach tree even as many a person was saved in the passing holocaust. However, Joseph was never accounted for and it was presumed that he "drowned".

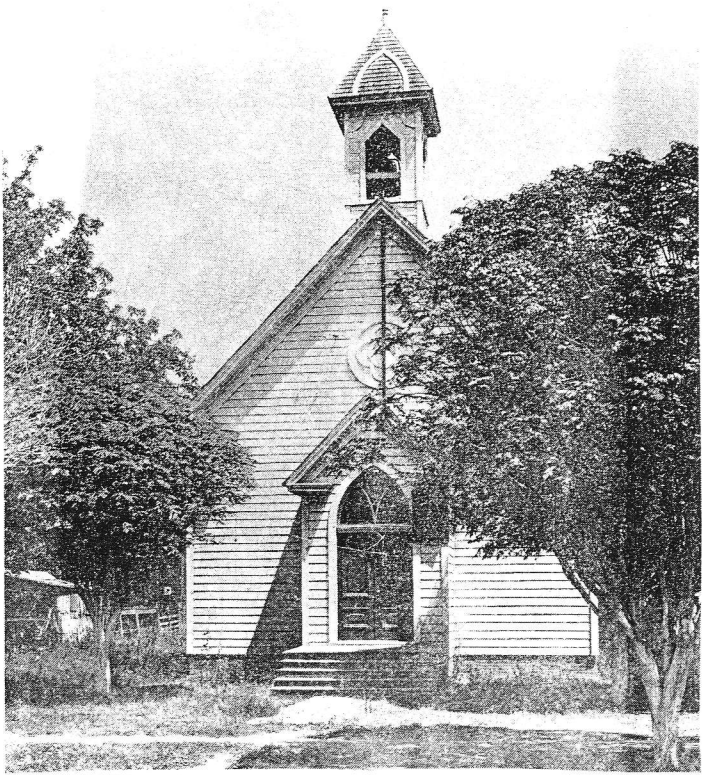
Of the church membership, only one person lost her life in the tragedy. Mrs. Sarah Pierce some weeks previous had come to this community to help her daughter, Mrs. Clovis Hensley, with the home for the aged which she managed. A faithful attendant at church, Mrs. Pierce had her letter of transfer placed in Grace Church on a Sunday shortly before the disaster. That night she and her daughter had transferred the men and the women of the home, save one, to places of safety and were returning down Onstott Freeway to get the last patient and the members of their family when as they reached the Smith Road intersection, the water overtook them. Mrs. Hensley was ahead in her car closely followed by her mother. Both cars were overturned by the torrent and Mrs. Hensley was washed from peach tree to peach tree and to safety, but her mother drowned in the car and her body found Christmas Day by workers.

A nine year old boy who had often helped to light tapers for church services was drowned when their home was washed away by the roaring flood waters. This child, named Steven Russel, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Russel. Also the husband of Norma Haynes Bartlett lost his life in a heroic effort to reach her water-stalled car which preceded him on Township Road. This was almost seven miles west of the break in the levee yet the wall of water surged forward like a wave of the ocean. Then came the time to decide about the church building and parsonage, and after much faithful work by Reverend Magnuson and his committee, it was decided to restore the parsonage and to build a church on a new site. During this time the Franklin Church had offered its building in which to hold services during the time of transition; an offer gratefully received and deeply appreciated by Grace members.

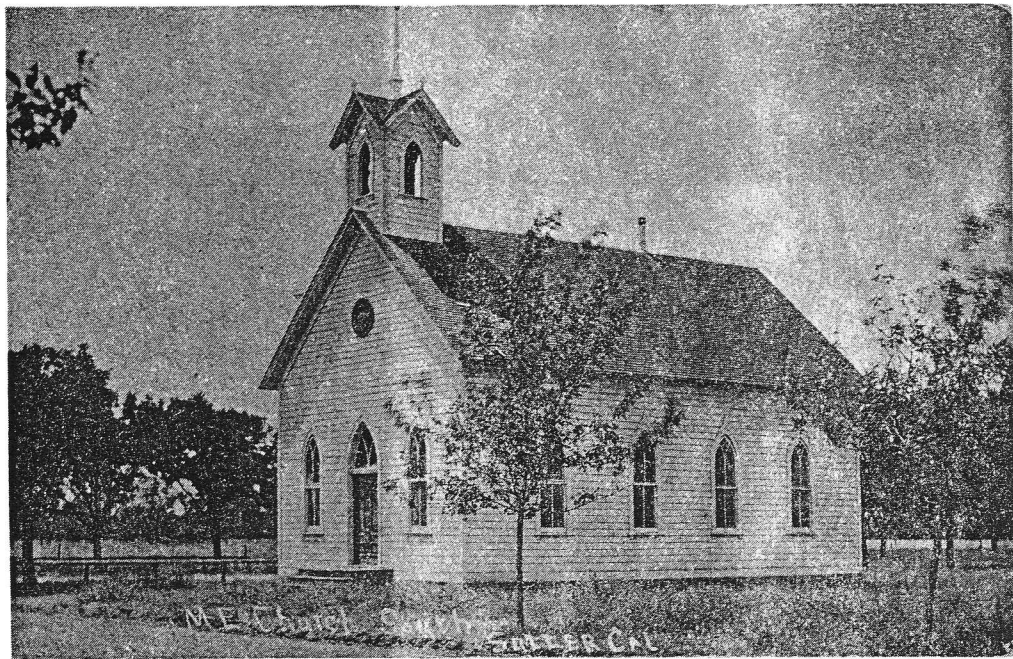
There stood the church at the corners, its basement still a shambles while the new site was purchased on Walton Avenue and the church brought to completion, this under the able management of the Reverend E. J. Huntley, who in June nineteen hundred fifty-six was appointed to the work by the conference. In June nineteen hundred fifty-eight, Reverend Stanely Read II was appointed to fill the pulpit, and it is under his care that the old church is to be disposed of. The building will be cut into sections and moved to a new church site at Princeton, there to be reassembled and once again become a place

of worship. A church, like home, needs to know sorrow and joy and fulfillment of hopes and desires before it can really impart the spirit of its purpose and mission. All of these have become a very important part of this building. And what is our loss shall become the gain of the city of Princeton. Many of those who are mentioned in this historical poem have gone on to be with their Maker to rest from their earthly labors. Others are carrying His challenge to the new church on Walton Avenue still weaving the golden threads in the Saviour's garment of sacrifice.

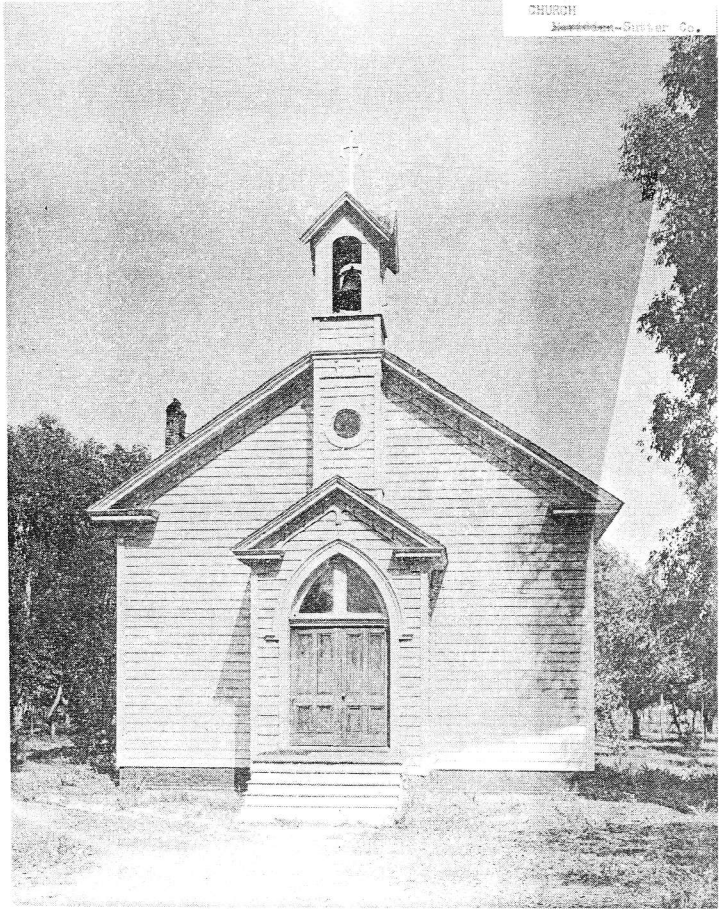
So to the old church, farewell, and hail to the new church in His name. May both be blessed with His love to bring peace to the hearts of many. Thus endeth the saga of Grace Methodist Church at O'Banion Corners. This in the year of Our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-eight.



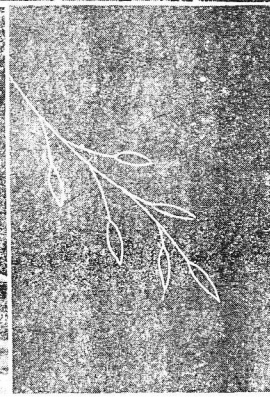
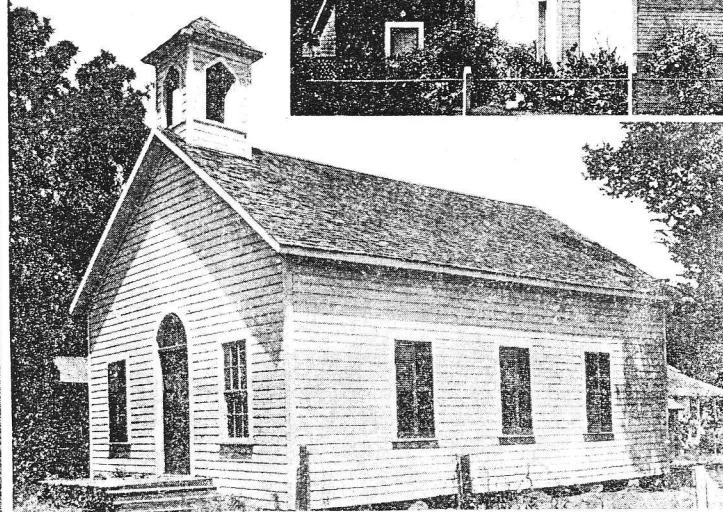
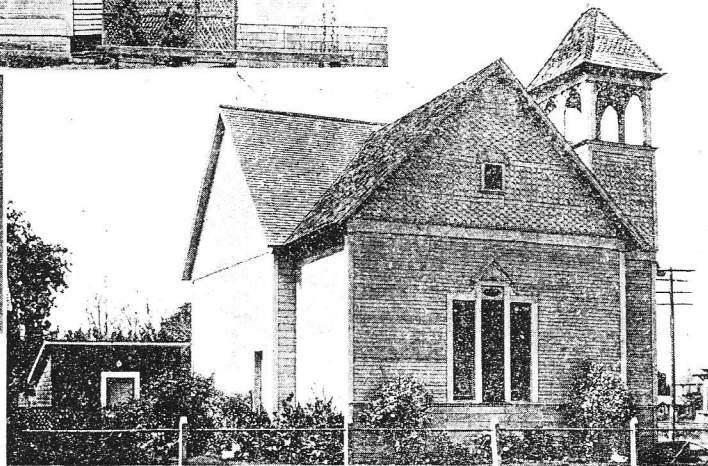
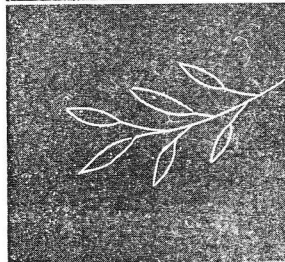
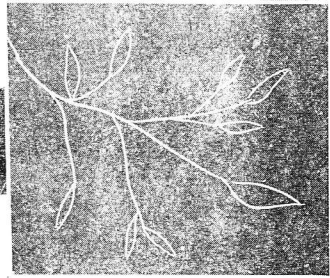
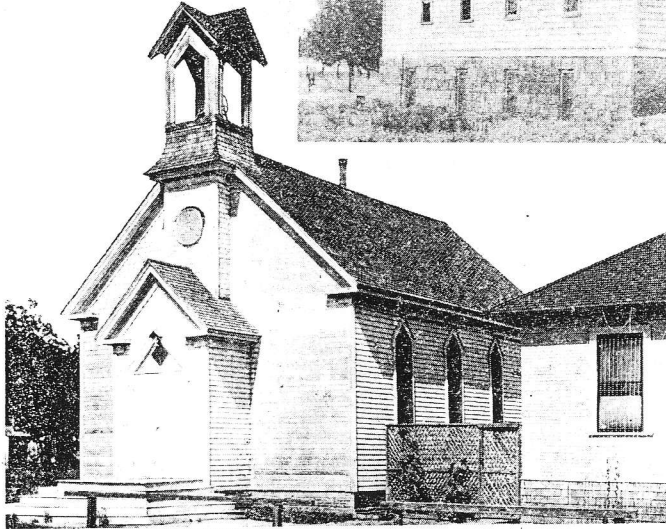
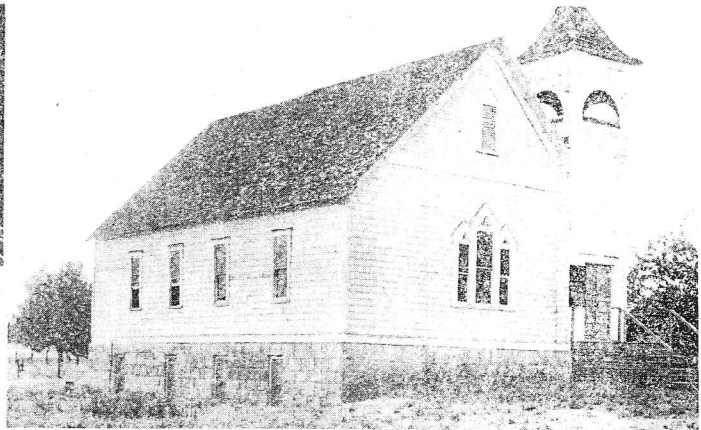
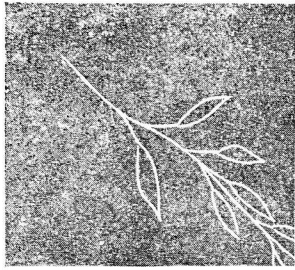
Meridian M.E. Church



CHURCH
Sutter Co.



Christain Church Sutter City Cal



WHERE YUBA CITY GOT IT'S NAME
(One Man's Version)
Reference: Sutter County Farmer
4/23/1915

Yuba City, like Yuba County, got its name from the early Spanish explorers. As early as 1854 the grape grew wild along the banks of the Yuba and Feather River. "Tierra De Las Uvas" (Land of the Grape) exclaimed the Spanish explorer, when he noted the luxuriousness of the grape vines which to this day cling to the trees along the Feather River.

From the word "Uvas" came the word Yuba, a derivation given it by the Americans who named Yuba City the county seat of Sutter county, the home of the grape.

The land now included in Yuba City came from the Mexican Land Grant given to John A. Sutter. Charles A. Keyser, John C. Fall, George M. Hammon, W. S. Sheppard, Bill Hanson, Sam Brannon and W. S. Webb were the first to receive from General Sutter deeds to Yuba City lots.

Joseph Ruth made the first map of Yuba City in the year 1856. He provided a mile square for the growth of the place, describing its limits as follows: The north line to begin at a corner of the Judge Keyser home (later John Duncan home) extending westerly one mile, thence southerly one mile parallel with the Feather River thence easterly to the river bank and north along the bank of the Feather River to the point of beginning. The bricks of the Keyser home were brought around the horn and direct to Yuba City by water.

EARLY RIVER HISTORY
Transportation

Reference: Sutter County Farmer
July 23, 1915

The little steamer "Washington" was the first to ascend the river as far as Verona, at the mouth of the Feather River. In 1850, the "Aetna", a small steamer, went up the American River as far as what was then known as Norristown. May 8, 1850, the Jack Hayes reached Redding at the headwaters of the Sacramento. The "Linde" ran from Sacramento to Yuba City in the fall of 1849. In 1850 the "Senator" and "New World", both large steamers, made alternate trips to San Francisco. In 1850 there were 28 steamers in operation on the Sacramento and Feather Rivers. The "Senator" and "New World" drew 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water. Prior to the introduction of hydraulic mining, there was no difficulty in large steamers and ocean sailing vessels navigating the Sacramento River.

CONCRETE WATERING TROUGHS ON TOWNSHIP ROAD

Article from:

Sutter County Farmer, July 23, 1915

Besides the concrete watering troughs built under the direction of Supervisor J. C. Albertson at the old Butte House site near Sutter City and two others at Long Bridge and near Meridian, a new one has recently been completed on the township line cross roads at the J. T. Bryan farm between this place and Sutter City and another one will be built at the Howlett farm on the Butte House Road north of the latter place. These two troughs are between the road districts of Supervisors J. C. Albertson and E. J. White and the funds to build same are provided mostly from advertisements placed on the same.

SUTTER COUNTY FARMER, JULY 2, 1914

A person need never be without something to do if he does all that folks are willing to let him do.

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Happiness is a perfume which one cannot shed over another without a few drops falling on one's self.