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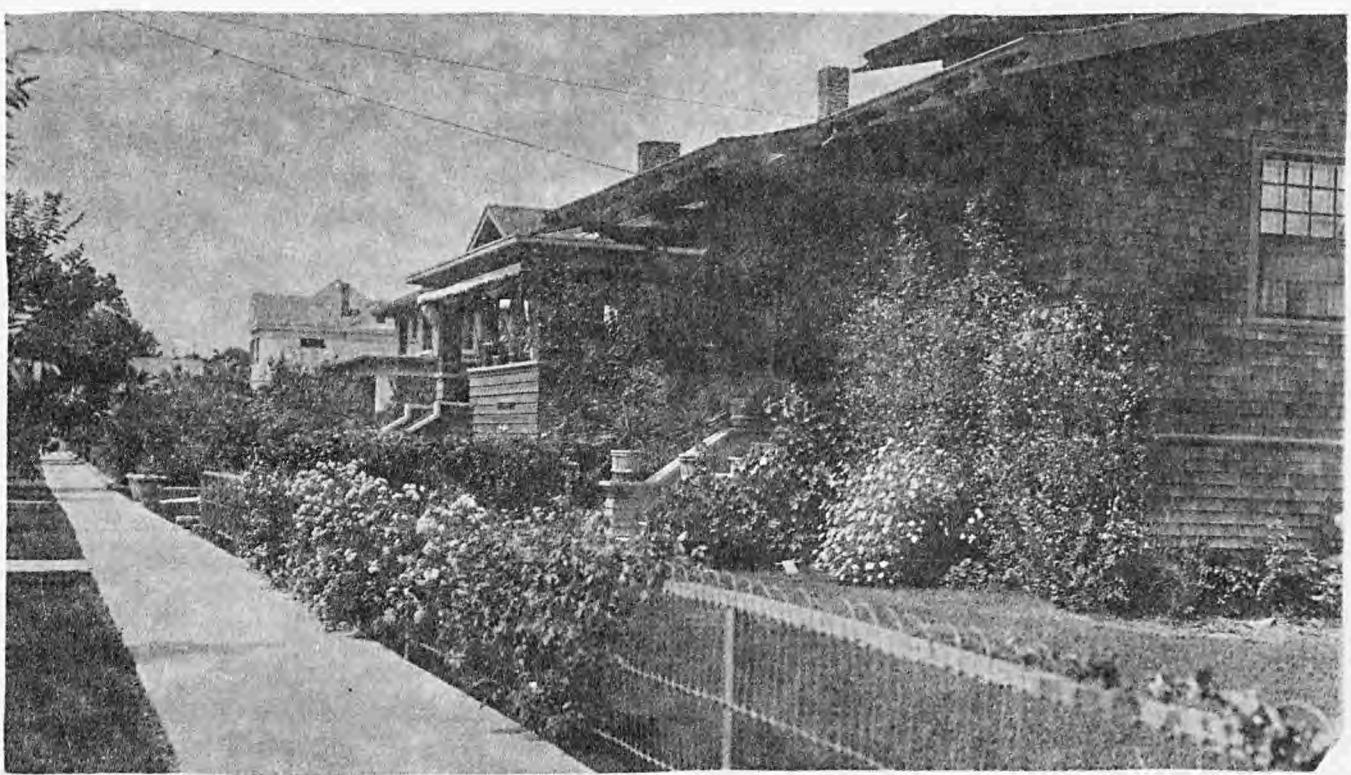
SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. 4 NO. 7

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 1965



MAGRUDER HOME
J. H. BARR HOME
H. WOLFSKILL HOME
H. P. STABLER HOME
Second Street Looking North

THE SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

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VOL. 4 NO. 7

September 1965

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL MEETING, OCTOBER 19, 1965, 8 P.M.

RECREATION ROOM OF MID-VALLEY SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION

PLUMAS STREET, YUBA CITY.

Program

Speaker: Mr. Charles K. Price
Retired Superintendent of Schools, Orland, California

Topic: Ghost Towns of the West

Mr. Charles Price, better known to school people as "Chic" Price has made a hobby of visiting "ghost" towns, studying their histories and taking many, many slides. He tells me, he has 500 slides pertaining to "ghost towns", all the way from the Mississippi to the Pacific.

Come prepared for a very enjoyable evening with "Chic" Price
October 19, 8 P.M.

Business meeting will follow the program.

NEW THINGS ARE BEING ADDED TO THE SUTTER COUNTY MUSEUM EVERY
DAY. VISIT YOUR MUSEUM

A Presentation

The Degree of Pocahontas, Le Mont Council 255 will be guests of the Sutter County Historical Society, October 19, and will present to the Sutter County Historical Society a 50 star flag for use at the Sutter County Museum. They are also presenting the Museum with their charter flag which will be placed on display in the museum.



MEAT MARKET ON SECOND STREET
(between Bridge & Fairman)



LARGE WALNUT TREE ON B STREET
Necessary to cut down at later date. Was
used for furniture.

(Speech given by Lou Newfield at a Rotarian Luncheon, 1963. Newfield was former owner editor of the Sutter Independent.)

YUBA CITY AS I KNEW IT
by Lou Newfield

Since Mrs. Newfield and I left here in 1935 our residence has never been more than 125 miles away, but there have been altogether too few times when we have picked ourselves up and driven to Yuba City for a look-see at our former home. This is something to be deplored for we have roots here. Though we have seldom visited here, we feel closer to the friends we made here than to some of our current metropolitan area neighbors. Our children were born and spent their early years here and even today we frequently refer to Yuba City as "back home".

So, when Harold Moore issued me an invitation in September to come and chat with you folks on the occasion of your annual dinner meeting, my inertia seemed to be overcome and I gladly accepted the assignment.

In presenting me this evening, I. L. Putnam referred to me as his friend of the twenties and of the sixties. Normally I would have been happy to be so classified, and I may have misunderstood him just before the introduction, but it seemed that when he leaned toward me while you were happily chatting, he asked me whether we should proceed with my speech or would it be better to let you enjoy yourselves a while longer. Well, I'd be in favor of your having your good time extended, but I've come all the way from San Leandro to get these remarks out of my system, so please be charitable and put up with me.

Standing here this evening, I can go back in memory forty-two years when a fellow at the foot of Bridge street could look directly north to the hobo "jungles" shut off by only a wire fence. To the west he'd observe at the slough a cabbage patch and a laundry. At the top of the "hill" was a much weathered wooden school building, and beyond it was Garth Ottney's fading almond orchard. Immediately to the south and the place where I was to carry on a newspaper and printing business - stood the abandoned brewery building. Abandoned for brewing purposes, anyway.

And you wish to know, I suppose, how, with such an apparently unsavory composite viewpoint one could engender a feeling positive enough to warrant what - at that time of my life - would be a substantial financial outlay.

Well, there was another little item that compensated for the things that seemed so unpromising. The late Victor M. Cassidy from whom I was buying the newspaper, showed me his

books, including a bank book that demonstrated substantial regular deposits. So, I figured that despite the brewery-laundry-jungles picture, if he could succeed, so could I. I was just optimistic.

I look back upon Yuba City in the early twenties with a sincere nostalgia. The people were very friendly. We attended bridge dinner after bridge dinner from October until June, and we became charter members of the Monday Evening Dancing Club that met on Thursday evenings...Parenthetically, I understand that in later years it has become the Monday Evening Dancing Club that meets on Friday evening... And, truthfully, some of our best friends we acquired during our stay here.

But, as a city, Yuba City had grown like Topsy, so it seemed. From 1878 until 1908 the population had grown from 600 to 1200. In 1921, when I arrived here, it hovered around 3,000; and while I was a member of the Marysville Rotary Club - there was none in Yuba City then - I listened to Hugh Smythe predict that Yuba City would equal Marysville in population within the next five years. He should have been in a good position to know since he was a Marysville merchant who resided in Sutter County.

But, it didn't happen. Despite the fact that the Newfields had two children born here in 1922 and 1925, respectively, Yuba City's population had reached a bare 3,600 by 1930. Looking backward now, it bothers me to think that neither Mrs. Newfields and my demonstration of how to get a population explosion going, nor my highly profound editorial pronouncements in the Sutter Independent were able to start a trend. And, my research efforts indicate that you had to initiate a census recount in 1940 to get past 5,000. Of course, it took the war years to start the real growth, until now, I am informed, you approximate 14,000 souls.

We had one bank in 1921, operated by the Boyd family. Today you have three. We had two or three churches in 1921. Religionists of faiths not represented in Yuba City went across the Feather River, or further, to worship. Today, I am told, there are 21 churches in Yuba City. There was no high school and but one grammar school. Today your fifth grammar school is being built. The town had no radio station and today you have three. The only things I can think of that we had more of in 1921 than in 1963 were newspapers. There was the Sutter County Farmer owned by my very good friend, the late Lou Woodworth - and there was The Sutter Independent.

Today you have The Independent-Herald - just changed, I am informed, from a weekly to a semi-weekly paper. I had the pleasure of viewing that very modern and well equipped plant

recently and I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of this community on having such a newspaper serving them. I say this without detracting from the papers of the twenties, for every period owes much to the periods that have preceded.

I've made brief mention of the churches and radio stations. Recently, while researching the files of The Independent, I chanced to be reminded of one of my most embarrassing moments in Yuba City. Not only was there no local radio broadcasting station; very few people owned radio receiving sets at that time. An official of the Pacific Gas & Electric Company and one of the best known and best loved of Yuba City residents, Merl Bremer had become interested in radio and had succeeded in constructing a home-made set for the enjoyment of himself, his family and friends. I was fortunate to be one of the latter and Merl subsequently made a set for me.

Shortly thereafter there was formed a Yuba-Sutter Radio Club and we hit upon the then very exciting and novel plan of having Rev. Eustace Anderson, pastor of the Yuba City Methodist Episcopal Church, South, deliver his sermon from a ham radio sending station in Gridley, to his congregation within the local church on Second Street. Merl chose to go to Gridley to supervise the broadcast. The pastor had invited his church members to attend and bring their friends. I further publicized the event in my newspaper - and that's where I should have left well enough alone. Instead, Merl appointed me to handle the reception of the broadcast at the church; and maybe some of you old timers can remember all the gadgets and condensers and doodads that were attached to the outside of those early receivers. Perhaps you can imagine what happened. Merl 's end of the deal went off all right, I guess. But all I could get were a series of squeaks and a mess of static. After about 10 minutes of fiddling with the set I heard a disturbance behind me and turned around to hear Doctor Peery say: "C'mon, let's get outa here." He evidently was respected because almost everyone took his leave. If I hadn't been in a house of worship those who remained would have been treated to some plain and fancy cussing, during which Merl Bremer and Marconi in particular and radio sets in general would have felt my wrath.

I've mentioned, however, that people were friendly in Yuba City. To their credit, I must add that no one rang up the following week to order his Independent subscription stopped, and it is a matter of record that Rev. Anderson was permitted to retain his pastorate, though being admonished, no doubt, to do his preaching face to face.

I believe that Yuba City in 1921 was the only county seat in California without a high school. But within a year, both newspapers got behind a movement initiated by Mrs. Minnie M. Gray, with the result that the Yuba City Union High School District became a reality.

Cree T. Work was brought here to get things started and become the first principal, and the only mistake he made that I know of was inviting me to be the first businessman of the community to address the student body.

It was my first experience addressing teen-agers and I can say that they haven't changed much over the ensuing years. For, before I was more than a couple of paragraphs into my talk, a big farm boy sitting at his desk immediately in front of me, lowered his head into his folded arms and went to sleep. Mr. Work, however, was insistent upon the school operating on fundamental democratic principles, and wakened the lad so, doubtlessly, he could suffer equally with his fellow students. From my viewpoint, however, he might just as well have left him sleeping for he sat there and glared at me for the balance of the harrowing experience.

Our first residence here- after a week at the Hotel Sutter was in one of Mrs. Campbell's rented houses near the laundry on Bridge Street. But we soon built a new home on B Street near Cooper Avenue and saw the permanent high school go up opposite us. Dr. Tom Nelson, whom I still occasionally run into when making my Rotary attendance in Berkeley, came down from Yreka to succeed Cree Work as Principal. I referred to it as the "permanent" high school I now see those "permanent" buildings have been torn down and new, modern structures have replaced the old. Which bears out the adage that there's nothing so constant as change.

You've been told that in recent years I have become an artist. In that capacity I have turned out canvasses that I thought were alright at the time, and yet today, when I see them on the livingroom walls of their present owners, I'd like to recall them and replace them with something more worthy.

The same thing used to happen in the newspaper business. For example, one of the very important safeguards against plant diseases had been set up prior to my arrival here by the then horticultural commissioner, Harry Stabler. He was adamant in seeing to it that the rules were observed. I had been editor of the Sutter Independent for only ten days, when, on March 10, 1921, there appeared this heading on page 1:

Stabler Stabs
No-Good Nuisance;
Nematodes Nabbed

Now, strictly as a "city guy" new to the country, I hadn't much of an idea of what nematodes were. But desirous of demonstrating, I suppose, that my subscribers had gained not only a new editor, but one gifted with rare talents, I went on with

I never saw a nematode; I never hope to see one;
But I tell you I'd rather see a nematode than be one.
The nematode's a wily worm. About our vines he'd clutter.
Doc Stabler stabs them right and left to keep them out of
Sutter!"

---and then followed a somewhat less exotic news story about how Mr. Stabler had condemned some 10,000 grapevines from Fresno county... Well, it's too late to do anything about it now. I can't recall it. It's been printed and circulated and, no doubt, read. It's also been microfilmed and filed in the Sutter County Library. All I can do is try to forget it.

As members of the Yuba City Commercial Association you may be interested in efforts to establish an effective booster organization here in 1922. I had previously published a paper in Turlock. Now, it's common knowledge that here in the Sacramento Valley we have been endowed with many natural advantages. Not so in the San Joaquin Valley. Man had many obstacles to overcome. A parched land needed irrigation projects. Sand storms were common in the Spring. After a windy day a sand dune, one would pass on the north side of the street in the forenoon would be found on the south side five hours later. So, to overcome these and other problems practically every town and county in the San Joaquin Valley had its board of trade or chamber of commerce in which the citizens cooperated for progress.

Imagine my surprise, then, on coming here, to learn that while there was a Sutter Chamber of Commerce, its sole support was from the county board of supervisors who annually appropriated \$400 to cover its operating expenses. The money was turned over to Ed Hughes, cashier in the local bank, together with some four-page folders. These Ed would send out whenever an inquiry came to his desk about the city or county. The \$400 not only provided the printed folders. It also supplied the stamps - the 2 cent variety that Postmaster Harry Meyers carried in those days, and Ed would lick the stamps and at quitting time the story of Sutter County would be sent on its way along with the outgoing bank mail. I was told that just about constituted all of the chamber's routine activity.

In due course, this brash editor felt that a positive promotional and development job could benefit the county. Ed Hughes and some others agreed. But, in the friendliest manner they whispered good counsel in my ear. Did I know, for example, that Clyde Harter of the Harter Packing Company was president of the chamber? And did I want to step on his toes and get myself slapped down and my purpose thwarted before it got started on its way? Well, you can just bet that I didn't. So I arranged for a talk with Mr. Harter who immediately gave the idea a green light.

Under date of June 1, 1922 an editorial appeared in The Independent reporting a rumor to the effect that certain members of the Yuba County Chamber of Commerce across the river in Marysville were heading up a movement to have the Yuba County chamber represent both Yuba and Sutter Counties. The editor suggested that if it was so, before they went too far with the idea they'd better consult the officers of the Sutter chamber. We admitted that perhaps the Sutter operation hadn't been too active but maybe we'd better see if it couldn't be strengthened.

Thus was the seed planted. I don't know what kind of fertilizer was used but in the issue of June 22- three weeks later- a news story told of a booster club being suggested with Gene Littleton, Fred Bonsack, Lon Woodworth, Frank Bremer and Thurlow "Red" Dowell named a committee to work on plans.

A mass meeting was called for July 23. And by September, Bremer, Littleton and yours truly were appointed to prepare a tentative constitution for reorganizing the Sutter County Chamber of Commerce. Though he preferred to let younger men shoulder the major effort, may I add that one of the warmest supporters of the reorganization plan was Clyde Harter.

The only bit of chicanery in the foregoing was the printing of that rumor. Frankly, I don't know whose idea it was. Maybe it was a spark from Ed Hughes' fertile brain. Or it could have been suggested by Gene Littleton who also worked with Ed in the bank. The only credit I'll take was for publication of the editorial. As things turned out it proved not only harmless, rather was it helpful, for by the end of the year reorganization was completed, Adrian McMullen, formerly a San Francisco newspaperman who handled publicity here in connection with the financing to the Hotel Marysville, was employed as a paid secretary, and an annual budget was set up amounting to \$15,000. It proved, also, that at that particular time, at any rate, the people here preferred to stand on their own feet and not have to hang onto the apron strings of their neighbors across the river. Of course, had we not been pretty sure of that attitude, the rumor strategy would have been valueless.

I've had occasion recently to peruse the minutes of meetings of your Yuba City Commercial Association, going back to the year 1935 when C.B. George was your president. Adrian McMullen who, by the way, purchased the Independent from me in 1927, served as vice president: and Leon Dassonville, then manager of the Producers Bank of Sutter County, acted as secretary-treasurer.

There had been discussions of the need for establishing a businessmen's group in Yuba City prior to 1935, but my recollection does not support it's having been organized prior to my departure for the Bay Area on New Years Day of that year.

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Those minutes give evidence of many worthwhile accomplishments by your organization and I have no doubt that your plans for furthering Yuba City's progress and development will amply justify the continued support of the business and professional people who comprise your membership.

There has been an awful lot of the first personal pronoun in this talk and I would readily apologize for it were it not for the fact that the nature of the presentation I was asked to give called for my own experiences while a Yuba City resident. However, I can bring this to a close with some subject matter that won't call for the "I" and "me" routine, but could call for you to raise some eyebrows and remark, perhaps, that "them was the happy days!"

The files of the Sutter Independent in 1921 reveal that your grocer, Nick Weber, offered three pounds of peanut butter for 65 cents and you could carry home fifty pounds of brown onions for only 50 cents.

Also, prices effective May 7, 1921, allowed one to acquire a Chevrolet touring car for \$798.82; a sedan for \$1,450.34; a coupe for \$1,408.34; and a light delivery truck for \$804.32.

In the want-ad column appeared the following notice:

"PERSONAL - Charlie W. - if you are in Sutter County and read this, return to your home and all will be forgiven. H.D.W., Sacramento."

May I suggest, in passing, that if Charlie W. didn't read the notice - and happens to be in this audience, it may not be too late to take a run down to the capital and see what's what.

Finally, for the ladies present, you'll be intrigued to learn that a heading in The Independent in 1922 proclaimed:

"SKIRTS TO LENGTHEN"

and was followed with this item:

"Short skirts are on their last legs.

"Calves are to be hidden in the daytime - and the decolletage of evening dress is to be much less marked.

"Dresses are promised with one shoulder bare and one covered. Backs are still to be bare, but not much. The shape of the decolletage may be square, round, oval, oblong or boat-shaped."

Hm-mm-m.

I sometimes wonder now whether my subscribers fully appreciated the earth-shaking information I gave them for a paltry two dollars a year!

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SECOND STREET AFTER 1908 FIRE



FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF YUBA CITY
Later Bank of America, Bridge Street

FIRST TRUSTEE RECALLS EARLY DAYS IN Y.C.

Back in the days when wheat fields started at Plumas Street, and there was a 60 foot drop to the water instead of levees along the Feather River - those are days reminiscent to George T. Boyd, the only living first trustee of the incorporation of Yuba City 40 years ago.

Boyd describes himself as a young shaver of the early days, compared to the older men who sat on the first board of trustees, and who have since passed away.

Boyd, himself, was 23 at the time he sat in the trustees chair.

Standing out in his memory is the story of founding the municipal water system in Yuba City. Boyd said that the town, at that early day, had outgrown a private system and fire insurance rates were high.

PAID FOR ITSELF

The bond issue passed, and lowered fire insurance rates paid the cost of the entire system in the first three years, making it one of the first bond issues of history that didn't cost anyone anything.

The name Boyd itself has been a familiar one in Yuba City almost from the time the town was unofficially laid out in July, 1849, almost 100 years ago.

George Boyd's grandfather left a Virginia mansion, replete with slaves in the Civil War when scouts from both sides warned that a battle was to be fought on the homesite.

The family left, part and parcel, never to return except on a visit that revealed the family home destroyed. The new home was set up in Yuba City, and the Boyds have been here ever since.

George Boyd has worked under six different firm names in approximately 43 years, but they all involved the same business.

GRAIN ON BANK

Farmers used to leave harvested grain along the river bank unprotected, while waiting for boats to carry it downstream, Boyd recalls.

If a rain came up, a good part of the crop stood to be lost. That brought formation of the "Farmers Union" (The Farmers Cooperative Union of Sutter County)

It originally was to build warehouse space to hold the grain and three were constructed, one following the other. The firm dealt in grain sacks and branched into insurance. Boyd started in what he terms in a janitors job or some such, and his father was for some time head man.

Located in the present site of the farm labor office and next to the Bank of America on Bridge Street, the "Farmers Union" became a bank and George Boyd it's manager.

George tells a story of leaving \$10,000 in gold out on the counter while he'd go inside to pick up 15¢ while weighing hay.

HOT STEVE

Customers were on the in or outside of the counter, it didn't matter, and they used to sit on star tobacco boxes while grouped about the stove.

All the trading was in gold, and the vault was usually open, with nothing ever missing.

More and more the headquarters performed the role of accepting money or loaning it on crops. An I.O.U. type of slip would be written on a piece of newspaper and when redeemed torn up.

The farmers didn't exactly realize they were running a bank, but the state did after the banking act was passed, and a call was put in for a representative to report to the state inspector. George Boyd, still what he calls a youngster at 27, was picked for the roll.

"What'd they send me a kid for, I want to talk to a man" the state inspector greeted him.

CARRIED WORD

"Well, you got me, and I'm all there is " or words to that effect, was Boyd's reply, and he brought the word back that a bank it was.

That brought a change in name, first as "The Sutter County Bank" and then the First National Bank of Yuba City. In the late 20's it became the Bank of Italy, and then the present Bank of America.

An avid hunter and fisherman, Boyd not only knows the best spots in California but he travels into southern Oregon and the Klamath area for steelhead. Those who fish mostly look to him to bring home the limit if anyone does.

George Boyd is one of the third generation of the Boyd family in Sutter County.

JESSICA BIRD GIVES GIFT TO THE SUTTER COUNTY LIBRARY

Miss Jessica Bird, former reporter for the Appeal-Democrat, recently retired, is a member of the Sutter County Historical Society. She presented the Sutter County Library with her entire clipping file on the Sutter County Historical Society and Museum.

This is a very valuable collection and will save anyone using it a great amount of time and trouble searching through the newspapers trying to locate articles which now may be found in one place and grouped together.

Many prospective writers will be able to glean information from programs which have been given before the Historical Society with interesting historical facts reviewed by Miss Bird in her publicity reports.

The library hopes to continue collecting the clippings as they are printed in the current papers.

The library as well as the Historical Society and Museum owe a debt of gratitude to Jessica Bird for this gift.