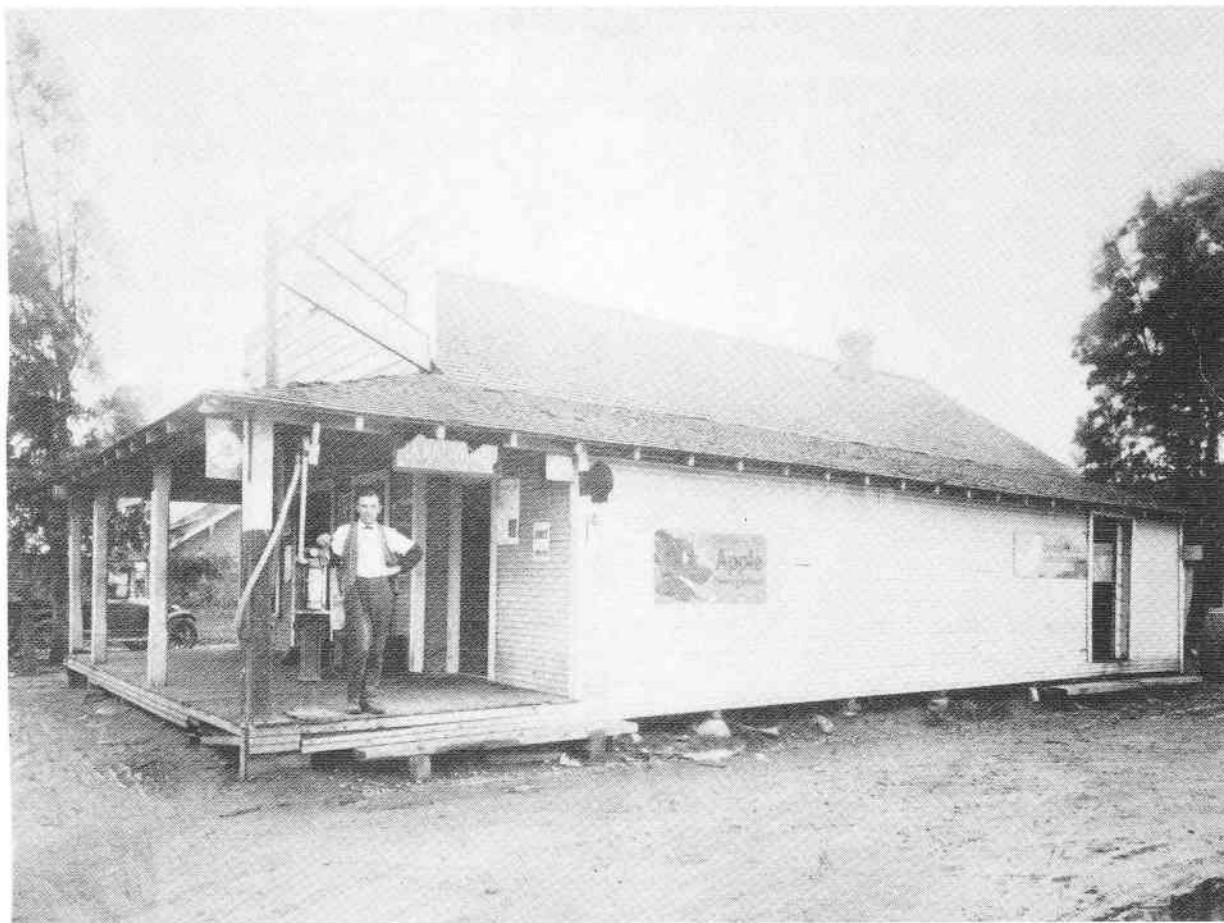


# Sutter County Historical Society News Bulletin

Vol. XXXVII No. 1

Yuba City, California

January, 1996



*(Photograph credit: Ruby Romovich)*

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# Sutter County Historical Society News Bulletin

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The **News Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Society in Yuba City, California. The annual membership dues includes receiving the **News Bulletin** and the Museum's **Muse News**. At the April 1987 Annual Dinner Meeting it was voted to change the By-laws to combine the memberships of the Society and the Museum.

The 1996 dues are payable as of January 1, 1996.

Student (under 18)/Senior Citizen/Library . . . . .	\$10.00
Individual . . . . .	\$15.00
Organizations/Clubs . . . . .	\$25.00
Family . . . . .	\$30.00
Business/Sponsor . . . . .	\$100.00
Corporate/Benefactor . . . . .	\$1,000.00

## PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Good day to you,

Another calendar year is about to close its door upon our lives. A bright and shiny new gate is swinging wide open to what will be the best year of our lives here on Mother Earth. What we did accomplish in 1995 will be history, likewise what we did not do, but feel that we should have, will also be made history. This latter perhaps would be better left unrecorded!

With these solemn thoughts in mind let each of us endeavor to build a good chapter of history this next year in our personal, family and community lives. One could even make a bountiful recording of accomplishments in more sweeping geographical areas. I tend, however, to feel that the highest and most important acts take place in the order that I above wrote them. A good recording there will be naturally followed by a tasteful history in the region, state, nation and world. It all begins at home.

I look with enthusiasm to the prospects of seeing many of the Society members and their friends at our get togethers. We will have a great time and will see and hear history being made on the spot!

Oh, incidentally, before I close this written dissertation, a thought just struck me! I believe that there is yet room in our organization for a few new members! I beg each of you to see what you can do this new year to fill our rolls!

May Peace and personal prosperity be yours forever.

Bruce Harter  
President



## HONORARY MEMBERS

Were you or was someone you know born in Sutter County ninety or more years ago? Those are the qualifications to become an Honorary Member of the Historical Society. Our current Honorary Members are Delma (Davis) Welter Reick, Grace (Hill) Onstead, Margaret (Meyer) Madden, Aileen (Scheiber) Marty and "Tillie" (Scheiber) Dettling. Delma and Margaret were written about previously; information about Grace is included in this issue. You will read about Aileen and Tillie in a future issue.

## Director's Report

At the Museum, 1996 promises to be a year where we spend a great deal of time learning more about the various communities within our larger Yuba-Sutter community. In January the Museum will host the traveling exhibit, *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain*. On loan from the High Desert Museum in Oregon, *Gum San* focuses on the contributions of the Chinese to the Gold Rush. The Bok Kai temple and its surroundings are tangible reminders of the important role that Chinese immigrants played in the development of our area. *Gum San* will be at the Museum through mid-April.

In May, the Museum will unveil a new exhibit created in cooperation with the Marysville Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Based on their brand new book, The Road Not Forgotten, the exhibit will expand on the book's main theme, looking at the Japanese immigrants of this area and how they developed into a strong and vibrant segment of the community. We are looking forward to working with members of the Japanese American community and learning more about their lives in the Yuba-Sutter area. This exhibit will close on Labor Day.

To round out the year, in mid-September we will be working with the East Indians for Community Enhancement to present an exhibition on the various contributions and aspects of life represented by the East Indians who live in the Yuba-Sutter area. We hope that this exhibit will help to clarify the various groups represented by the term "East Indian" and make them more accessible to the community. This exhibit will close the first week of December.

As you can see, we are looking forward to a year full of wonderful learning opportunities. This is a chance to expand our cultural horizons without ever leaving the boundaries of Sutter or Yuba counties. The experiences will be enriching and, we think, a great deal of fun. We hope that you can join us in this year of exploration into our own community.

Jackie Lowe  
Director



### The Road Not Forgotten

The Marysville Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League has completed a book about the Japanese in Butte, Colusa, Sutter and Yuba Counties. The Road Not Forgotten is a pictorial history compiled from photographs and oral interviews of area residents. The book will be available starting January 20, 1996 at a cost of \$22.00 (including tax). If you would like to reserve a copy of the book or have any questions, please contact Mrs. Terry Itano (673-1054).

## Letter From the Editors

*HAPPY NEW YEAR!* We hope 1995 ended on a good note and 1996 is a good one for all of you and your families.

The cover photo of the Trowbridge Store was provided by Ruby Romovich who now resides in Sacramento. In the October issue, we asked if anyone had a photograph of the store. Mrs. Romovich called to see how many responses we'd had and was surprised to learn that she was the only one. The picture she sent appeared on a calendar which had been given out by the Trowbridge General Store, possibly in 1973. Thank you, Mrs. Romovich.

We're still telling you about the 1955 flood in this issue. Tony Winship was a college boy home on break from school and Steve Perry was just a little boy. Arthur "Bill" Coats' memories were stirred by previous articles in the Bulletin and he sent his contribution from the southern part of the state where he now resides. We're still interested in collecting your "flood stories," although we'll let the matter recede for a few years.

Mr. Coats also sent us the wonderful "Fairman Street Gang" story. We don't want him to "name names," but do hope he will share more of their adventures with us. Are there any other "Fairman Street Gang" members out there who would like to share a story?

Nicolaus Scheiber was one of the speakers at the Historical Society meeting held in October at the Hermann Sons' Hall in Nicolaus. He told us his story that night, but we thought everyone should hear it and are pleased that he was willing to have it repeated.

Mrs. Grace Ettl's history of the First Lutheran Church of Marysville and Yuba City came to us in a round-about way. Bob Mackensen was talking about the history of the Chapel building and was asked to provide us with information for the Bulletin. He gave us a copy of the history which had been written by Mrs. Ettl. Excerpts are printed with Mrs. Ettl's permission.

The April Bulletin will include information concerning some Sutter County buildings. Do you know in which building Yuba City was incorporated? In April you will.

The July Bulletin will once again feature the four winning essays in the Judith Barr Fairbanks Memorial Essay Contest. In addition, Don Burtis is writing a couple of articles with "Fourth of July" themes.

October will once again take us to the Nicolaus-Rio Oso-Pleasant Grove section of the county.

We'll take this opportunity to encourage you to share your stories and memories with us. It is up to all of us to work together to preserve the history of Sutter County; we and those who have gone before us are the history of Sutter County. If you or someone you know has a story to share, call us (Linda - 673-2721 or Sharyl - 674-7741).

Linda Leone

Sharyl Simmons



## Memorial Contributions

- In Memory of **Clifford Abbott**  
M/M Robert Coats
- In Memory of **Arthur Adams**  
John & Dorothea Reische  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey
- In Memory of **Mary Alves**  
Orlin & Johanna Schuler
- In Memory of **Mike & Agnes Arnoldy**  
Wally & Dealla Crother
- In Memory of **Barney Barnickol**  
Orlin & Johanna Schuler  
M/M Ernest Speckert
- In Memory of **Chas. "Bud" Binninger**  
Bill & Betty Arnett  
Jack & Marge McLaughlin
- In Memory of **Peter Cohiles**  
Joe & Patti Benatar  
Eleanor Holmes
- In Memory of **Gerald Crumrine**  
M/M Robert Coats  
Eleanor Holmes
- In Memory of **Francie Dale**  
Joe & Patti Benatar & Staff  
Fidelity National Title Insurance
- In Memory of **Dan Dillon**  
Jane Boone
- In Memory of **Bruce C. Forsythe**  
Meriel & Leroy Davis
- In Memory of **Arleatha L. Gillett**  
Bob & Katie Bryant  
Barbara, John & Kathleen Putman  
Sutter Co. Taxpayers Assoc.
- In Memory of **Alberta Gilpatric**  
Bob & Katie Bryant  
Bob & Jean Kells  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey
- In Memory of **L. Herbert Gruening**  
Dewey Gruening
- In Memory of **Gerald Cook Harter**  
Tom Aiken  
Joe Benatar & Fidelity  
National Title Insurance Co.  
Richard & Karna Boyer  
Ray & Judy Brown  
Ken & Vivian Calhoun  
Chipman & Renfro  
Accountancy Corp.  
Jim & Lois Changaris  
Blanche Davis  
Carmen Durso  
Jim & Lois Enoch  
Enoch Packing Co. Inc.  
Miriam Etchells  
Henry & Betty Everett  
Bob Ferguson  
Kathryn Forderhase  
Ray & Betty Frandrup  
Bud & Carmen Frye  
Thomas Frye  
Gerald Gibson  
Jim Gilpatric  
Bill & Carol Hamon  
Howard & Bobbie Hardie  
M/M Larry Harris  
Bruce & Gini Harter  
Helen Heenan  
Bob & Jean Kells  
Nancy Kenfield  
Otis Kittle, DDS  
Lois Lathrop  
Eugene Lonon  
Mariani Nut Company  
The Dean Munson Family  
Annabel Onstott



Norm & Loadel Piner  
George & Dottie Post  
Barbara, John & Kathleen Putman  
Caroline Schnabel Ringler  
Myrtle Shannon  
John K. Simonds  
M/M Joe Sims  
M/M Ernest Speckert  
Richard & Elaine Tarke & Family  
Cirveda Tucker

In Memory of **Flora Hartman**  
Virginia Hartman

In Memory of **John Hirshkorn**  
Jack & Marge McLaughlin

In Memory of **Joseph Kaveney**  
Vera Devasher

In Memory of **Doris Larson**  
M/M Robert Coats

In Memory of **Ed LePine**  
Jane Boone

In Memory of **Mildred Henson Long**  
Arthur "Bill" & Jane Coats

In Memory of **Janet Lonon**  
M/M Robert Coats

In Memory of **Caroline Mathews**  
Norman & Loadel Piner

In Memory of **Dr. Carl Monnie**  
Margerey McCullough Edmonds

In Memory of **Gerald Pierce**  
M/M Robert Coats

In Memory of **Don Poole**  
M/M Robert Coats

In Memory of **Rosemary B. Redhair**  
Connie Cary  
Jim & Eleanor Clark & Family  
Arthur (Bill) & Jane Coats  
Tom & Marnee Crowhurst  
Eunice & Renzo Del Pero  
M/M Bryan Fairlee  
Bruce & Gini Harter  
Marvin & Laura Justus  
Caroline Schnabel Ringler  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey

In Memory of **Anna B. Tarke**  
Connie Cary  
Jim & Eleanor Clark & Family  
Tom & Marnee Crowhurst  
M/M Grover Davis  
Roberta McCoy, Marcella  
Hardy & Elizabeth Phillips  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey  
Harry & Bernice Wilson

In Memory of **Mrs. Genie Thomas**  
Marian Regli

In Memory of **Marjorie Von Geldern**  
Judith Barr  
Joe & Patti Benatar  
Arthur "Bill" & Jane Coats  
M/M Robert Coats  
Mrs. Hugo Del Pero  
Jim & Bobby Howard & Family  
Bob & Jean Kells  
Sparky & Marilyn Kirby  
Carolyn Watkins Murphy  
Norman & Loadel Piner  
M/M George Post  
John & Hope Sheehy

In Memory of **Warren Weis**  
Connie Cary  
Linda & Scott Leone  
Ivadel Simmons  
Sharyl Simmons

In Honor of **Caroline Ringler**  
Burwell & Loretta Ullrey

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

### JANUARY MEETING

The January Historical Society meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 16th at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Memorial Museum. Carol Withington, a local writer and historian, will be the speaker. She will tell us about some local early settlers. We hope you can join us; it will be a very interesting evening. All of our meetings are open to the general public, so bring a friend.

### BUTTES HIKES

The dates have been set for the Historical Society's guided hikes into the Buttes. The hikes are scheduled for March 16 and March 30, both Saturdays. The charge for each hike is \$15.00 per person. Reservations must be made since each hike is limited in number for safety reasons. If you want to make reservations or have questions, call Linda (673-2721) or the Museum (741-7141). The reservation deadline for the hike on the 16th is March 6th; the deadline for the March 30th hike is March 20. The proceeds from the hikes go into the Historical Society's Ag Building fund.

### BUS TRIP AROUND THE BUTTES

The Historical Society's bus trip around the Buttes will take place on Saturday, April 13. Randy Schnabel is our "tour guide;" he will be assisted by Don Burtis and Burwell Ullrey. Burwell will once again share his knowledge of West Butte; Don will discuss the history of various locations including Sutter City. We are working on improving and expanding the handout to include more information about the various locations discussed on the trip. There is a \$10.00 charge per person.

### DUES DUE

The Historical Society/Museum dues seem to be one of the steadiest things in the economy; they have remained the same for several years. The fee schedule can be found on the inside cover of the Bulletin. If you haven't yet paid your 1996 dues, please do so. Also, consider giving memberships as gifts -- it's too late for Christmas, but Valentine's Day is approaching.



## GRACE NOYES (HILL) ONSTEAD

Grace Noyes Hill was born on February 28, 1905 at Noyesburg, Sutter County, California and currently resides in Sacramento.

Her mother, Bernice Estella Noyes, was also born at Noyesburg. She was the daughter of Edward and Belle (Dean) Noyes. Grace's father was Otis William "Oat" Hill, the son of Charles and Louisa (Reische) Hill. He was born in Quincy, Illinois and came to California by train. He was a rancher in Sutter County. Two of his sisters were Verona and Eleta Hill who both taught school in Sutter County for many years.

Grace was the oldest of four children. Her sister, Dorothy, was born in October 1906 and married Richard Fender. Her brother, Charles, was born in 1910 and married Nema Kupser. The youngest child was Earl who was born in 1920.

Grace lived at Noyesburg until the family moved to Santa Cruz where she started school. When she was in about the fourth grade, her family moved back to Sutter County where they settled in the town of Sutter. She attended Brittan School and Sutter High School where she graduated with the class of 1923. Grace's favorite school subject was reading. Eileen Graves, her favorite teacher, would read to the class approximately fifteen minutes every day.

The "McLean girls" were friends of hers, especially Ila. She would attend baseball games with them and yell for Scotty.

As a child, she had chores such as helping her mother with the wash on

Saturdays. Although she didn't like cooking, she enjoyed arranging the rooms the way she wanted them to be.

Prior to her marriage, Grace enjoyed attending dances at the Moon Dance Hall; she really liked to dance. She was employed in the Marysville office of PG&E where she worked in accounting and was a secretary. While working in Marysville, she lived with the DeArmond family. She attended the 1934 Olympic Games in Los Angeles with the DeArmonds.

Grace met her husband at Lake Tahoe through mutual friends. In 1934, Grace was married in a small ceremony in Oakland, California to Dudley Wixtram Onstead. He was born in New York on October 11, 1902 and passed away in Sacramento on February 18, 1966. Dudley was in the insurance business.

Following their marriage, Grace and Dudley lived in the Los Angeles area where Dudley was being trained for management. They moved to Piedmont, California where they resided until they moved to the Sacramento area in 1960.

She was a charter member of the Native Daughters of the Golden West in Sutter, serving a term as president. She has always enjoyed church work and is active in her church. She has belonged to several bridge groups and enjoys playing. She has a marvelous sense of humor.

Grace said she had a good life, but doesn't live in the past. She's more interested in today and tomorrow.

# MY HERITAGE

by

Nicolaus Manning Scheiber

I am a fourth generation farmer's son. My name is Nicolaus Scheiber. I was named after the town in which I live. I spell my name N-i-c-o-l-a-u-s. I live on Scheiber Road in Nicolaus so my name and address are Nicolaus Scheiber, Scheiber Road, Nicolaus. I am the youngest son in a family of six and I'm fourteen years old.

My great grandfather, John Scheiber, came to this country from Switzerland in 1891 when he was nineteen years old. Mr. Scheiber settled here in Nicolaus because of the rich farming ground, plenty of water and two older brothers who arrived a few years earlier. This area was once owned by the famous German-Swiss, John Augustus Sutter of the Sutter's Fort fame. Some of the property that my family owns today was sold only once. It was known as "The Drescher Lands." My great-grandfather purchased it from Ben Drescher, son of Phillip E. Drescher. Phillip was a surveyor for John Sutter and was paid in land for all his work for John Sutter.

John Scheiber and his brothers teamed up to operate some of the largest dairies in the Sacramento Valley which included 2,600 acres of prime farming ground.

John and Anna Scheiber had three children: Otto, the oldest, Tillie Dettling, and my grandpa, the late Carl Scheiber, also known in these parts as "Carl J." The reason for referring to my grandpa as "Carl J." is because there were two Carl Scheibers, "Carl J." and

"Carl A.", which is really confusing so Carl A. was referred to as "One Eyed Carl." He only had one eye because of an accident with a gun when he was in grammar school. Kinda cruel on the nickname for Carl A., but in those days that's the way they did things.

Carl Scheiber married Lillian Wetzel from Woodland. I'm not sure, but I think they met in Hermann Sons' Hall. There used to be Swiss dances nearly every Saturday night in the Hermann Sons' Hall with the music by the Otto Scheiber Swiss Orchestra. My grandparents made a very handsome couple on the dance floor. Grandpa with his trim muscular build and Grandma, the first Miss Yolo County, also known as the Spreckels Sugar Beet Queen.

Carl Scheiber was born about a mile south of Hermann Son's Hall at the Alpine Dairy where his father made his home. He dairied there until the early fifties. The flood came along in '55 and wiped most everyone out in the Nicolaus area. Grandpa and Grandma picked themselves up and started a new way of life. They invested in horses -- race horses, the "Sport of Kings." Carl Scheiber built a six furlong race track with all the trimmings. He had a barn of several winners over the twenty-six years in the racing business. Oh, yes, he had his share of losers too! Old Nicolaus, one of Grandpa's favorite steeds, went on to become a stakes winner at the Santa Anita Race Track. Even Stone broke the track record at Vallejo at 70-to-One odds. Only a handful of people bet on her that

day in June of 1959. One of them is Kenny Engasser. Classy Dame still today holds the track record at Cal-Expo at a mile-and-a-quarter.

My grandpa died seven years ago. He was 74. Grandma still lives in the big house. It's the house on Highway 99, about one mile from Hermann Sons's Hall as you're heading towards Sacramento on the right-hand side. It's a white house with a blue roof, white fences, and horses in the pasture. Oh, yes -- it's also on the cover of the latest edition [October 1995] of the Sutter County Historical Society magazine.

Carl and Lillian Scheiber had four children. John, Max, Hedy, and Mark. John is a full-time farmer in the Nicolaus area. He farms alfalfa hay as well as organic and wild rice. Max is employed by Crystal Creamery as their fieldman and has a Christmas tree farm directly across from my grandma's house on Highway 99. It's called "Scheiber's Christmas Tree Farm." Max is also my dad. Hedy works for the Department of Justice as a Special Agent supervisor. She works in the Organized Crime Division. Hedy's been with the D.O.J. for nearly thirty years. My Uncle Mark died two years ago because of an illness. He was 38. Mark was employed by Senator Rose Ann Vuich as her Administrative Assistant at the time of his death.

My mom and dad met right here

in Nicolaus at Grandpa's house. Maudie Baer, the daughter of World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Max Baer, brought her girlfriend, Maureen, up to the Scheiber's ranch in Nicolaus to visit. The Baers are long-time friends of our family. My mom was born and raised in Sacramento as was Maudie and they grew up together.

My mother is the daughter of George and Lorraine Manning of Sacramento. George Manning, also known as "Bucko", was a butcher and was Ronald Reagan's personal meat and poultry supplier. Grandma Lorraine kept him in line...

Mom and Dad had four children. Shannon, 26, is married and lives in Yuba City and is employed at Gray Avenue School as an aid for the special kids. Lili, 25, is engaged and lives at home and is employed by Tri-Valley Growers in Sacramento as their Senior Distribution Clerk. Cameron, 24, lives in his own house on our ranch and is employed by U.P.S. in West Sacramento as one of their load supervisors. He also works for my dad, running the tree farm. I came along ten years later. I'm a freshman at East Nicolaus High School and a member of the starting line-up on the Spartan Junior Varsity football team at the "quick guard" position. My name is Nicolaus and I hope you enjoyed "My Heritage."



# NOTES ON THE FLOOD

by

Arthur W. "Bill" Coats

I have been reading the accounts of the Christmas Eve flood of 1955 as published in the Historical Society News Bulletin. They stir a lot of memories. The only thing I want to add to the very comprehensive coverage already given is an account of a few particulars, which may be called vignettes.

First, about the two judges, Hugh Moncur, the Justice of the Peace and my father, Arthur Coats, the Superior Court Judge. Both stayed in their own two-story homes on Second Street in Yuba City throughout the night of the flood and had to be rescued by boat the next day. Regarding Judge Moncur, who was hard of hearing, the story is that he failed to notice, or at least heed, the warnings being broadcast, and went to bed confident that the levees would hold. He slept throughout the commotion and was mightily surprised to look out of his second story window the next morning and see himself completely surrounded by water.

As for Judge Coats, he had often expressed the opinion that his house was on relatively high ground and would escape the ravages of any flood which might invade the town. He and my mother ignored the official advisories to evacuate after the levee broke and the water started spreading north to the town. As it turned out, he was at least partly right about the high ground. The water only came up to 3-1/2 feet in his ground floor instead of the seven feet it reached in my brother Wilson's house near the Catholic church and the ten or

more feet it reached in places along the slough. The water ruined my mother's long-time collection of picture magazines. After her death in 1984, we gathered up all the Lifes, Looks and Posts she had been saving. As might be expected, there were none dated before 1956. The remainder provide an intriguing, and perhaps valuable, account of the world of the sixties and seventies. How much more valuable would have been the ones covering the earlier decades. On the other hand, where would have been the room to store them?

On the night of the flood, I was in bed with the fever of the flu. This excepted me from the obligation I felt to respond to the call for volunteers to work on the levee. However, nothing could relieve me of the responsibility of gathering our family, pets and a few essentials together and taking part in the advised evacuation. Along with hundreds of others, we took the bumper-to-bumper trek out Colusa Highway to high ground. We stayed overnight with my cousins in Williams and then moved on to Sacramento where we divided ourselves among other relatives. It was days before we could return to even look at our house, which had sustained less damage than many. However, all of our books and appliances in the garage were ruined, along with our carpets and floor surfaces in the living quarters. The water had only risen to six inches there, but left a messy layer of silt which had to be hosed out. Fortunately, we had the help

of some gracious young men in the cleansing. During our stay in Sacramento, we put our older kids in school, where they enjoyed considerable prestige as refugees from the "terrible Yuba City flood."

There seems to be something about that flood that attracted more attention than many others that periodically plague other parts of the country. This may be because it had some of the characteristics of events like the Johnstown flood, with its unexpected assault on a sleeping community and consequent deaths. Whatever the reason, it is still not unusual for people elsewhere to mention their memory of the flood when learning you are from Yuba City. These memories may be fortified by reports of other events which have given the town a reputation for unsettling experiences, such as the tragic school bus accident, the Juan Corona murders, and the undeserved ratings by Rand McNally. On the plus side, I have met people from other states who rated the blooming orchards near Yuba City as one of the most beautiful sights they have seen. Others remember the old description of Sutter County as the peach

(but now prune) bowl of the world.

The final matter I connect with the flood is the Christmas in July Festival held six months later. Our Lions Club sponsored it as a means of showing the world the city's powers of recuperation and, incidentally, helping merchants to recover some of the losses occasioned by the cancellation of after-Christmas sales. The celebration, however, did not live up to expectations. Apparently, the memories of disaster were a little too strong to inspire much enthusiasm for events recalling it.

I have stashed away a collection of news accounts and pictures of the flood. These include coverage by Sacramento and local papers, as well as the documentary published by the State Department of Public Works. The aerial photographs of the area show Marysville as an island in an ocean of water and Yuba City completely inundated. On one of the pictures we are able to pinpoint the location of our own home. However, in later reproductions of the same picture, it has been cropped just enough to leave us out, which has forced me to pencil it in on the margin of copies we show to interested acquaintances.



## Annual and On-Going Local History Competition

The Association for Northern California Records and Research (AANCR) sponsors an annual local history contest. Entries must pertain to some aspect of Northeastern California history (Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity and Yuba counties). The competition is open to all. This is a standing contest and entries are received on a continuous basis. All entries received before June 30 of any year will be judged during July and August of that year. For more information, write to: Association of Northern California Records and Research (AANCR), P. O. Box 3024, Chico, CA 95927.



# MEMORIES

by  
John O. Winship

I was born in Sacramento on December 21, 1929. My parents were Desmond A. and Leila (Houston) Winship. My mother was born in Sacramento, the daughter of John and Rosa (Sitez) Houston. My father was born in the Meridian/Winship District of Sutter County, the son of Oliver and Eliza (Ross) Winship. I was named after my two grandfathers.

At the time of my birth, my father was the District Attorney of Sutter County. We first lived on the southeast corner of Clark and Rosalind Avenue in Yuba City. We moved from there to Colusa Highway where we lived about two years and then to Orange Street where we lived about six months. In May of 1935, the family moved to 370 Second Street. My childhood memories are generally on Second Street with the Von Gelderns, the Childs, the Barrs, the Newkoms, the Bremers, the Waltons and Beverly Kykendall. I attended Yuba City Grammar School, Yuba City High School and Yuba College.

I enjoyed all of my teachers at Yuba City High School and most of my teachers at Yuba City Grammar School. My uncle, Chester D. Winship, was the principal of the grammar school when I was there. He kept an eye on me and I suffered because of it. I ran around with Hal Wisner, Gerald Frye, Gerald Harter, Raymond Wright, Francis Koozin and Dorman Ledford. We all lived in Yuba City except Gerald Frye. He lived out on the highway and in the 7th or 8th grade they split us up and he had to go to Terra Buena to school, but we all got

back together in high school. New people like Frank Gilpatric and Norwood Gibson were added in high school.

I was active in Boy Scouts and spent the summers at Scout camp until Harter's Cannery opened. At the age of 13, I went to work at Harter's and worked there every summer until I was about 21. I had various jobs and ended up as a mechanic on what we called the "pitting machines."

I had been in the Army and was attending the University of California at Berkeley at the time of the 1955 flood. I came home and when the water began to get bad, I went down to the emergency center on Bridge Street. I was sent to patrol the levee between the 5th and 10th Street Bridges. There were five other men working with me. I was there when the 5th Street Bridge went out. It was dark and we were on the west side; we didn't really see it. There were all kinds of noises that night. Some time after 11 o'clock that night, we were beginning to put our first row of sacks on the top of the levee when the water started to rush and go down and we knew it had broken south of Yuba City somewhere. I walked down from the levee, down Second Street to my parents' home. The water was beginning to come into the back yard and in front of the Courthouse and in the gutters of Second Street. I stayed at my parents' until the third day when we could get out. I helped people pick up things and clean up. My big memory of that night was going out into the backyard and hearing the houses crash together over in



the Gilsizer-Ledford Tract area and hearing the people yell for help and being aware of the helicopters going over all the next morning.

The water got onto the back porch and into the basement of our house. The water just came in and went out so it left the basement full and we were able to syphon the water out the next day. The back yard slopes down; we used two garden hoses and started a syphon and were able to get the water out of the basement.

The water at my office was one inch below the floor; it never got into the office. Plumas Street is known as "up on the Hill." Second Street is along the river. Before there were levees, when the river would spread out it would dump soil in the area of my parents' home and the Barr home. The Von Geldern home is an old Indian mound and is high ground. The little park at the corner of Second and Bridge Streets in Yuba City is the highest spot of ground in Sutter County, except for the Buttes. I think it was proven in the flood when Plumas Street was flooded to a depth of two feet and the lower end of Second Street did not get flooded. The water didn't even come close to those houses on the east side of Second Street next to the levee.

We celebrated Christmas at my parents' home. We had two livingrooms, a north livingroom and a south livingroom. The ceilings were 14 feet high and we'd usually have a 12-foot high

Christmas tree, completely loaded with ornaments and lights. We lost them in the flood, by the way. They were all in the basement and the water washed all the color off the ornaments. They were ornaments which my mother had collected over a lifetime and which had been given to her by people from all over. Mrs. Cline next door gave my mother ornaments; my mother had ornaments from her parents and she collected all different kinds of Czechoslovakian-made ornaments that were very beautiful. The flood did not break them, but it washed the color off. I can remember one set of our lights which we did salvage. It was a set of Mickey Mouse lights. They were just regular lights with little shades of Mickey Mouse on them; we always had those up on the tree. My mother, in the early years, used to decorate the outside of the house with lights and we always had garlands and wreaths on the front door.

My first birthday in the house on Second Street, Santa came to visit everybody. Mother put a chocolate Santa in front of everybody's plate and my father turned up the stove. By the time we got to eat our meal, all the Santas had melted. I never had a problem with my birthday being so close to Christmas. Of course, over the years I've gotten things marked "Happy Birthday -- Do Not Open Until Christmas." Other than that, there was no real problem.



*Happy New Year!!*

# The Fairman Street Gang

by  
Arthur W. "Bill" Coats

The Fairman Street Gang was a phenomenon the likes of which is not apt to be duplicated in this day and age. The "gang" consisted of the younger generation of a small section of a small town. Although the group was usually referred to as a "gang," that term did not then carry the same opprobrious connotations as it does today. The "gang" was just a bunch of youngsters between the ages of four and sixteen who lived in close proximity to one another and engaged in common activities. Drawing on memory of my own participation, I would say that it flourished primarily during the years 1918-1930.

Fairman is a one-block long street in the California town of Yuba City, which, according to census records had, in 1920, a population of around 2,000, a figure that has since grown by ten-fold. To be precise, the street, while being an unbroken block on the south side, is intersected on the north by two other streets, Yolo and Sutter. As first laid out, Yuba City had only three east-west streets, A, B and C. Fairman should have been A but acquired its present name from one of its early residents. To the confusion of visitors, a detached segment to the west is still labeled A and the east extension beyond Second Street is called Keyser.

The 23 progeny of six families living on this one block provided the core membership of the gang. These are the ones who lived there continuously throughout the entire period of the

gang's existence. According to my best recollection, their names were:

1. Robert and Henry Heiken, sons of Fred and Ora. Fred was County Treasurer during much of this period. Henry was killed in action during World War II. Robert became a real estate broker.

2. Albert, Mary, Clinton, Jack and Gordon Powell, children of Charles and Myrtle. Mr. Powell operated a machine shop. Clinton, who was the same age as Henry Heiken, was likewise a victim of the war. Albert served for many years on local school boards.

3. Arthur William Jr. (myself, generally called Bill), Jane, Wilson, Robert, Wallace, and Lauren Coats, children of Arthur and Assumption. Arthur, Sr. was District Attorney and later Superior Court Judge of Sutter County. Lauren was killed in a highway accident at the age of 15. The four other sons served in the armed forces during World War II, but came through safely. Their later careers are too varied to recount here. Jane became a social worker in Siskiyou County.

4. Walter Redhead, son of a retired couple who were older than most parents on the block. Walter had two adult sisters, Doris and Emily, whom I include on this list only because they were second generation. Walter went to work in a print shop and eventually took it over.

5. Harriet, Bill and Don Thomas, children of Harry and Irene. Harry worked for PG&E and Irene was a leader

in Red Cross work. Bill had some attendance problems in school, but later served a lengthy and distinguished term as the county probation officer.

6. June, Bert Jr., Eddie and Harry Price, whose parents operated an ice cream parlor on Second Street. Their English cousins, Hilda and Nancy, lived briefly with the Fairman Street family when first coming to Yuba City and remained well-known to gang members. Eddie later established a beer tavern across the street from the old home.

To complete the record, one must add the names of some of the young people who lived in the vicinity and may be said to have supplemented the gang's membership from time to time through participation in activities of common interest. Some of their names are:

1. From Fairman Street: Ed Wilcoxon, Bob Keely, Anita Lang, Bob Thrun, and the Jacobys.

2. From Yolo Street: Harold and Helen Peters; Beverly, Barbara and Roberta Kirk; Al, Rita, Lucille and Donald Huckins; and Wayne and Stelman Walkup.

3. From the side of B Street backing on Fairman Street: Tom, Lawrence, Bob and Imelda Webdell and Durward King. (The Arthur Coats family, including myself and siblings, lived there several years before moving to Fairman Street.)

4. From Bridge Street: Kathryn Carpenter and Albert Waters.

A little more remote, but distinctly part of the riverside section of town (east of the slough), were the residences on B, C or Second Streets of several young people who had occasional contacts with the gang members or their activities, namely Frank Bremer; Franklin

Morehead; Edward, Marian, Richard and Frances Von Geldern; Burwell and Walter Ullrey; Clare, Evelyn and Roy Sweeney; and William McMullen.

It would unduly expand the scope of this article to try to describe all of the children and teenagers from other parts of town and the surrounding farmlands who, at one time or another, participated in the social or scholastic activities that centered around the intersection of Fairman and Yolo Streets. Nor is it practical to describe in detail the nature of these activities. It is enough to say that they were not confined solely to the paved intersection.

There were ample backyards with tall trees and interesting sheds and barns, all of which regularly served as playgrounds. Gang members often embarked on excursions into neighboring areas, such as the banks of Gilsizer Slough, which lay only a few yards beyond the west end of Fairman Street, or to the river-bottom lands where tall pecan trees grew and shed nuts that were free to anyone with time and energy enough to pick them up. And there was always the Feather River, just beyond the levee, which rose at the east end of the street.

The river itself was, of course, off limits to the children of tender age, unless in the company of adults. Even the older ones operated under constant warnings to beware the treacherous sink holes and vagrant currents which were (and continue to be) the cause of many drownings. Nevertheless, adventurous gang members, confident of their swimming ability, found opportunity to enjoy many of the sports, such as bathing, boating, and fishing, associated with river life. For a good picture of such

sports, refer to Mark Twain's descriptions of the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn in relation to the Mississippi. This comparison is not entirely absurd when one considers that the movie company filming Huck Finn actually relied upon sections of the Feather River for environmental background.

When former and, of course, aging gang members gather for family or school reunions, they spend a good deal of time exchanging memories of events, episodes, and even escapades, which marked the course of their childhood. I don't say that a book recounting all of these ventures might not be interesting, but I do not intend to write it here. What I will do is tell and conclude this article with the story of one event that left a rather strong impression on my mind.

This is about the climbing of the water tower on the grounds of the C.P.C. (later known as Del Monte) cannery. This tower, about 70 feet in height, consisted of a large cylindrical tank supported by long steel legs. A narrow ladder running to the top was attached for use in repair and maintenance.

One summer evening a group of us in an age bracket of around twelve years decided it would be fun to climb to the top of this tower. I am not giving any names, other than my own, because some of those involved may not want to be publicly associated with such a venture, which was probably illegal and certainly foolhardy. However, I would be glad to hear from any readers who are willing to acknowledge their participation. (Don't worry! The statute of limitations has long run against any possible charge of trespass.)

After traversing the half-dozen blocks between Fairman Street and the cannery, we arrived at the foot of the tower and ladder. About four of us started up, with me in the lead. All went smoothly for 4/5 of the way to the top. I then encountered a somewhat distressing feature. Up to this point the climb had been vertical, or almost so, but now the ladder was leaning sharply outward in order to pass around the flange which surrounded the top of the tank.

I hesitated a few moments in the face of this new situation, which meant that the climber would have to hang on for dear life until he could pass over the flange and proceed to the apex. Deciding to press on, I continued upward, out and over the flange, and thence up the modest slope to the very top. After enjoying, or at least experiencing, the view of the town's lights below for a minute or two, I started back down. I quickly realized that the process of descending was fraught with even greater uncertainties than the ascent.

On finally reaching the merely vertical portion of the ladder, I noted the rest of our climbing group still in the same positions in which I had left them. None of them had shown any interest in following my steps up the out-leaning portion of the ladder. Nor could any now do so without passing around me, which the narrowness of the ladder made impossible. Slowly and carefully we all backed down and silently retraced our steps to our Fairman Street origin. Thus, into the unwritten (until now) annals of the Fairman Street Gang went the story of the after-dark climb of the C.P.C. water tower.



# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MARYSVILLE AND YUBA CITY

by  
Grace Lang Ettl

[The following is excerpted from the history of the Church given by Mrs. Ettl at the 40th Anniversary celebration of the Congregation on May 16, 1967.]

Our congregation's beginnings were way back as far as 1917, when records show baptisms were performed by Rev. Wm. Husemann for people from Cranmore, Grimes and Arbuckle. Rev. Husemann was sent by the Mission Board of the Missouri Synod. A group of German-speaking Lutherans were worshiping in Marysville; Norwegian Lutherans were being served by a minister from Sacramento who traveled the valley holding services in the E. H. Olson and Walter Forde homes. In 1926 we were meeting on the third floor of the Forrester's Hall at 321 E Street, Marysville. It was here at Forrester's Hall that history was made for our church. On May 15, 1927, the First Lutheran Church of Marysville was officially organized. In 1928, the church was accepted into the Missouri Synod. The first confirmation class was confirmed in 1929 by Rev. Huseman.

Rev. Huseman, who was quite elderly, resigned in May of 1929. A call was sent to the College at St. Louis and Rev. Victor Halboth was sent to us in June; he was installed in September. The Sunday School was organized that year and the Ladies' Aid was also started; Mrs. Blume was the first president. I remember the wonderful Mission Festivals we had with all the wonderful food! We kids had a grand time, country kids spending a whole day in town

chasing up and down the sidewalks on foot! A Young People's Society was organized with Walter Forde as Advisor. I was really too young to go, but I got to go everywhere Dorothy went -- wonder why the older ones put up with me? It was started at the parsonage in Marysville. The group started off right, and continued to be active until I guess we all outgrew it.

In 1930, a resolution was passed that English services would be held every Sunday and on the fourth Sunday a short German service would follow the English services. A Building Fund Committee consisting of Fred Stohlman, Fred Heitman and Edward Lang was appointed or elected. Rev. August Hansen, Director of Missions for the California-Nevada District stressed the necessity of a good location for the future Church home.

In July of 1931, Pastor Halboth visited Milwaukee and brought back the Communion Service we are now using. Mrs. Wm. Alpers returned from a visit to Germany, bringing the picture of the Good Shepherd which is now hanging on the stage.

The 1932 to 1935 years were tremendous ones. Remember the depression was in full swing. Most of our people were farmers or dairymen. I remember poor crops and nothing for them. Here was this church ready to

embark on a building program at the worst possible time financially. A location committee was created. Ballots were taken to all members to vote on which site they wished to have the Church built on, the Marysville site on 11th Street for \$4000 or the Yuba City site on Cooper Avenue for \$1475. Thirty-four voted for Yuba City and eighteen for Marysville. The Yuba City site was ratified by voting members in a rising vote. Trustees E. N. Olson, E. H. Erickson and Wm. Blume were authorized to bid for the purchase; Rev. Halboth was authorized to negotiate with the Church Extension Board for a loan.

Articles of Incorporation were issued July 19, 1932. The name was changed to First Lutheran Church of Marysville and Yuba City. On August 5, 1932, lots were purchased from the George Walton Estate (\$750) and from Ella V. Shillig (\$725). A sign was erected which read "Future Home of First Lutheran Church." The Mission Board urged us to build the parsonage first and guaranteed us \$36.00 monthly. A resolution was passed, but on October 20 the decision was reversed and it was decided that the Church must be built instead.

The Building Committee toured Vallejo, Modesto, Tracy and other places, looking over church plants to obtain a consolidation of ideas. The sentiment of the public (I assume the local public) was their being impressed with our location. We had an attractive site and we would be a fine addition to the city. They looked upon us as a substantial church organization and a valuable addition to the community. A \$4000 loan was applied for from the Extension Fund. Three of the men went out on a drive to

raise funds; Mr. Edward Lang remembers receiving \$2000 in one day. They were anxious to secure the lots before someone else did. The lots were purchased on August 5 and on January 11, 1933 the Decker-Jewett Bank, where the church kept its funds, failed. Having spent our cash on the lots we lost only \$60.07. An account was then opened with the Bank of America on Plumias Street. The minutes record "treasury in arrears. Mission Board sorely pressed for funds." On May 30th, 1933 the United Crises Endeavor Plan called for extra 10 cents weekly and the Pastor called for moral support. The total church collections for the year, I assume besides the \$2000, was \$577.71. City taxes were \$10.84; County taxes were \$9.96. Mrs. Blume remembers we paid the pastor \$90 to \$100 for his services (I hope per month).

It must have been shortly after the lots were purchased and the bank failure that the men talked of the Old West Butte Church; it had not been in use for years. They wondered if they could secure the building, tear it down and use the pews, bell and lumber for our Church. They contacted members of the old pioneer families, the Carrols, the Tarkes, the Wilburs and received permission. A purchase price of \$1.00 was given "to make it legal." The framework of our present church is the lumber from this pioneer church. The pews were taken to Sutter Union High School where the wood working classes under Fred Havens repaired them. The bell still has the original wheel with which it came. It was repaired by Mr. Tange before it was hung in our belfry.

The West Butte Union Church was built in 1884. It was financed by pioneer



settlers of West Butte and used by all dominations. Everyone worshiped together and everyone went. The main contributors were Bill Wilbur, Frederick Tarke and Frederick Hoke. The Hoke estate is where James Tarke now lives. Samuel Reische helped to build the Church. C. E. Reische and Eleta and Verona Hill of West Butte attended Sunday School there. Bill Wilbur was Sunday School Superintendent. Mr. Hoke gave the bell which now hangs at First Lutheran. Ranious Todd remembers Charlie Stohlman telling him that the bell came around the Horn. He, Charlie Stohlman, rang the bell when it was first dedicated in 1884 and he rang it here in 1935 when our Church was dedicated. Ranious says that Mr. Tange helped him to ring the bell; the tears were streaming down Mr. Stohlman's face. The West Butte Church was dedicated free of debt. Rev. R. E. Wink held the dedication service in the morning, a Lutheran minister from Sacramento speaking in German held services in the afternoon. Mrs. Louis (Nancy) Tarke who died in 1932 wrote: "It has been without any services for years, but the few remaining residents of West Butte prefer to let it stand where it is as a memorial to the pioneers who built it." Cecil Straub's mother and grandmother were Sunday School teachers. Miss Hill of West Butte said "I always miss the Church -- it really was a church, it had the atmosphere of a Cathedral. The old shutters and the gas lights which you could pull down made the interior so soft." Later on one minister served three parishes, Meridian, West Butte and Sutter.

Back to First Lutheran 1934. The loss of funds in the failure of the Decker-

Jewett Bank was still felt. The Young People's Society donated \$15.00 to pay taxes on the lots. Ladies Aid paid back taxes. The balance on hand March 31 was \$34.97.

Ground-breaking services were held on July 17, 1935. The builder was Walter Tange of Los Angeles. The lumber from the West Butte Church which had been piled at the Stohlman Ranch was moved to the Yuba City site by August Stohlman, son of Fred. When they were ready to start the building there was the lumber. John Munsterman tells how he, Henry and Herman Munsterman, using Billie Nuebel's Fresno Scraper, dug the basement. Three services were held at the dedication. The congregation borrowed \$1500 from Synod; 10 notes of \$150, one to mature every year at 1% interest per annum. The congregation borrowed \$500.00 on the lot being reserved for the parsonage. Mr Tange was paid \$7.00 per day; he boarded with the pastor, the Congregation paying \$1.00 per day for board. The Ladies' Aid met in the Parish Hall for the first time with a devotional service in the Chapel. They started their many donations to the Building Fund with \$325. They sent canned and dried fruit to Concordia College in Oakland; a donation which has continued almost every year since. The first chicken pie supper was held in 1935. The Aid started to supply the kitchen; from here on, their help has been outstanding in every endeavor of the congregation. The men gave in money and labor what the families could; the women went to work to meet the balance. Money was scarce; hours of donated work, food sales, apron sales, basket socials, making quilts, selling of fancy work raised money. There wasn't a

man in the congregation who didn't do his share with a shovel, hammer or saw, even to the Pastor, who I can still see sitting on the roof shingling.

In 1936, the Building Committee was dissolved with a vote of thanks from the congregation. The value of the church was set by the insurance appraiser at \$9952.00. The Ladies' Aid took over cleaning the Church. This really tickled me in reading the minutes. When the Ladies tired of doing the cleaning they would hire someone. The next meeting's minutes read "Janitor quit." The following meeting, the Ladies would be cleaning the church followed by "hire janitor." We are cleaning it again, perhaps this is the way it is meant to be!

In 1937, the Ladies set the 4th Wednesday of each month as sewing day. The first Vacation Bible School started with an enrollment of 74.

In 1938, it was decided to build the parsonage. The Ladies collected clothing for the needy in Canada and from here on clothing has been collected and sent to all parts of the world, Mexico, Canada, Japan, Germany.

On March 30, 1939, the printing and sale of Loan Certificates of \$10.00 to bear no interest, to be repaid in five years was authorized. Money was to be used to purchase additional real property build the parsonage. On April 5, 1939, the parsonage lot was purchased from L. Van Dueson for \$850. The Lutheran Centennial celebration was held in Yuba City on May 7th at the Elementary School on Bridge Street. Ladies served coffee and the Young People decorated for the event.

The parsonage was dedicated January 29, 1940. Services were held at 11 a.m. with open house all day. Total

cost of building, excluding the furnace, was \$5200. This will get you -- "the Men 'acknowledge receipt of resolution from Senior Young People concerning noise before and during Church Service.' A collection was taken for Missionaries stranded because of the War situation. A weekly bulletin was established to inform the congregation of meetings and activities. It was agreed that in case of a call to service by the Government, a leave of absence for one year would be given to Rev. Halboth; after such time, he was to return to this congregation. On March 1, 1940, the Langs and Heitmans were involved in the Meridian flood due to a break in the By-pass levee. The Lang's home was demolished; the Heitmans had all the mud!

Rev. Halboth was called to Armed Service in 1941 and the Mission Board to supplied a pastor during his leave of absence. There was no dinner this year, each member donated \$2.00 instead.

War risk insurance was placed on buildings. The Ladies' Aid purchased flags and Mrs. Boor donated them to the congregation.

In 1943, the drive met the payment of \$609.00. Red Cross sewing started and continued until there was no need. A day room at Camp Beale was furnished by the Ladies's Aid and gifts were sent to the boys in Service. Ladies Aid applies for membership in LWML August 12, 1943.

1944 saw the organization of the Friday Nighters Couples Club. In 1945, the possibility of purchasing the lots in back of the church was discussed.

In 1946, the congregation declared self supporting. The organ fund was started. Mrs. Boer and Myrtle Lang

Todd received Red Cross awards for 100 hours of service and Ladies's Aid sent food packages to Europe.

In 1949, the Van Duesen property was bought and the Educational Building Committee was formed.

In 1950 the Church turkey dinners were started with Grace Franklin in charge.

The Educational Building was dedicated on Sept. 16, 1951. The total cost was approximately \$23,825. \$700.00 was given by Ladies's Aid to the congregation to pay for cabinets and chairs; they continued to supply the new kitchen with a stove, etc. Membership in the Ladies' Aid reached 56.

The organ was purchased in 1952. The same year, the 25th anniversary of the Congregation was celebrated. There were 497 baptized members; the property was valued at \$80,000.

In 1954, the church school started with 31 pupils. Mernard J. Callios and Nadine Wihlem were the teachers. The Ladies Evening Guild organized Jan 2, 1954:

The teacherage was built in 1955, mostly with donated labor, and the Altar Guild was established.

Tragedy struck Dec. 24, 1955 with the Christmas Flood. The Church was decorated for holiday services, but no services were held. The basement of the parsonage was flooded up to within 4" of the first floor. The teacherage, occupied for one week, had 3" of water. The basement of the Educational Building was a mess with water to the top of the new stove. Approximately fifty families of our congregation were affected. No one was allowed into the flooded area. I

remember waiting with Dad for hours to get permits to go to the church to see what damage was done. Finally, I believe Ole and Tom Pederson went in the back way with pumps to get the water out as soon as possible. We no more than got the building cleaned up when the clothing started to arrive by the truck load, semi-trucks too. Clothing that had been stored in Modesto earmarked for Europe was sent to Yuba City. Congregations sent clothing and money from all over. A fund was set up in a local bank which later was allocated to those in the flooded area. You had to see it to really believe it. The clothing just kept coming, the whole basement and kitchen was full of it. The women worked day, after day, after day, sorting, giving it away. We held back some of the nicer things for our members who needed help and would use it. We opened it to the public. In fact, I think we almost advertised for people needing clothing to come. Some came who didn't need it. We heard rumors to the effect that clothing given in Yuba City was being sold in Live Oak. One minister from Olivehurst must have brought his whole congregation; he was there every day with different people. What was left, we crated and shipped back for World Relief. After the cement dried, paint was purchased and everything was repainted and everything put back in order. We finally had to buy a new refrigerator due to mud in the mechanism.

A Memorial Fund was established in 1958 and in 1967 the Women of the Church were reorganized into the First Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

## Remembering the Flood of 1955

by  
Ivadel Simmons

One of the reasons we chose the house on South Lawrence (Yuba City) in 1954 was that it was located on a site that my uncle, Vern Summy, said would never get flooded. We had looked at other places, but he said this was the safest. We moved in June 1954, before Highway 99 was build up behind us. I still believe Uncle Vern and that it was the change in land levels that caused us to get any water in the house in 1955.

My husband, Jesse Simmons, worked for the telephone company. When Marysville was evacuated, a lot of our friends who worked for the company brought their belongings, and themselves, to store at our house. Our garage was full of furniture, TVs, and clothes and our house was full of telephone people staying over. My father, Steve Burtis, took my daughter Linda (Leone) to Meridian for safe keeping. All day long, even though I didn't expect water at my house, I put a few things in the car, including the Christmas presents and some of my husband's fishing and hunting things. It was wall to wall people in the house; telephone workers and their wives with sleeping bags spread out on every flat surface. I couldn't sleep; I had to listen to the radio to hear what was happening. When the 5th Street Bridge went out, I still didn't think the water was going to get here.

All of the neighbors -- the Hohmanns, Yants and Jahnes - were waiting for me to give the word about leaving. I'd lived around here all my life and they were going to follow my lead. I

stayed and stayed. Even after the levee broke the neighbors were still waiting for my say so to leave. Finally my next door neighbor, Walt Hohmann, came over and said, "The water's on Barrett (the next street over), should we leave?" When I said we should, everyone piled out. We planned to go to my dad's house in Meridian. Since my car was the closest to the house, I was the last to go.

I was alone in the car and headed out Franklin. I was the only car on Franklin and wondered why no one else was traveling on that road. I never dreamed that the water was coming back that way. I finally turned on Township and headed for Highway 20. The road was full. I saw nothing but head lamps heading out of town, but they let me right in onto Highway 20 and I headed west with the rest. Sometimes I just can't believe how lucky I was not to get caught by the water on Franklin.

We got to Meridian and stayed at my dad's house. The house was full of people - family, friends and coworkers. Telephone trucks were lined up outside. I was exhausted, but I couldn't go to bed. I wondered what had happened to other friends and if they got out of town all right.

There were a lot of people to feed and my dad fed them all. People went to the stores in Meridian and bought food to contribute to the kitchen. Of course, we couldn't wait to get back to town and find out what happened and see for ourselves what the town looked like - what our homes looked like. The people from Marysville who had been staying



with us in Yuba City got to go home as soon as they could get over the bridge. People stayed in Meridian for different lengths of time, depending on their circumstances.

We got about 16" of water inside the house and the garage was two steps lower than that. Nearly everything that had been placed in our garage for safe keeping was lost. There was mud and debris inside the house. Because of snakes and other nasty surprises, I would take a stick and poke at something to see if it moved before I reached for it. There was a very suspicious looking something under the kitchen table. I couldn't figure it out and prodded it for some time before I realized it was a pair of long johns, coated with mud, that had landed in the kitchen.

My take on the situation was different than most. People thought I was crazy, but I thought things looked pretty good in my house. It's because I

had been through the flood in 1940 in Meridian. I remember my Uncle Vern and Aunt Wilma Summy's home after that flood. The house had been flooded twice and the mud was so high we had to shove it out of the house through the windows. I was just happy that my house didn't have nearly the damage that their house did.

I know that at one point we stayed in Marysville with Bud and Norma McKee while some work was being done on our house. It seems to me that we moved in and then moved out again when they replaced the floors. I know that we were still working on the house when my daughter, Sharyl, was born in April and I would leave her at the Hohmann's and go next door and work on our house. We were really lucky because we had insurance that helped us put our house back together.

The whole thing is like a nightmare, not a dream, a nightmare!



Steve Perry remembers the 1955 flood from the viewpoint of a 3-1/2 year old boy. He, his mom and sisters went to Meridian to stay with his grandfather, Steve Burtis. His strongest memory is of the wall-to-wall people staying at the house and him sleeping under the dining room table (an incident denied by his mother, Betty Perry). Bell Telephone workers used the ranch as a place to sleep and eat after long hours of working. Steve remembers not just floor space, but stairs, landings and every other flat surface being used by someone as a bed. Steve recalls the row of telephone company trucks parked along the road by the house.

On his return to Yuba City, he remembers seeing a layer of mud covering everything and filling the streets so that there were no curbs. It was as though it had snowed - mud. The familiar terrain was gone, replaced by a smooth, dark coating of mud that hid grass and shrubs, smoothing out contours. Houses were dark brown part way up their walls and then familiar colors - pink, green, yellow - appeared above the mud line.

In his own home, much to his surprise, when he opened the closet doors, the water had gotten inside the closets too -- even though the doors were closed! His major loss in the flood was his rocking horse, Eustice, whom he recalls fondly to this day.

# Kid's Page



BARNEY  
BUS TRIP  
BUTTES

COATS  
COUNTY

DUES

ETTL  
EXHIBIT

FAIRMAN STREET  
FLOOD

GANG

HERITAGE  
HIKE  
HISTORY

LUTHERAN

MERIDIAN

NICOLAUS

PERRY

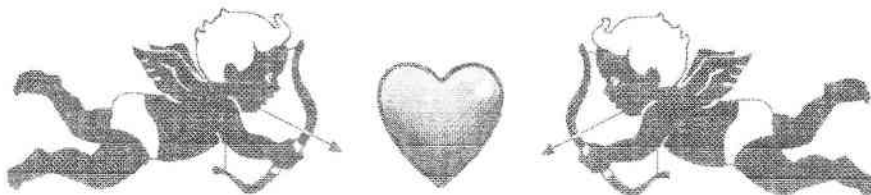
SCHEIBER

TELEPHONE  
TESS  
TOWER  
TROWBRIDGE

G	P	F	Y	W	O	B	G	E	H	F	E	R	Y	V	B	B	L	T	O	N	Y	W	T
Z	B	U	M	S	Z	M	A	M	O	N	Z	V	I	P	O	K	D	E	A	V	X	N	R
U	V	U	T	C	H	Z	J	R	I	L	Y	B	E	B	I	Q	N	R	Q	I	U	W	G
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O	V	B	O	T	F	I	N	R	F	E	T	B	U	Y	H	H	V	M	T	D	G	W	P
N	N	H	M	Q	E	E	C	P	R	T	Y	E	A	P	T	Y	X	A	L	I	L	T	S
K	I	A	A	R	L	S	I	O	R	X	L	Y	E	U	H	G	O	X	G	T	O	C	T
X	Z	E	I	A	M	R	N	O	L	D	X	L	L	R	Z	C	F	S	I	W	H	Q	R
P	P	G	V	D	T	B	W	O	N	A	E	X	C	Z	T	Y	J	B	E	E	R	E	E
U	I	Q	Y	S	I	B	O	F	C	T	U	O	K	S	R	S	I	R	I	M	H	L	P
E	X	H	U	P	R	R	T	Y	G	N	U	S	E	R	H	H	N	B	O	I	L	Y	C
R	G	B	S	I	L	J	E	S	R	N	B	U	E	G	X	F	E	A	S	Z	T	A	M
E	Q	A	D	N	I	U	X	M	T	P	D	P	A	E	L	R	X	T	M	Y	T	A	P
K	F	G	T	G	I	W	E	Y	J	O	U	N	H	O	U	Z	O	K	T	R	E	Q	D
I	E	A	O	I	T	W	K	T	X	L	G	P	O	R	Z	R	T	E	O	E	I	S	W
H	G	L	V	I	R	Q	G	U	Q	J	G	D	T	C	Y	G	B	A	O	E	S	A	Q
P	Z	V	Y	W	U	E	Q	G	Z	P	C	I	U	L	X	H	V	T	E	I	U	S	F
C	S	A	U	W	A	L	H	U	I	Y	H	V	T	B	C	H	C	B	A	Q	S	N	V

VALENTINE

WISHIP





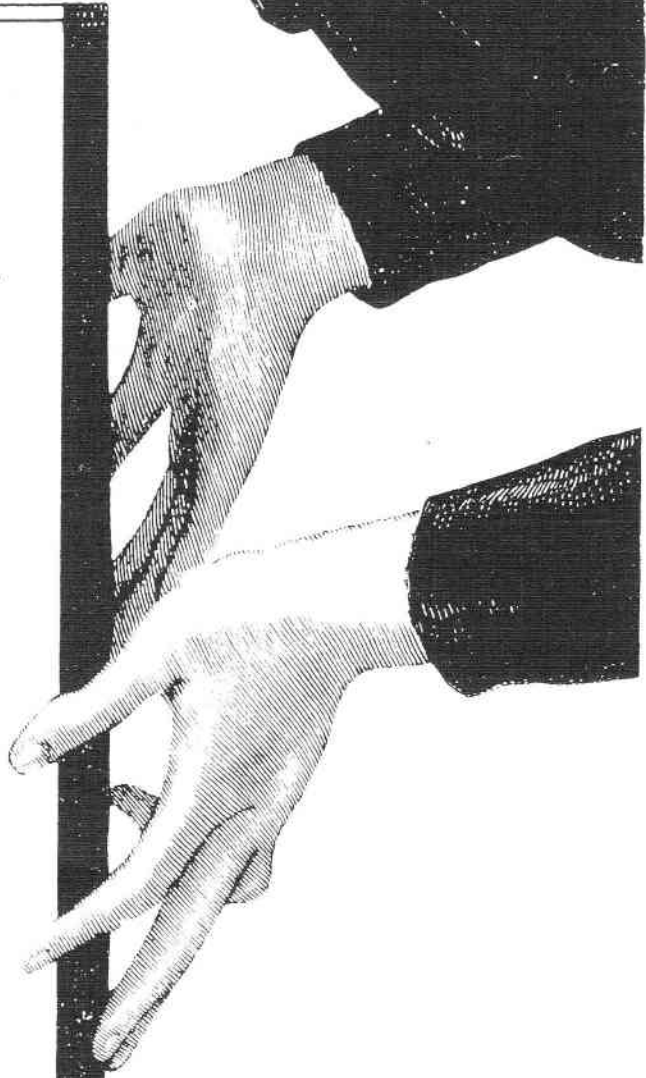
Are you interested in history  
and preserving our past?

Do you like to meet interesting people?

The Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County  
would like you as a volunteer!

Please call 741-7141  
or stop by

1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City



# COMING EVENTS

## January

- 1 Historical Society/Museum Dues
- 5 Gum San: The Land of the Golden Mountain  
exhibit opens at Museum
- 16 *Historical Society Meeting* - Museum - 7:30 p.m.  
*Speaker: Carol Withington*  
*Topic: Local Early Settlers*

## February

- 14 Love's Messenger Gift delivered (order early!)  
Happy Valentine's Day!

## March

- 6 Reservation Deadline for March 16 Buttes Hike
- 16 Historical Society's Buttes Hike
- 17 Happy St. Patrick's Day!
- 20 Reservation Deadline for March 30 Buttes Hike
- 30 Historical Society's Buttes Hike

## April

- 7 Gum San: The Land of Golden Mountain exhibit closes
- 13 Historical Society's Buttes Bus Trip

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOX 1004  
YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95992

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