

# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWS BULLETIN

Sacramento Branch  
Genealogical Library

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YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

16 APRIL 1963



DEER PENS IN NICOLAUS- THE FIRST MASONIC LODGE IN SUTTER COUNTY  
WAS ORGANIZED ON THIS SITE.

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SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SPRING MEETING  
County Office Building  
Chambers of the Board of Supervisors  
April 16, 1963  
8 P.M.

PROGRAM: Panel of Members of Sutter County  
Historical Society  
Howard Harter--Beginnings of the Fruit  
Industry and the Area Surrounding Yuba City  
Earl Brownlee--Beginnings of Yuba City  
W. A. Green, Jr. --Development of Agriculture  
in Sutter County  
Mrs. Ida Doty--Beginnings of Meridian  
Nate Wise--Beginnings of Nicolaus  
Mrs. Rosemary Redhair--Settlement of  
Pennington  
  
Moderator--Randolph Schnabel

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
March 21, 1963

MINUTES

The Board of Directors of Sutter County Historical Society met in the home of Mrs. Bernice Gibson at 8 P.M. on March 21, 1963.

Mrs. Gibson, President presided. Those present were: Mrs. Florence Arritt, Mrs. Ida Doty, Mrs. Nanne Brown, Mrs. Bernice Gibson, Mrs. Rosemary Redhair, Mr. William Greene, Mr. Howard Harter, and Mr. Earl Brownlee.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Gibson. The minutes of the January meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer's report was read and bills for postage for mailing the Bulletin and a bill to the Jefferis Insurance were presented. It was moved by Mr. Harter and seconded by Mr. Greene that they be paid as soon as the treasurer returns from his trip. Motion carried.

Mrs. Doty, on behalf of the members expressed her appreciation to Mrs. Nanne Brown for her work displaying the film at the recent Camelia Show in Yuba City.

Plans were made for a panel discussion on Sutter County History for the April 16th regular meeting.

Mrs. Brown gave a report of plans for the Heritage Festival to be held in Yuba-Sutter Fair Grounds, April 28th from 12:30 to 10 P.M.

Delicious refreshments were served by Mrs. Gibson. There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Redhair, Secretary  
Sutter County Historical Society

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS

HERITAGE FESTIVAL  
AND  
BOOK FAIR

April 28, 1963  
Yuba-Sutter Fair Grounds  
Yuba City  
Noon until 9 P.M.

Donation 50¢ to benefit the Sutter County Historical Film Fund

The Sutter County Historical Society presents a Sunday afternoon of entertainment, activities, exhibits, food, and fun for the whole family. This festival will exemplify the heritage of our community which is nearing its 113th anniversary as a part of the Golden State.

Articles from the time of John A. Sutter, the Pony Express, Wells-Fargo and the early days of Yuba City and Sutter County will be on exhibit. The Book Fair will include local authors and their publications, exhibits of old books and new books, an evaluator for your own rare books and a rummage sale of books. There will be a picture gallery of old time snapshots and family portraits.

The entertainment will include a rare collection of vocal, instrumental, and dancing groups highly regarded in our community's heritage.

A documented film of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire will be shown several times during the afternoon and evening. The funds derived from this Heritage Festival will be used to produce a documented film on some phase of Sutter county's history

Sunday, April 28, 1963 is Heritage Festival Day for young and old--the whole family and all the relatives.

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF NICOLAUS LODGE

NO. 129 F & A.M.

By Philip O. Baltzell P.M.

The early history of Nicolaus Lodge N. 129 F.& A.M. is meager owing to the loss of many of the records of the lodge in the fire which destroyed much of the town of Wheatland in 1898 and the passing of those who were closely associated with the lodge in its several locations up to that time. It is therefore difficult to know where legend leaves off and actual history begins. However what is known of the first hundred years of Nicolaus 129 is not without considerable color.

Acknowledgement for the information contained in this account is made to the following sources: Brother Loyd E. Wilson, Grand Secretary of Grand Lodge of California; Brother Charles Oakley of Nicolaus Lodge and his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth DeWayne, Past Matron of Wheatland Chapter, O.E.S.; Mrs. Thomas A. Gianella; Mrs. Amelia Tyler of Nicolaus; a set of books published by the Grand Lodge of California entitled "One Hundred Years of Free-masonry in California"; some records of the early history of Sutter County belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cornelius; Hall of Records of Yuba County; and a few old minute books still in possession of the Lodge.

It seems that certain Masons of the area of the town of Nicolaus, desiring to organize a lodge there, met in a cabin owned by John Saul on the edge of town. The exact location is uncertain. These Masons, E. Crain, C.W.A. Arens, Timothy Wharton, M. Gray, J. Hart, R.D. Carlos, W. H. Beatty, and S.M. Clay, petitioned Grand Lodge for a charter. As Grand Lodge was doubtful of the advisability of issuing a charter to so small a group before they had proved their ability to carry on a lodge, a dispensation was issued instead on May 13, 1858, authorizing the group to hold meetings at what was known as Half-Way House, located about four miles from Nicolaus. Here Masonic work was done until the Grand Lodge issued a charter to Nicolaus Lodge No. 129 on May 13, 1859. At about that time the lodge moved into their new hall, a building owned by Mr. Wessing in Nicolaus. The lower floor of the building was occupied by a butcher shop operated by Charles Engasser, the lodge hall being upstairs with an outside covered stairway.

The lodge prospered until there were 29 members in 1864 and then began to decline until there were but 12 members in 1870. In 1871 the lodge petitioned the Grand Lodge to move to Wheatland where it began to grow and has continued to do so up to the present time. The lodge's first returns to Grand Lodge after moving to Wheatland show a membership of 16 and by 1872 the number had nearly doubled, with 29 members. The lodge now has a total of 110 members.

The first meeting place in Wheatland was the Odd Fellows' Hall, a two-story frame building located on part of the same lot occupied by the present hall. According to Mrs. Elizabeth DeWayne, daughter of Amasa W. Oakley who was an early member of the lodge, entrance to the hall was gained by an outside stairway on the east and south side of the building. This building was destroyed by fire in 1876. Brother Charles Oakley and his sister, Mrs. DeWayne recall that Mrs. DeWayne, then a child, was sitting on the lap of her cousin, Mrs. Lizzie Mansfield, on the front porch of the old Oakley home that summer day. She said to her cousin, "That is a funny noise." Her cousin ran into the house calling Mrs.

DeWayne's father. He ran out and said, "Fire! Just about where the hall is!" He ran to the barn, jumped on his horse bareback with only a halter and went up the road as fast as the horse would go. He came back the next morning and said that he was too late to save anything.

After the fire the lodge met in a hall over Neimeyer's store located across the street about where the Wheatland Food Market is now. Mrs. DeWayne says the lodge met there until they moved into the new building. She does not know how long that was but remembers that the date, 1885 was on the front of the hall.

On August 12, 1898 much of the town of Wheatland was destroyed by fire, including the building where the lodge met. The charter and much of the furniture and other property of the lodge was destroyed. It is said that Brother Fred Baun who was then secretary managed to save some of the records. The record book covering the period from October 4, 1889 to November 22, 1901 was partly damaged by the fire but the records in it were not destroyed. The lodge met in the home of John Frederick Baun for the stated meeting of August 26, 1898. At this meeting the Grand Lodge was informed of the loss of the meeting place and the charter to the lodge and was requested to grant a duplicate charter. In due time a duplicate charter was received. Later the Grand Lodge remitted the dues to the Grand Lodge for that year.

The next meeting was held in the Tulilie School House which was located about where the present manual training shop for the Wheatland Elementary School now stands. The lodge met there until December 23, at which time they met in the town hall of Wheatland. The lodge continued to meet in the town hall until the new Odd Fellows Hall was completed. The first meeting in the new hall was May 8, 1899. The lodge has continued to meet in this building until the present time.

Brother O.K. Roddan, P.M., recalls the building of the new building while he was a boy. A horse was used to hoist the brick for the wall. The horse was controlled with a cowbell. When the "skip" was loaded with brick a jangle of the cowbell would start and stop the horse.

The Masons had a share in the ownership of the Odd Fellows Hall Association which at one time the lodge offered to sell to the Odd Fellows at face value. The Odd Fellows offered to buy the share for seventy-five cents on the dollar. Members of Nicolaus Lodge turned down their offer. Finally in 1948 the Masons bought out the Odd Fellows and formed a new building association. Since that time many improvements have been made in the hall, kitchen and banquet room.

Perhaps the most notable of the early members of this lodge was Ansel Melen Bragg who is shown to be a Past Master in 1873 and withdrew in 1876. He was Master of Confidence Lodge No. 203 of Castorville before affiliating with Nicolaus 129. After withdrawing he went to Arizona where he became the first Grand Master of that jurisdiction when the Grand Lodge of Arizona was organized in 1882. Later he returned to California and affiliated with Los Angeles Lodge No. 42 of which he was a member until his death in 1909.

Another notable member was William H. Beatty who was one of the eight who organized the lodge. He became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California.

Brother Amasa Wilder Oakley was also a person of some distinction. His son, George, also a Past Master of this lodge, used to relate that his father built the first house, first church, first saloon and another building in Grass Valley. He had 100 men in his crew. They worked with such teamwork that, including the making of all the doors, door frames and window frames by hand on the job, he would take a contract to build a four or five room house, start on it in the morning and hand over the keys to the house at quitting time that same evening. It was finished!

James Hart, one of the charter members of the lodge, was Superintendent of Schools September 4, 1856 to November 9, 1857, at which time he resigned. He was also elected Coroner on June 3, 1857.

Crawford Holland, who was shown to have been a member of Nicolaus 129 in 1871 and was Master of this lodge, was the founder of the town of Wheatland. It is not certain whether he was raised in this lodge or came in by affiliation.

Tom Devan, who is shown to have become a member of this lodge by 1878 arrived at Nicolaus in 1858 at the age of five years. He came from New York to San Francisco on the ship, Golden Gate, then up the river by steamer to Sacramento, then on to Nicolaus. When he was twelve years old his father was a blacksmith at Nicolaus. Tom had taken a job bucking straw for Peter Peters, a pioneer German rancher near Nicolaus. Peters didn't think much of banks and buried his money at the base of oak trees between the barn and the house. One Sunday when the horses had been tethered to the feed racks among the oaks Tom went out to tend them. His eyes bugged out when he saw one of the horses pawing up twenty dollar gold pieces. He ran and told John A. Peters, an old relation of Peter Peters. John Peters gathered up a hatful of the double eagles and carried them into the house. "Mein, Gott, Mein Gott!" Pete exclaimed. He hurried out and with a rake went over the ground and recovered the money. How much of it there was Tom didn't say, but when Peters sold his ranch some eight or ten years later, he dug up his "buried treasure", put it in sacks and hauled it, \$100,000 to the Marysville Savings Bank, taking a draft on a bank in Germany. He and his family returned to Germany where he died a few years later.

Another of our former secretaries, and Past Master, Henry Jasper, told of an incident that happened during the early days. A man was coming into the lodge who was somewhat of a pugnacious sort of fellow. Lodge members were telling him that he wouldn't be able to take it and he declared up and down that he would. Jasper said he bet that before the night was over he would back down. The candidate asked him how much he would bet. Jasper said "A case of beer." About two weeks after the meeting a grocerman delivered a case of beer to Jasper.

On May 14, 1958, Nicolaus Lodge 129 was host for the opening of Grand Lodge at the hall in Wheatland for the ceremony of laying the cornerstone for the new hall of Corinthian Lodge No. 9 in Marysville. Before opening lodge we were served a delicious dinner in Pioneer Hall in Wheatland. After the opening of lodge recess was called for the purpose of proceeding to Marysville for the laying of the cornerstone. Following that ceremony, Grand Lodge returned to Wheatland to close the lodge.

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#### FIRST LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Charles E. Arnold

"JAMES McCONAUGHY, born January 18, 1842; died in San Diego on January 17, 1920. He married Marie Josephene Cesbron on January 6, 1875; she was born in New Orleans on June 7, 1852 and died in San Diego on October 1, 1891. They lived in Marysville, California during the latter part of the 1870's and until 1886 when they moved to San Diego. In Marysville, James was manager of the Western Union Telegraph Company's office.

In 1876 John I. Sabin, later President of the Pacific Telephone Company brought six telephones from the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 to San Francisco and gave two of them to his brother-in-law Louis I. Glass, later Vice President and General Manager of the Pacific Telephone Company. When passing through Marysville on his way to Grass Valley (where Glass was a telegraph operator), Glass left one of the telephones with James McConaughy, telegraph operator at Marysville, and Glass and McConaughy agreed to try to operate the two telephones between the two towns, a distance of about 35 miles.

They hooked them up on the Marysville-Grass Valley telegraph circuit (a single line, or rather a grounded circuit between the two towns). The hook-up proved to be an interesting plaything and by boosting the battery power on the lead with the then universally used blue-stone crow-foot batteries, they succeeded in talking to one another, and quite satisfactorily, but present day telephone patrons would expect more efficiency. However, theirs were the first long distance telephone conversations in California and probably the first in the west, if not in the nation.

Excerpts from booklet entitled "The Telephone in America" published by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1946.

This instrument transmitted the tones of the voice, but it was not until March 10, 1876 that Bell, using an experimental transmitter in which the vibrations of the diaphragm raised and lowered a wire in a tiny cup of dilute sulphuric acid, first sent over an electric wire an intelligible sentence of speech. -----Bell's telephone was exhibited and demonstrated at the Philadelphia Centennial in June 1876-----Bell's first telephone patent had been granted on March 7, 1876. In May 1877 the first telephones were put into use on a commercial basis.----The first switchboard was installed--in Boston in May 1877 and connected four banks and a manufacturing concern.

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NINTH ANNUAL MEETING  
CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES  
San Francisco, California  
June 20, 21, 22, 1963

Thursday, June 20

4:00 P.M. Registration - Bellevue Hotel  
5:30 P.M. Board Meeting and Dinner at Bellevue Hotel  
8:00 P.M. Reception - California Historical Society, 2090 Jackson St.

Friday, June 21

8:30 A.M. Registration - Bellevue Hotel  
9:00 A.M. Greetings and Announcements - Bellevue Hotel  
Presiding: Mr. Jerry MacMullen, President of the Conference  
9:30 A.M. NEW HISTORICAL EXHIBITS  
Chairman: Mr. Richard C. Bailey, Director, Kern Co. Museum  
Mr. Jack Sutton, President, Siskiyou Pioneer Sites Foundation  
Mr. Edwin M. Eaton, President, Fresno Co. Historical Society  
Mr. Gilbert Kneiss, Railway and Locomotive Society  
Miss Katherine Finchy, Palm Springs Historical Society  
  
10:45 A.M. Coffee  
11:15 A.M. BOOK DEALERS OPEN HOUSE  
12:30 P.M. Luncheon - Bellevue Hotel  
Presiding: Dr. Harold Taggart, Regional Vice President  
Speaker: Dr. Henry Madden, Librarian, Fresno State College  
2:00 P.M. TOUR OF SAN FRANCISCO'S HISTORICAL EXHIBITS - by bus  
7:00 P.M. ANNUAL BANQUET - Bellevue Hotel  
Presiding: Mr. Jerry MacMullen, President of the Conference  
Speaker: To be announced later.

Saturday, June 22

8:00 A.M. Registration - Bellevue Hotel  
8:00 A.M. BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLES  
Chairman: Miss Ruth Mahood, Regional Vice President  
Panel: "Community Projects" Mrs. Bernice Gibson, Regional VP  
"Membership Dues" Miss Ivy Loeber, Treasurer  
"Program for Meetings" Dr. Clarence McIntosh, Past  
President of the Conference  
"Proposition 11" Mr. Walter Frame, Legislative Chrmn.  
"Group Tours" Mrs. Clyde Arbuckle, Past President  
"Historical Displays" Dr. Aubrey Neasham, Western  
Heritage, Inc., Sacramento  
9:30 A.M. Round Table Summary by Miss Ruth Mahood, Chairman  
10:45 A.M. WRITING HISTORY FOR PUBLICATION  
Chairman: Mr. Richard Dillon, Librarian, Sutro Branch  
California State Library  
Panel: Mr. W. H. Hutchison, San Francisco Chronicle  
Book Reviewer  
Mr. Leonard H. Verbarq, Sunday Knave Editor  
Miss Millie Robbins, San Francisco Chronicle  
Feature Writer.  
12:30 P.M. Luncheon - Bellevue Hotel  
Presiding: Mr. Donald Biggs, Director of Calif. Historical  
Society  
2:00 P.M. FILM "DISASTER 1906"  
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING - Bellevue Hotel  
CLOSING REMARKS by Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt, President Emeritus



REPORT OF LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Registration Fee: \$2.00

Buss Tour: \$2.00 To include visits to Society of California Pioneers, Wells Fargo Bank History Room, San Francisco Fire Department Exhibit and Western Museums Laboratory.

Meals: Thursday Dinner - Roast Chicken - \$4.25  
Friday Lunch - Fruit Salad - \$3.60  
Friday Dinner (Banquet) - Lamb or Salmon - \$4.25  
Saturday Breakfast - Hotcakes and Bacon - \$2.75  
Saturday Lunch - Chicken ala King - \$3.60

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The following book dealers, etc., have been invited to exhibit:  
(Nature of reply, when received, indicated)

John Howell Books, S.F. - Yes  
Paul Elder, S.F.  
Newbegins, S.F.  
Books, Inc., S.F.  
Argonaut Book Store, S.F.  
Holmes, Oakland  
Alta California Book Store, Berkeley  
Howell-North, Berkeley  
Wm. Wreden, Palo Alto  
Talisman Press, Georgetstown  
International Book Finders, Los Angeles  
Arthur Clark, Los Angeles

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TWELFTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND SOUTHERN OREGON  
SEPTEMBER 28th, 1963  
CRESCENT CITY: THE HOME OF THE LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM

Set aside September 27, 28, 29 and plan to journey to Crescent City and enjoy the hospitality of our Coastal friends. Big plans are being made and Ruby VanDeventer has checked with the ocean tides and assures us the tide is supposed to be low at that time and we should be able to visit the famous Old Lighthouse Museum. (I hope her tiday predictions are better than our weather predictions were October 12, 1962.)

Program will be in July issue of the Bulletin

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