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# SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS BULLETIN

VOL. XIII, NO. 1

YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95991

JANUARY, 1974



Samual Brannan  
1819 - 1889  
(Picture courtesy of the  
California State Library)

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by  
Robert L. Ryan

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

Vol. XIII, No. 1

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THE WINTER MEETING

The first 1974 meeting of the Sutter County Historical Society will take place at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 15 in the Assembly Room of the Sutter County Library in Yuba City.

The speaker will be Norman Wilson, Supervisor of Interpretive Planning, Division of Beaches and Parks for the State. He will discuss Museum Planning. Visitors are always welcome to attend the Society's meetings.

\* \* \* \* \*

SUTTERANA

Major General John A. Sutter. - It gives us pleasure to observe this veteran pioneer of the Eureka State in our city on a short sojourn. As is usual when he comes amongst us, a large crowd of admirers and warmly attached friends constantly surround him, depriving him in a measure of his liberty of personal action.

From the Sacramento Union of August 13, 1853.

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The NEWS BULLETIN is published quarterly by the Society at Yuba City, California 95991. The annual membership dues include receiving the NEWS BULLETIN. Your remittance should be sent to Mrs. Wanda Rankin, Treasurer, 805 Orange Street, Yuba City. To insure delivery of your NEWS BULLETIN please notify the Treasurer of any change of address.

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NO LONGER IS OUR HAVING OUR OWN MUSEUM A DREAM

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With the establishment of the Community Memorial Trust Fund Oct.1st,1973, and the County's acquisition of the strip of land between the existing Memorial Park and Butte House Road, made possible by the gifts of Howard and Norma Harter and Gilbert Williamson, Sutter County will soon be seeing its Museum-in-the-building!

Forest Duranceau of the firm of Gillett,Harris, Duranceau Associates has been engaged as the architect, and building contracts are to be put out to bid.

Who knows just how far development may be by the time this Bulletin reaches you, since the date of this writing is Nov. 5th! However, a tentative date of July 1st has been set for completion.

Now that it is an established fact that we are to have a museum built on the Park Site, it remains for us, as members of the Historical Society (and surely the most interested in its development) to support it, not only with personal gifts but also by enlisting the support of others who may not know of this opportunity now open to them for participating in this project which will be so great an asset to our community.

With the County's recent acquisition of the thirty acres just across Butte House Road to the south of our Memorial Park and Museum Site now on the drawing boards for a County-City Complex, our site will be an ideal extension to its public grounds, and facilitate its maintenance.

It is "all coming along" - but the rapidity with which landscaping and all development occurs depends upon your response, your enthusiastic participation, - and your enlisting the participation of others!

Continuing list of donors

Ruth van Courtright	in memory of	Kenyon Gregg
Howard and Norma Harter	" " "	Jack Young
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SAM BRANNAN IN SUTTER COUNTY

by

ROBERT L. RYAN

To be able to recite with any degree of accountability the actions of a man with a life span from 1819 to 1889, who became one of the early pioneers of California, requires many information sources. It is, therefore, quite possible that these sources will at times vary as to dates, spelling of names, and the basic reason for the action. However, an attempt will be made to keep to the best historical source on a subject who has been called a benefactor and also a man capable of any kind of skulduggery.

Such a man is Samuel Brannan, who has been described as a Mormon Leader, publisher, an explorer, a merchant, a colonizer, a banker, a rancher, a land developer, a hotel and warehouse owner, and a financier of railroads. In addition, he has been dubbed a vigilante, a scoundrel. Finally, he was ex-communicated from the Church of Latter Day Saints. For many years he made great sums of money, some of it spent for school property in San Francisco and additional sums for ladies and juice of the grape. Then, to a pauper's grave, forgotten by friend and family.

The manner in which Sam Brannan was able to gain a great fortune and lose it, has been the subject of many writers of history and fiction. The part he played in the development of San Francisco, Sacramento, the Napa Valley, as well as Sutter and Yuba Counties, included transportation by river and by rail, merchandising and real estate development.

Since this recitation is mainly concerned with his interest in Sutter and Yuba Counties, the reader should be aware of some of the more important activities in other areas; so an appendix is included that has been prepared in chronological order of these other interests.

Brannan arrived on the ship Brooklyn on July 31, 1846 at the then small seaport town of Yerba Buena, which was to become San Francisco. Among the necessary supplies he brought to establish a Mormon colony was a small printing press which was used to publish the first newspaper in that town, the "California Star". The actual colony was founded in the so-called town of New Hope, near the mouth of the San Joaquin River, but Brannan remained in Yerba Buena.

In order to supply the colony from the coast, Samuel Brannan & Co., which then had title to all the property owned by the Mormons, bought a small launch, the Comet. With this conveyance Brannan first visited Sutter's Fort and became aware of its importance. It was from this point that Brannan with C. C. Smith started east over the Sierra Nevada to meet Brigham Young to try to convince him to bring the Mormons to California. Young did not agree with their request. (1)

When Brannan and Smith returned to Sutter's Fort, it was decided to rent an out-building from John A. Sutter and establish a store there. This store was established on October 12, 1847 under the name of C. C. Smith & Co. Smith remained to be the store-keeper while Brannan went back to San Francisco to arrange for the supplies and transportation. It proved so successful that later in 1848, Brannan bought Smith's interest for a reported sum of \$50,000.00.

John Marshall, with a number of Mormon workers, was building a saw mill at Coloma when gold was found in the mill-race, on or about January 24, 1848. The "California Star" contained a short note about the discovery when word reached San Francisco but this did not seem to excite the citizens. Brannan, however, made a trip to Coloma to verify the discovery. Some credit him with returning with a small bottle of gold, and shouting

in the streets, "Gold, Gold, on the American River." On May 27, 1848 the following article appeared in the California Star, and the gold rush was off and running:

"The proprietor of the Star, Mr. Brannan, who is the headman of the Mormons, has taken possession of a large space in the gold country and with his Mormons and two small cannons swears that not a man will work their ground. I expect both printing offices will be closed this week." (2)

The editor was correct. The Californian in Monterey closed down on May 29, 1848, and the Star published its last edition on June 14th, as everyone went to the "diggings", except Sam Brannan. He was buying anything that was for sale. The small Wrights' store in Coloma was bought and William Stout was the store-keeper (3). A few months later Mellus and Howard became partners with Brannan, and it may have been at this time that Howard furnished financial support to Brannan. A store was also opened at Mormon Island while the Sutter Fort store was so located that it sold to miners going to all the northern rivers and streams. To supply the stores, Brannan needed ships. He first owned the Eliza, the Eldora and the Whiton. Then the fleet was expanded when he bought the Susanita and the Dice Mi Nana. These ships were kept very busy since it was known that Brannan's stores had monthly sales of amounts from \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00. He became a rich man very quickly.

Brannan must have sensed that land would be in demand in California, as now he started to acquire town lots in San Francisco. Since Sutter claimed, by various grants from the Mexican Governors, vast areas along the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, in addition to his claims in the Sutter Fort area, Brannan bought from both John A. Sutter, Sr. and his son, various tracts of land.

The first purchase recorded in what is now Sutter County was made on June 11, 1849, when he purchased the two square mile tract on the west bank of the Feather River, across from Nicolaus. It was to become the site of Brannan Ranch and the White House. This deed was executed in favor of Brannan by John A. Sutter, Jr. The purchase price was \$2,000.00 and it was stipulated that the property had not been surveyed. On July 14, 1850 the survey was completed and the land described and recorded in Book A. page 131, Sutter County Book of Deeds.

Sutter must have indicated that other properties were available. It is known that Sutter, Jr., was attempting to bring some order out of the affairs of his father who was burdened with debt and was being pressed by his many creditors. One means was to sell land. In the meantime, Brannan, Langford Hastings and Theodore Cordua had convinced young Sutter Jr. that the proposed site of Suttersville as planned by Sutter Sr. was not as good a site as Sacramento City. (4) Brannan received 50 city lots for his part in this most worthy suggestion and the other planners were rewarded in the same manner. John Sutter Sr. was quite upset by his son's action.

Brannan and John S. Fowler bought a grist mill from Sutter, moved it to Front Street in Sacramento, remodeled it and opened the Sacramento City Hotel in September, 1849. A frame storehouse had also been erected for Brannan at the corner of J and Front Street. In addition to the store operated by Brannan, were Priest, Lee & Co. and Hensley, Reading & Co. One other store owner, McDougal, moved to Suttersville and tried to get the other merchants to follow. Sam Brannan with Priest, Lee & Co. and Judge Burnett had a better idea. They went to John A. Sutter, Jr. and indicated that they would move. Young Sutter then agreed to give the merchants 500 city lots each to stay in Sacramento City.



How Sam Brannan was able to keep track of all the things that happened in 1849 is truly remarkable. On January 6, 1849, a committee met in Sacramento City to establish laws and procedures for the provisional government of the Sacramento District. Peter Burnett was elected as the president of the committee, and he in turn appointed a special committee to make recommendations as to the laws to be enacted by the Provisional Government. This committee included John S. Fowler, John Sinclair, P. B. Reading, Burton Lee and Samuel Brannan. The committee had to request additional time before bringing in their report, but it was approved as presented. (5)

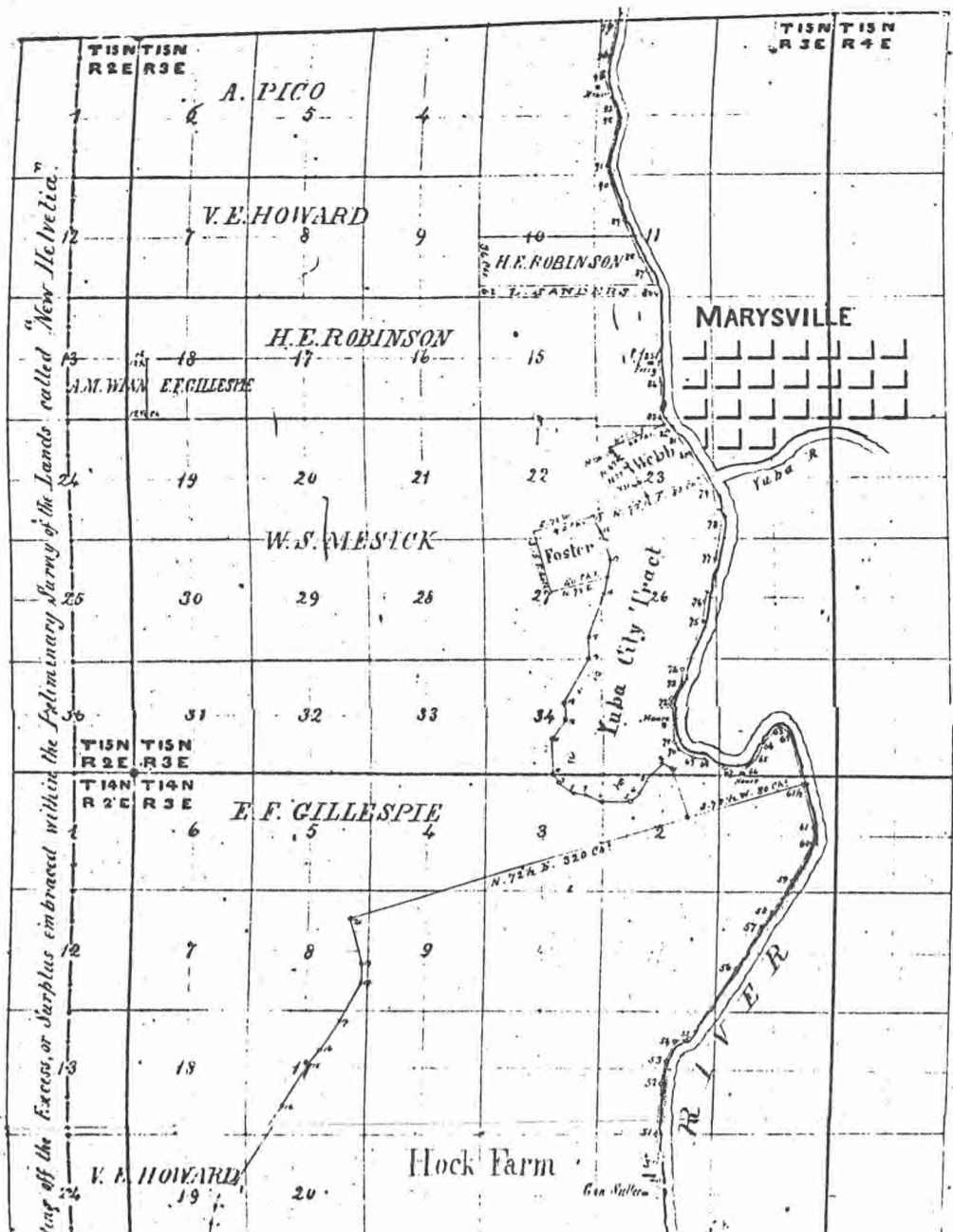
After the Sacramento City Hotel was opened, Brannan disposed of the Brannan & Co. that had been the official owner of the Mormons' property. According to an ad that appeared in the Placer Times on August 18, 1849, Brannan & Co., which was then supposed to consist of S. Brannan, William Stout and the Mellus & Howard Co., would sell the one-half interest in the Sacramento City Hotel; the store-ship Eldora, schooners, Eliza, Dice Mi Nana and Susanita; the Mormon Island store with all stock on hand; claims filed on Mormon Island Bar; horses, mule teams and goods then enroute. It seems that all of these things were sold. However, Sam Brannan and the other principals were the main purchasers. Other members of the Mormon Colony claimed they did not see any of the proceeds of the sale. Perhaps the fact that New Hope had been a failure and the colonists had left the area, some to return to Salt Lake and others to settle in various areas in the Sacramento Valley, made any outcry quite weak.

At the same time, Brannan's interest in Sutter County land had increased. On July 27, 1849, John A. Sutter entered into an agreement with Pierson B. Reading, Henry Cheever and Samuel Brannan, wherein the four principals including Sutter, held title as partners, covering four

square miles which was later described as the Yuba City Tract. On September 18, 1849, the four partners deeded certain lots to each other as individuals, each owner thereafter effecting the sale of his land as he wished. One of the first sales made by Brannan of his separate property was several town lots to T. H. Rolfe for the sum of \$1200.00. (6) Brannan and others continued the sale of property to other pioneers of Yuba City. Brannan also owned and sold lots in the Yuba City area, outside of the Yuba City Tract. One other transaction deserves mention. On May 18, 1858, Brannan deeded to Sutter County, Lots 1 and 2 of Block 18 in the Yuba City Tract to be used for the county courthouse. The Sutter County Courthouse still occupies these lots.

Sometime during this period, Brannan and others were party to a purchase, or perhaps a grant, by John A. Sutter of a large area of land, most of which fronted on the east bank of the Sacramento River. A deed from Sutter does not appear in Sutter County records, so it is not known whether Sutter gave this land to the partners, gave it in exchange for some of his debts or if there was a purchase price paid. The entire grant was first known as "Lot 8". It extended from the Third Standard North, about due west of the Buttes, to the junction of the Sacramento with the Feather River, including a short distance north on the west bank of the Feather, but excepting the property already owned by Brannan, purchased in June, 1849. The owners took title as partners; however, in Brannan's case he had two partners, Wake Bryarly and Presley Dunlap. The other owners were Henry E. Robinson, Eugene F. Gillespie, Albert M. Winn, Andreas Pico, Volney E. Howard, Lewis Saunders, Jr., William S. Mesick.

Title to "Lot 8" was taken by the various parties subject to a survey, and much of this land was in the "Sobrante Grant". In July, 1850 several surveys were made and are of record in Sutter County. It was



*Meanders of Yuba City Tract.*

Sta.	Course	Chs. Lts.	Sta.	Course	Chs. Lts.
Beginning at a Stake opposite the Mouth of Yuba R. on the Right Bank of Feather River, thence down Stream.					
1	N. 15 W.	35.00	12	N. 20 E.	16.00
2	N. 7 1/2 W.	8.19	13	N. 11 1/2 E.	6.00
3	S. 46 3/4 W.	12.45	14	N. 25 1/2 E.	36.00
4	S. 29 1/2 W.	15.00	15	N. 5 1/2 E.	14.00
5	S. 37 W.	7.50	16	N. 13 1/2 E.	29.50
6	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00	17	N. 11 E.	27.00
7	N. 63 W.	12.40	18	N. 16 W.	21.65
8	N. 57 1/2 W.	15.00	19	S. 31 1/2 E.	18.00
9	N. 63 1/2 W.	11.00	20	S. 16 E.	21.65
10	N. 11 1/2 W.	5.00	21	S. 11 W.	27.00
11	N. 1 1/2 E.	20.00	22	S. 15 1/2 W.	29.50
12	N. 1 1/2 E.	20.00	23	S. 5 1/2 W.	14.00
13	N. 20 E.	16.00	24	S. 25 1/2 W.	36.00
14	N. 11 1/2 E.	6.00	25	S. 11 W.	27.00
15	N. 63 1/2 W.	12.40	26	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00
16	N. 25 1/2 E.	36.00	27	S. 37 W.	7.50
17	N. 5 1/2 E.	14.00	28	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00
18	N. 13 1/2 E.	29.50	29	S. 29 1/2 W.	15.00
19	N. 11 E.	27.00	30	S. 46 3/4 W.	12.45
20	N. 16 W.	21.65	31	S. 29 1/2 W.	15.00
21	S. 31 1/2 E.	18.00	32	S. 37 W.	7.50
22	S. 16 E.	21.65	33	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00
23	S. 11 W.	27.00	34	S. 25 1/2 W.	36.00
24	S. 15 1/2 W.	29.50	35	S. 11 W.	27.00
25	S. 5 1/2 W.	14.00	36	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00
26	S. 25 1/2 W.	36.00			
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28	S. 8 1/2 W.	14.00			
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July, 1855 before an agreement of partition was executed by the partners. There were several transfers of interest about that time, to which reference was made in the "Agreement for Partition". Then on July 3, 1856 a survey map was recorded showing how "Lot 8" was divided into 66 lots. A deed had been prepared on June 16, 1856, prior to the recording of the survey, and the various partners then received individual deeds. Brannan and his two partners were granted portions of the newly designated lots 16, 23, 34, 35, 36, 53 and 54. It seems that the wording, "portions" might be due to the fact that the map of "Lot 8" does show houses on some of the lots and these may have been grants from Sutter or perhaps squatters. On Brannan's lots the following appear; Lot 16, Newton; Lot 23, also Newton; Lot 34, Bullock; Lot 53, Marking and Lot 54, Baker.

Perhaps the largest purchase of property from John A. Sutter was on June 20, 1850. A deed executed on that date by John A. Sutter, Jr. sold to Samuel Brannan, Samuel C. Bruce, Julius Wetzler and James S. Graham, each a one-fourth interest, the following: 2200 town lots in the city of Sacramento, 5 shares except the lots sold to date in the town of Eliza, 1 share in Plumas City, and this was further described as being the 80th part of that city and consisting of 36 town lots, all enumerated, a portion of lot 62 in San Francisco, a square mile of property on the east bank of the Sacramento River between Sacramento City and the townsite of Sutter on Sutterville. The sale also included 12 lots in the town of Nicolaus. (7)

The consideration for this deed was \$25,000.00 on execution, a similar amount due on July 1, 1850 and September 29, 1850 and a balance of \$75,000.00 on or before July 1, 1851, a total of \$150,000.00. The purchasers were authorized to collect in behalf of Sutter any amounts that might be due or become due for rents or so-called sales entered into by

Sutter prior to this deed. The three partners, Bruce, Wetzler and Graham, deeded their interest to Brannan on June 27, 1851, after full payment of the contract was supposed to have been made. Sutter signed receipts on March 18, 1851 acknowledging payment in full, the receipts notarized and recorded in Sacramento on March 19, 1851. However, a dispute arose later with respect to this purported payment and was settled in a California Appeals Court case, which will be covered in chronological order.

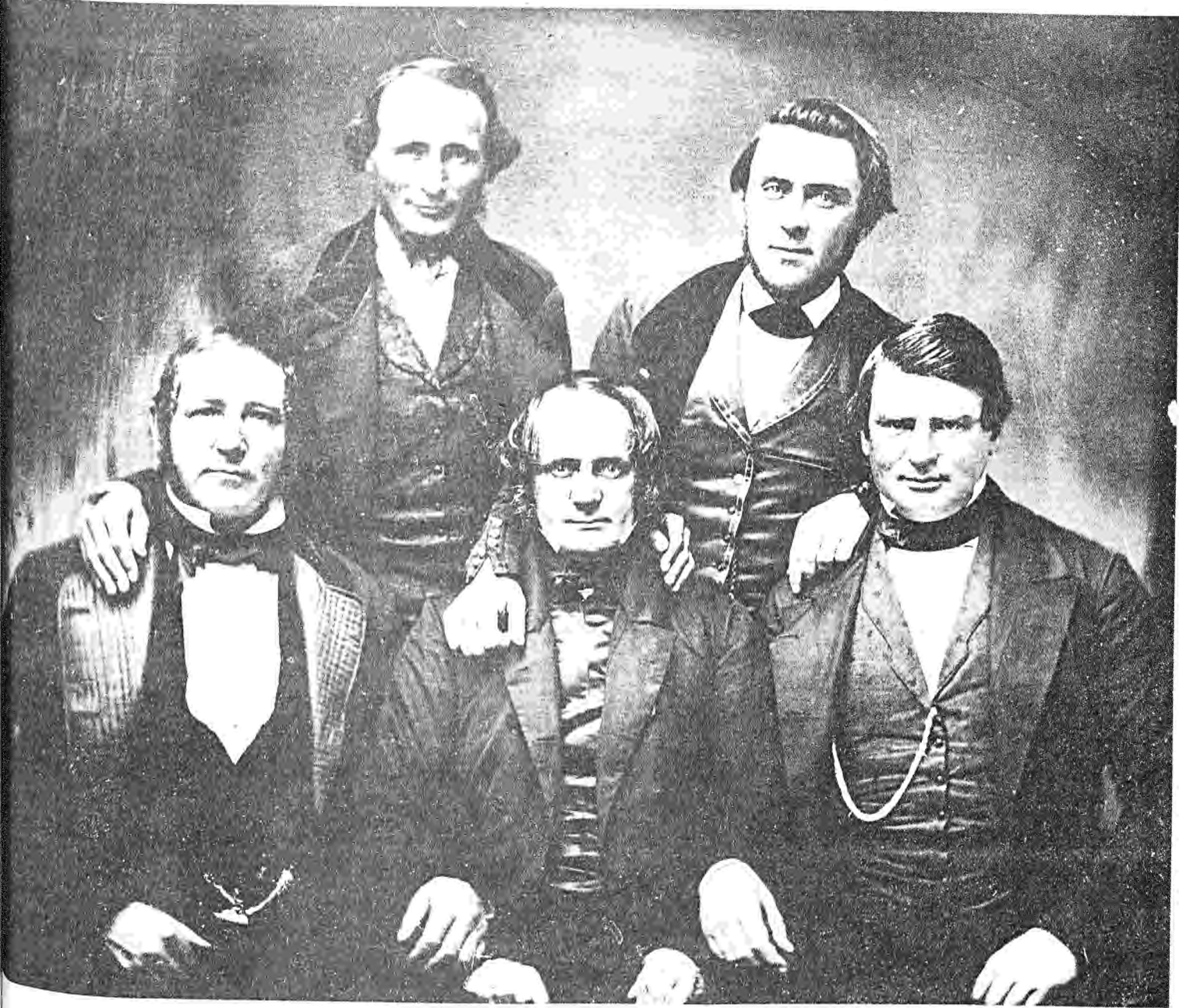
On July 15, 1850, construction started on the home built on the property located on the west bank of the Feather River, across from Nicolaus, that was to become the "White House". Materials were pre-cut and shipped from the East by steamer, then shipped from San Francisco to the location by river steamers on barges and then erected on the foundation. Plans were then made for the establishment of a pear orchard. The Brannan family moved into the White House late in 1850. Prior to that, Brannan and Howard had pre-cut homes erected for themselves in San Francisco. The Brannan store ads would announce the arrival of so many pre-cut homes and there were "iron houses" also brought from the East. At the time the Brannans moved in, the land was not subject to overflow and all reports indicated that this house was much more expensive than others in the area at that time.

In 1851 and for several years after, Brannan was more active in the San Francisco scene than in the Sacramento Valley. He bought city lots in San Francisco, headed the first Vigilante Committee, went to the Hawaiian Islands on the "Gamecock" and bought property there. He was building commercial buildings in San Francisco. In September, 1853 when the Express Building was finished he owned it and three others on Montgomery Street.

Page, Bacon & Co. with headquarters in St. Louis, failed in February, 1855, and this caused the failure of its banking office in San Francisco. Next, the firm of Adams & Co. closed and California had a severe financial crisis. The two partners of Brannan in the Sutter County land purchase, Wake Bryarly and Presley Dunlap exchanged various deeds and the last transfer of their interests came in July, 1856. None of the transfers seem to have indicated that Brannan was concerned or affected by the financial crisis. In fact, he became interested in founding a bank.

In the "Recollections of Casper T. Hopkins" by Casper T. Hopkins and published in almost serial form in the California Historical Society's Quarterly, Mr. Hopkins, an experienced man in many real estate transfers in California involving appraisals, advanced the theory that real estate could be used as collateral for the protection of bank depositors, instead of bonds or other surety, as required then by California law. Brannan became quite interested in such a procedure and actually used it in establishing the Brannan Bank.

On October 21, 1857, Brannan and his wife, Ann Lisa, executed a deed of trust to Howard, Hensley and Cook, on 2600 acres of land, the Brannan Ranch, including the White House, giving the Trustees power of sale, with the property as security for the depositors of the Brannan Bank. This bank was located at Montgomery and California Streets in San Francisco and for a short time had a branch in Sacramento. It seems that Brannan was not cut out for a banker for long, as he was seldom found at the bank; so, the bank was closed by voluntary action and Sutter County records show that the trustees transferred the deed of trust back to Brannan and his wife on October 25, 1858.



#### GO AHEAD MERCHANT PRINCES

(Left to right) Jacob P. Leese, Talbot Green(?), Thomas O. Larkin, Sam Brannan, W.D.M. Howard, founding fathers of San Francisco. Larkin, reputed the richest man in the United States at the time of this shot: Brannan, perhaps yet richer at this instant (1853); Leese, co-producer of the first American child at Yerba Buena in the 1830's Howard, his thumb in every pie; Green, the mysterious Green, who disappeared when it was said that he had heisted the deposits of a bank back East.

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with permission of the California Historical Society.

Now the contract on purchase of the 2200 town lots in Sacramento became the subject of rather prolonged court action. In July, 1855, John A. Sutter, Jr. now living in Acapulco, Mexico, deeded all the 2200 lots described in the deed to Brannan and partners on June 20, 1850, to W. S. Mesick. Mesick recorded his deed and Brannan brought action in the District Court to quiet title, declaring that Sutter's deed to Mesick was fraudulent and void. The District Court upheld Brannan's contention, but Mesick appealed and it went to the California Supreme Court where it was heard during the July, 1859 term. Wetzler claimed that he had been acting as an agent for Brannan and had been taken in with a one-fourth interest, but his testimony was not consistent and certain facts came to light that money paid to Sutter, for which Brannan had receipts, were actually from rents and payments collected that were due Sutter under the terms of the sale. Brannan also contended that the \$25,000.00 paid down at the inception of the purchase gave him title to the Sacramento lots. The Court held that the terms of the sale agreement were such that title did not pass until all payments were made as stipulated. Brannan lost the appeal. There is no indication what happened to the lots in Nicolaus and in the paper towns of Eliza and Plumas City, and the old records in Yuba County do not reflect any transfers in the period 1850 to 1860.

As stated, Brannan started to sell a great deal of the property he had acquired from the division of "Lot 8". On August 10, 1855, he sold 160 acres to George Zins, followed very shortly by another sale, but this time George's name was spelled Zinse. In 1857 Pico Andreas bought some of the property and some of the other buyers were John McDougal, E. F. Gillespie, George A. Jones, Fritz Haas, P. E. Drescher, J. H. Esselstyne and Jonas Marcuse.



The proceeds from the sale of the Sutter County land were used in purchasing acreage near Mount Helena. In 1858 he purchased 3000 acres and began to plant grapes and mulberry trees to raise silk worms. He also owned Merino sheep imported from France and Spain. He was planning the "Saratoga of the Pacific" and was credited with naming the area Calistoga, a combination of California and Saratoga. By 1859, he was known to have between 700 and 800 head of horses, flocks of Merino sheep, grape land that produced enough to support a 90,000 gallon brandy distillery and a winery. Plans were proceeding for a fine resort, the Calistoga Hot Springs.

However, not all interest in Sutter and Yuba Counties was ended. Colonel Charles L. Wilson, after losing his interest in the Sacramento Valley Railroad that had been completed to Folsom, planned to build the California Central Railroad from Folsom, along the foothills to Marysville using the survey that Theodore Judah had prepared before he started looking for the transcontinental route. Wilson needed money in addition to the bonds he was to sell to local investors from Marysville and Sacramento. Marysville was of course interested in such a railroad, but they also hoped for a line more direct to Benicia or Vallejo and the Marysville-Vallejo Railroad had been discussed and planned since 1852. But, Wilson started to build from Folsom and managed to reach Lincoln. Brannan had loaned \$85,000.00 and Charles Dana \$15,000.00 in a joint loan agreement, with the lenders taking a chattel mortgage on the four railroad engines, the few flat cars the road had and on all the iron rails Wilson had ordered from the East, some of which were held in San Francisco for payment on arrival. The loan became delinquent; Brannan moved quickly and got a judgment for the loan advance plus interest and for some of the bonds he also held. Wilson appealed this judgment. After reciting the

facts about the terms of the loan, he related how Brannan had agreed to advance additional funds after he had been given more bonds of the railroad, and how it had been agreed that another railroad company would be formed to complete the road to Marysville with Sam Brannan as president.

Now this is what happened in Yuba County, and the Marysville Appeal reporter or perhaps the editor wrote articles that explain the matter in excellent terms:

September 11, 1862. "The settlers in that part of Linda Township toward Sand Flat, on the east side of the Yuba, above Simpson's Ferry, have been somewhat excited lately by the appearance among them of a party who is negotiating for the sale of several sections of land lying on the ridge, just the other side of the river, east and northeast of Marysville. The object of the purchase is given out to be for the purpose of making a large sheep ranch, but it is well understood that the purchasing party is acting as agent for a well-known San Francisco broker who has a large interest in the California Central Railroad, and, that upon this tract is to be located the new railroad town which that company is to call into existence, to cut off this city from the mountain trade, and to punish her for the failure or tacit refusal to vote the \$100,000.00 worth of unissued bonds to the Central Railroad Company." (8)

September 12, 1862. "A. N. Rood says not a railroad town, just a sheep ranch."

Now, to give the reader an insight as to what was happening, the Yuba County records indicate as follows:

September 23, 1862. Azanian N. Rood deeded to Samuel Brannan over four sections of land in Township 15N, Range 5 E. Consideration named of \$10,000.00.

On September 30, 1862, A. N. Rood, deeded to Samuel Brannan the same sections of land as described in the first deed, plus one additional section and a parcel containing approximately 240 acres in Township 16N, R 5E. The consideration this time shown as \$20,000.00. We do know that Sam Brannan did not pay twice for the same land.

Just to show that there was not too much of a secret, the Journals of Charles E. De Long, published as "California's Bantam Cock" by the California Historical Society Quarterly quotes, "November, 1862. Monday 3rd - Attended District Court in the morning. At noon took Mrs. Simpson's carriage and went with her up to Yuba Ranch (alias Brannan City that is to be) to attend a little trial for her against H. H. Miller."

Now to return to the Marysville Appeal stories of events:

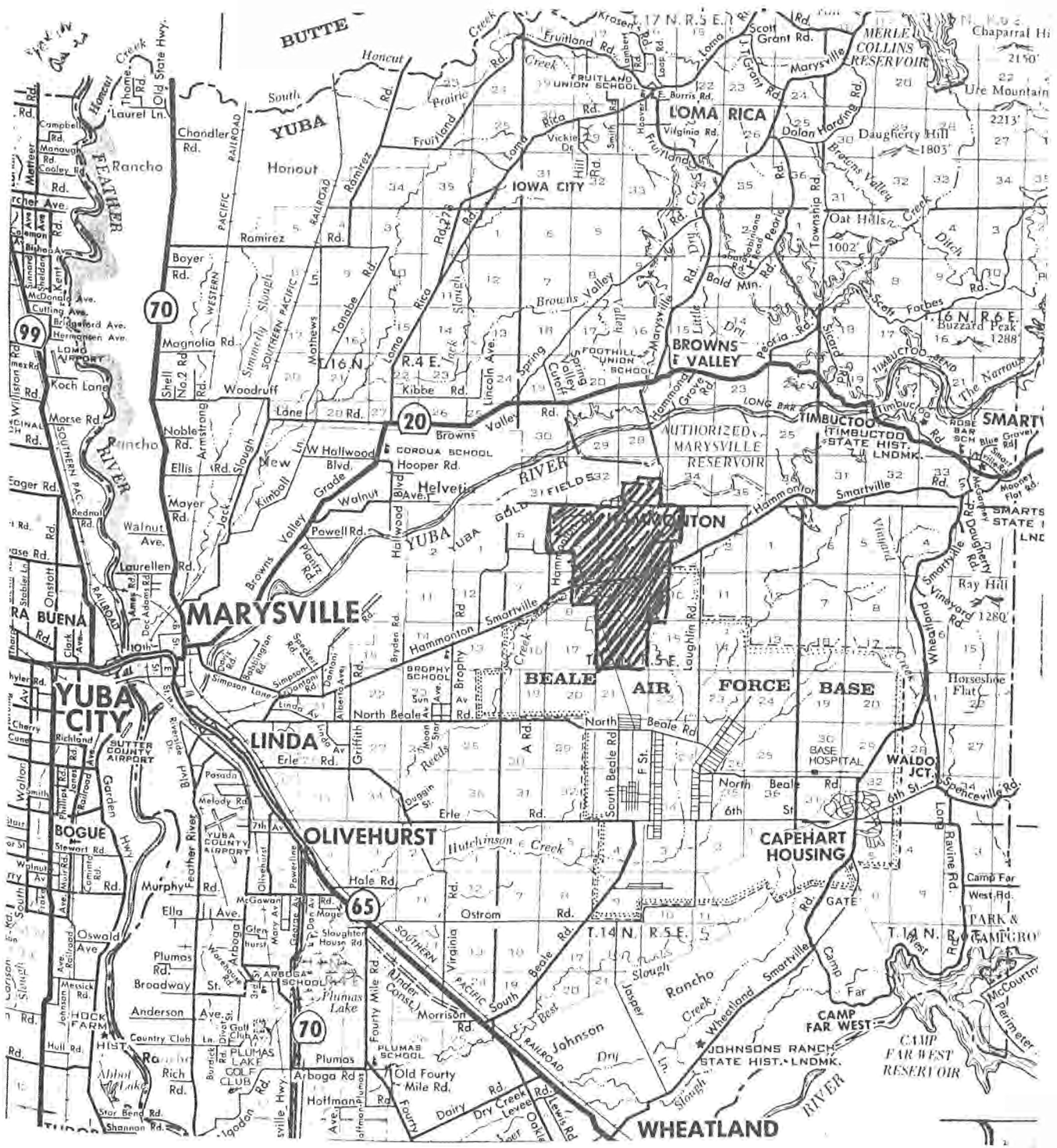
November 21, 1862. The article is first in reference to the California Northern Railroad then building from Marysville to Oroville.

....."only one link in the chain".....

"With the rails laid from Vallejo, Marysville could feel less concerned than she does at the prospect of another railroad, the Central, being run from Lincoln to a terminus eight miles east of this city. It was thought that the threat to do this on the part of the managers of the Central was an empty scarecrow extorted by the refusal of the Yuba County Supervisors to break faith with the San Francisco and Marysville Company, and further impair its credit, by transferring the \$100,000.00 remainder of the railroad bonds the county is authorized to issue, from the later company to the Central. The last Legislature passed the bill giving the Supervisors power to make this transfer, the people consenting, and the Supervisors would not submit the bill to the popular vote. The Central Company were apparently in earnest. They are said to have recently obtained means from other sources for their extension of their road twenty four miles

northwardly and are now, as we are told, laying out a townsite at the proposed terminus near Owsley's Bar, some eight miles east of Marysville." November 22, 1862. "What we gave in a report in yesterday's Appeal, relative to the extension of the Central Railroad from Lincoln to a point near the foothills east of Marysville, is confirmed by the San Francisco journals of Thursday. The extension, however, is not to be built by the Central Company, but by a new corporation styled the Yuba Railway Company, which met on Wednesday at the Bay and elected the following officers: Sam Brannan, president; James P. Flint, vice president; J. M. Shotwell, secretary-treasurer. The directors, James P. Flint, Charles Dana, H. B. Williams, J. M. Shotwell. The incorporators of the company were: Henry E. Robinson, Samuel Brannan, James P. Flint, H. P. Williams, J. K. Osgood, Charles Dana and Joseph M. Shotwell. Brannan is probably the principal owner in the enterprise, as he is said to be in the road from Folsom to Lincoln; and that the purchase of the "sheep ranch" by his presumed agent, several miles east of Marysville, sometime ago was probably part of the new scheme. The only wool said ranch will produce will be that which is pulled over the popular eye. The terminus of the extension road, according to the Bay papers, is to be nineteen miles up the Yuba, instead of only eight miles east of the city. Shrewd business men here are unable to see the wisdom of building a road away from Marysville, so soon to be the terminus of the Oroville road running twenty six miles further up the valley. Perhaps the Yuba Railway Company fear the competition of the boats if the cars come into the city. If so, how will they like the railroad from Vallejo? Let Marysville give all her energies to the completion of this road and thus checkmate her enemies." (9)

The pressure on Marysville and the Yuba County Supervisors did not work at this time. Brannan resigned from the Yuba Railroad Company, had



This map has imposed on it the original size of Yuba Ranch, as described in the deed from A.N. Rood to Samuel Brannan, recorded September 30, 1862, Yuba County. This ranch was later enlarged as shown by subsequent deeds.

the Sheriff in Sacramento County sell the engines and cars of the California Central Railway at auction. By this time the Central Pacific Railroad of California was in the picture. This company bought the engines, took over the tracks of the California Central, and when they had opened their track to Roseville, first called Junction, had a line from Sacramento to Lincoln. Brannan sold the Yuba Ranch property in 1869, that is, he deeded it to the Capital Savings Bank of Sacramento, the consideration stated as \$9,000.00. This could have been a foreclosure on a settlement on other borrowings.

It is believed that the Central Pacific Company bought Brannan's judgment against Colonel Wilson and gave him 200 shares of their stock. Much later Brannan filed suit against the Central Pacific and all its officers. He claimed that Stanford, Crocker, Huntington and Hopkins had so managed the affairs that he did not get a proper dividend on his stock. The suit was settled, it is said, for \$100,000.00 without a court judgment. The basis of this suit and the figures used to show the great profit were the basis of the United States Senate Select Committee hearings much later, when the Senate forced the Central Pacific to pay the bonds that were granted for the construction of the railroad.

Jacob P. Leese executed an agreement with the Mexican Government of Benito Juarez, on March 31, 1863, whereby a group of San Francisco men paying at the inception \$100,000.00 were granted a lease of land in Baja California of almost 6800 square miles with the right to colonize. Additional payments would be due at a later date to a total of \$300,000.00. Leese represented Samuel Hensley, Samuel Brannan, John Parrot, A. B. Forbes, Henry E. Robinson, S. W. Inge, Jesse Holladay, W. Norris, John Sime, John Caperton, E. Wakeman, Lewis MacLane, James W. Winans and J. H. Biard.

It is not known how much each man was assessed. However, the plan did not work; no further payments were made and later an English company took over the concession and also failed.

Sam Brannan, however, was able to confuse the claim with Mexico, since he became involved in an advance of the sum of \$30,000.00 to General Ochoa, for the purpose of printing and issuing Mexican bonds.

The story of the Ochoa bonds is a tale unto itself, but it should be mentioned since it later developed as a claimed resource by Brannan to restore his failing fortunes. General Ochoa was authorized to come to San Francisco, issue and sell \$10,000.00 in Mexican bonds to help finance Mexico in the fight against the French. Brannan advanced \$30,000.00 to have the bonds printed and to pay some of the expenses of Ochoa and Mexican Consulates. Brannan was appointed the agent to sell the bonds, but they did not sell. In order to protect his loan, Brannan required that the bonds be assigned to him with the right of sale on disposal if the loan was not repaid within a short period of time. Brannan then exercised his rights under the agreement and attempted to sell the bonds in New York. Still they did not sell. The Mexican Government became quite concerned that this amount was outstanding. They claimed the ownership was void as were the bonds, but Brannan still hung on. It took many years to settle this claim, which by now included interest at two per cent per month. (10)

1866 was not a good year for Sam Brannan. Mrs. Brannan left, went to London and indicated that she would file for divorce. She took the children with her and placed her divorce suit in the hands of San Francisco attorneys. (11)

1870 the divorce was granted and Mrs. Brannan received a settlement of \$500,000.00. Brannan was required to sell some of his property, borrow

on other buildings in order to effect settlement. During this time some of his properties were lost by foreclosure, perhaps the Yuba Ranch, but he did not want to sell the "White House" at that time. He did, however, borrow on the Brannan Ranch, giving a deed of trust to Swift and Coleman, Trustees for the Sacramento Savings Bank. But the pressures were too great. His very heavy investment in Calistoga resulted in the sale of the White House to William P. Hanson for the sum of \$4,000.00 on May 9, 1873. On November 9, 1873 he sold the last portion of Brannan Ranch to his neighbor, Jonas Marcuse.

In a privately printed book by Nicolaus Wilson Hanson, titled "As I Remember", (12) we are given a personal view of the "White House", since the author was the son of William P. Hanson and lived on the property as a boy. He describes the house as having eight rooms, eight fireplaces with the interior walls of lath and plaster. He recalls the house as surrounded by a large lawn, shade and ornamental trees, an orchard with apples, pears, peaches, plums and figs. Mulberry trees were planted along the river bank, the same kind that Brannan had planted at Calistoga so that a silk worm culture could be established. A new levee was later constructed west of the original location of the house because of overflow; and the house and barn were moved one and one-quarter mile west and near the present Garden Highway.

However, the new levee did not hold during the floods of 1875 and 1876 and then in 1878-79 a great flood left the White House surrounded by water. Hanson lost his crops and livestock. In more recent times, 1940, a flood put water eight feet deep around the house.

The Brannan Ranch, while it was owned by Brannan, had not been subject to flooding, and only after the effects of hydraulic mining on the



Yuba and Feather rivers had filled the stream beds did this condition occur. Some of the testimony taken during the famous Hydraulic Injunction Hearings refer to the properties that Brannan had owned, the Yuba Ranch in Yuba County and the Brannan Ranch in Sutter County. Joseph A. Flint expressed the opinion that the ground water level had been raised on the Yuba Ranch, later owned by Daniel Walters, but how much it could have improved does not seem to have been borne out when the Capital Savings Bank foreclosed the property from Walters. Another opinion voiced by Philip E. Drescher was to the effect that the Brannan Ranch, opposite Nicolaus, which once had 3000 wine grape vines imported from Spain and almost 20,000 other grape vines planted by Brannan, starting in 1861, were entirely destroyed and the land was now covered with slickens and sediment. It might seem that Sam Brannan was fortunate to sell when he did.

Now all things seemed to go against Brannan. He turned more and more to his claim against the Mexican Government and for the services of the "Brannan Contingent" he financed to go to Mexico. He made many trips to New York, to Mexico City and these expenses caused him to borrow on or sell the property he had left. By 1877 all the Nicolaus, Calistoga, Yuba County, Sacramento City property had been sold or lost. In San Francisco he retained only the Masonic Hall, and the rental at one time was his only income. Brannan's ownership of the Masonic Hall is strange. He was denied membership as a Mason, based then upon his Mormonism, but he built and owned the hall in San Francisco which was the last piece of property to be sold.

Brannan's reputation still was of interest to Sutter and Yuba County residents. The Marysville Appeal had two articles about Brannan, as follows:

April 17, 1886 Sam Brannan

"This gentleman, so well known to many citizens of Marysville, is now residing at Nogales, a small town on the Guaymas Railroad. Sam and a man named Dumphy are engaged in surveying the State of Sonora, for which they are to receive from the Mexican Government an immense grant of land."

Then on November 6, 1887, an editorial was published in the Appeal, which appears to have been based on an article first printed in the San Francisco Examiner:

"Sam Brannan, one of the best known of California pioneers, has returned to this state after eight years absence in Mexico, where he has been working up a colonization scheme. He was found by an Examiner (San Francisco) reporter the other day, lodged in a miserable garret of a cheap lodging house of San Francisco. It does not appear, however, from the interview which resulted that Brannan is in want. He says he will never leave California again if he can help it, and that he means to spend a year in San Diego. He told the reporter that the Mexican Government had acknowledged his claim of ten million dollars for supplies furnished Mexico in the war of 1866, but that he has been paid only \$20,000.00 of that sum, and that chances of his receiving more are very slim. The Mexican Government, he says, is miserably poor and the officials from the President down donate half of their salaries to the treasury. Brannan has made and lost many fortunes in his time. He is to receive one-third of the land of the new colony that he has been laying out in Mexico so that he is not likely to suffer for comforts in his old age. He is something of an

invalid now and is obliged to go to bed at sunset owing to the effects of an attack of paralysis he sustained some years ago."

The proposed colonization in the Mexican state of Sonora was a complete failure as Brannan failed to raise the funds needed and the Yaqui Indians of Sonora were not at all cooperative with anyone attempting to settle in their territory. There is a history of a number of Mormon families that did move into Sonora but none of these settlers were of benefit to Brannan.

Sam Brannan acquired a Mexican wife, but the Catholic Church refused to marry them in Mexico. They were married when he returned to San Diego and Brannan became a real estate agent in that city. Later he moved to Escondido, California, a few miles north and east of San Diego and died in that town on May 5, 1889.

The author of this article has friends in Escondido and on a visit he asked to be taken to the Escondido cemetery, since some historians have stated that Brannan was buried there. No record of such burial is found in Oak Hill Cemetery records, but it was suggested that Mrs. Frances Ryan of Escondido (no relation) be consulted since she is a daughter of one of the early settlers and considered the historian of the area. Her uncles came to Escondido in 1860 and her father came in 1887 when he was age 21.

Mrs. Ryan recites in her book, "Early Days in Escondido" (13) that her uncle C. E. Thomas died in April, 1889 and was buried on a piece of land owned by the five Thomas brothers. The remaining brothers later gave 38 acres surrounding this area for the purpose of a cemetery, and that later the Oak Hill Cemetery Association was formed. While not so

stated in her book, Mrs. Ryan stated that Sam Brannan was the second person to have been buried in this area since he was considered a pauper and no one claimed his body.-

The official records of the Mount Hope Cemetery in San Diego indicate that Sam Brannan's remains were not received there until May 14, 1889. This would indicate a nine day-lapse between date of death and when the body was taken to San Diego. So, it might be that Samuel Brannan had two burial places in this state; and a few years ago people in Calistoga felt that he should be brought from San Diego and buried in the town he founded. San Diego resisted this attempt and Sam has been left in peace.

Brannan's remains were held in a receiving vault at the Mount Hope Cemetery from May 14, 1889 until October 1, 1890, when a nephew, Alexander Badlam of San Francisco, paid the receiving fees, vault rental and burial costs to have Brannan properly buried. In 1926, a history buff provided a granite headstone to mark the resting place of a California Pioneer.

Today, Yuba City honors Sam Brannan's memory with San Brannan Park and a granite marker; San Francisco has a street that carries his name; and a small island in the Sacramento River, which Brannan never owned, is named for him.

It took quite a man to do what Sam Brannan did in those rough and tough times. No holds were barred and it was each man for himself, the devil take the hindmost.

An index and file of all of the past issues of the NEWS BULLETIN may be found in the Sutter County Library and in the Marysville City-County Library.

NOTES

- (1) Brannan & C. C. Smith left Sutter's Fort, April 16, 1847. They met Brigham Young at Green River, June 30, 1847. "Sam Brannan and the California Mormons" Paul Bailey, Western Lone Press, Los Angeles, California.
- (2) "Tales of San Francisco", Sam Dickason, Stanford Press, Stanford, California, 1947.
- (3) William Stout came to California with the "Brooklyn Company" with Brannan, later became first Mayor of Sacramento.
- (4) "John Sutter, Rascal & Adventurer", Margaret Eyer Wilber, Liverwright Publishing Company, New York, 1949.
- (5) "An Old California Pioneer - Peter Harpemen Burnett", By Peter H. Burnett, foreword by Joseph A. Sullivan, Oakland, California, 1946.
- (6) "The Cheever Family and the Founding of Yuba City", Earl Ramey, News Bulletin of the Sutter County Historical Society, Vol. 2 No. 7, October, 1960 - also, "Yuba City's First Store-Keeper", Earl Ramey.
- (7) See map on inside back cover of News Bulletin, Sutter County Historical Society, Vol. 11, No. 1, January, 1972. The lots were Lot 6, Block 8; Lot 10, Block 16; Lots 3 & 4, Block 18; Lot 1, Block 43; Lot 6, Block 44; Lot 2, Block 45; Lot 5, Block 46; Lots 1, 5, 6, 10, Block 52.
- (8) Yuba County authorized an issue of \$200,000.00 in bonds to assist the construction of the San Francisco and Marysville Rail Road Company. This is the railroad referred to as the Vallejo road. \$100,000.00 was issued. The "Central" is the California Central Railroad, as the Central Pacific of transcontinental fame had not started. The California Central was incorporated April 21, 1857 and the road was finished from Folsom to Lincoln on October 13, 1861.
- (9) Some reports put those proposed extension as going to Oregon Bar, which is not up the Yuba River, but with a lower elevation and easier to reach.
- (10) "La Concession Leese". Archivo Historica-Diplomatico Mexicano. Fernando Inglesias Calderon, #R, Mexico-Secretaria De La Relaciones Exteriores
- (11) From California Census of 1852 and contained in Francis P. Farquhar; Edward Vischer and his "Pictorial of California" 1932  
Ann Lisa Brannan, birthplace New York - maiden name Corwin  
Samuel Brannan Jr., birthplace New York - resided in San Diego in 1930  
Adelia Brannan, birthplace California - married Herbert Vischer,  
April, 1881  
Fanny K. Brannan, birthplace California - married L. A. Gjessing
- (12) "As I Remember" - Nicolaus Wilson Hanson, published by the author, Chico, California 1944.
- (13) "Early Days in Escondido" Text, Frances Beven Ryan, Illustrations by Lewis C. Ryan. Published by the authors, Escondido, California, 1970.

APPENDIX

Life of Sam Brannan

- 3/1/1819 Born, Saco, Maine. (Date given by Frank Soule in Annals of S.F.)
- 1833 Moved to Lake County, Ohio. Apprenticed to a printer.
- 1835-1842 Became a Mormon (Dates from various sources differ).
- 1844 Went to New York City to publish Mormon newspaper. First edition of the "Messenger" on May 18, 1844. Paper renamed the "Prophet".
- 1844 Married Ann Liza Corwin.
- 1845 Became leader of a Mormon group planning to leave the United States due to persecution.
- 2/4/1846 The chartered ship "Brooklyn" sailed from New York without public notice of destination, but intended to reach Mexican port of Yerba Buena in California.
- 7/9/1846 Commander Montgomery of the USS Plymouth raised the American Flag in Yerba Buena.
- 7/31/1846 The "Brooklyn" arrived in Yerba Buena via Honolulu with 238 persons. This doubled the existing population. S. Brannan & Co. formed to hold title to all of the community goods of the Mormon colonists.
- 1/9/1847 First edition of the "California Star" on the small press brought from New York. E. P. Jones, Editor; Edward Kremble, Assistant with Talman H. Rolfe also employed by Brannan.
- 4/26/1847 Brannan and Smith went to meet Brigham Young, failed to convince him to bring the Mormons to California. Brought a message back for members of the Mormon Battalion, still in California, to stay since a food shortage was expected. Many worked for Sutter and others were with Marshall building the new saw-mill.
- 1/24/1848 Gold found in the mill-race at Coloma by Marshall (date disputed).
- 4/1848 Gold discovery confirmed. Brannan reported to have returned from Coloma to San Francisco with gold in a bottle and to have shouted in the streets, "Gold, Gold on the American River."
- 7/15/1848 Brannan's claim on the American River (Mormon Bar) was reported. The workers were said to pay tithe to Brannan, who did not give the funds to the church. Brannan was excommunicated by the church.

- 7/15/1849 Elected member of the Town Council, San Francisco.
- 1850 Brannan and others formed the "Regulators" to drive squatters away from the banks of the Sacramento in the Sacramento City area.
- 1850 Brannan and others chartered the ship "General Morgan" and explored Humboldt Bay and the mouth of the Eel River.
- 1851 Brannan bought land in Honolulu after the so-called filibuster attempt to convince the King of Hawaii to join the United States. The ship "Gamecock" was used in this attempt.
- 6/1/1851 One of the organizers and the first President of the First Vigilante Committee.
- 1853 Charter member, Society of California Pioneers, President 1853-54.
- 1853 Elected as California State Senator. Resigned immediately.
- 1854 Considered major property owner in Sacramento, San Francisco, as well as Sutter County. Now had store in Sacramento under name of Osborn & Brannan. Published report indicated wealth in San Francisco of J. L. Folsom, \$875,500.00 and Sam Brannan \$494,300.00 on which they paid taxes. No mention of Sacramento, Sutter County, etc.
- 1856 Active with the Second Vigilante Committee.
- 1857 Interested in property in Napa Valley. Imported grape cuttings and merino sheep from France. Grapes planted in Calistoga and on the "White House" property in Sutter County.
- 10/21/1857 Established Brannan Bank in San Francisco, with branch in Sacramento.
- 10/25/1858 Voluntarily closed Brannan Bank.
- 2/18/1859 Newspaper article described 3000 acre ranch in Calistoga, with winery, distillery, sheep, horses and the Calistoga Hot Springs Resort.
- 1860 Charles Dana, James P. Flint, J. M. Shotwell with Brannan bought bonds of the California Central Railroad, then building from Folsom toward Marysville. Brannan & Dana also made a loan.
- 10/31/1861 California Central Railroad completed to Lincoln but is unable to continue due to financial problems.
- 1862 Brannan City planned in Yuba County.

- 1863 Jacob P. Leese entered into a colonization plan for Baja, California with Benito Juarez. Brannan was one of the many San Francisco men who provided the funds.
- 1864 Brannan was a Presidential Elector. He voted for Lincoln.
- 1864 Agreed to finance the extension of the Napa Valley Railroad from its terminus in Napa to Calistoga. Railroad was foreclosed by the contractor almost as soon as it was finished. Investment lost.
- 1866 Advanced funds to General Ochoa of Mexico for cost of issuing bonds to finance their defense against the French. Recovery of this amount and for the supplies furnished for a "Brannan Contingent" became principal activity in later years.
- 1866 Mrs. Brannan went to England taking the children, announcing her intention to file for divorce.
- 1868 Came to Los Angeles and bought land from Abel Stearns.
- 1870 Mrs. Brannan has a divorce and a settlement of \$500,000.00. It was necessary to sell various real estate holdings and some properties were lost by foreclosure.
- 1870 Filed suit against the Central Pacific Railroad and all its officers and directors, claiming loss of dividends due to the manner in which finances and contracts were handled for the benefit of the "Big 4". Suit was not adjudicated, supposed to have been settled by the payment of \$100,000.00 (not verified).
- 1871-1880 Spent most of this time in Mexico and also New York, attempting to collect on his claim against the Mexican Government for the funds advanced to General Ochoa and for supplies.
- 1887 Forced to sell last property in Nicolaus, Calistoga and the last building he owned in San Francisco, the Masonic Hall. Leland Stanford got the Calistoga property and Brannan was quite gleeful when it burned down.
- 1880 Mexico gave him a large land grant in the state of Sonora. Tried to finance the settlement of colonists by sale of stock in New York, without success. Efforts failed and colonists driven off by the Yaqui Indians.
- 1881-1889 Resided in San Diego and then in Escondido, California. Married to a Mexican wife, was a real estate agent.
- 5/5/1889 Died in Escondido, California. Buried in San Diego.



REFERENCES

Much of the history of early California from 1846 on, has been written by pioneers and then historians who have covered certain personalities or areas, but in each of these will be found references to others such as Sam Brannan. Paul Bailey has written several books about Brannan, *The Gay Saint* and *The Mormans in California* and several short articles in *The Improvement Era*, a publication of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Reva Scott, wrote *Sam Brannan and the Golden Fleece* in fiction style. Other references to Sam Brannan were found in *The Early Days and Men of California*, by W. F. Swasey; *Seventy Five Years in California* by William Heath Davis; *California - A History*, Based in part on *A Short History of California* by Rockwell D. Hunt & Nellie Van De Gridt Sanchez; *Representative and Leading Men of the Pacific* by Oscar T. Shuck; *The First Forty-Miner and the Story of the Golden Tea Caddy*, by James A. Scherer; *History of California* by Theodore H. Hittell; *This is San Francisco* by Robert O'Brien; various issues of the *Society of California Pioneers*; *Annals of San Francisco* by Frank Soule; many issues of the *Sutter County Historical Society's News Bulletin*, also many issues of *California Historical Society's Quarterly*. Perhaps most helpful was Mr. Earl Ramey of Marysville with his index of the many sources available in the Marysville-Yuba County Library and, his personal help in locating legal records of Sutter and Yuba Counties with specific dates of the many transactions.

GLEANINGS

Marysville Appeal, October 21, 1862

Rich One. In Sam Brannan's office on Montgomery Street, San Francisco, is a piece of rock weighing over fifty pounds, taken from the Ben Franklin, Humboldt Mines, which assays over six thousand dollars per ton, nearly all antimonial silver.

Marysville Appeal, November 13, 1879

Yesterday the old Sam Brannan ranch on the Yuba, lately owned by Daniel Walters, was sold on a trust deed and bought by the Capital Savings Bank of Sacramento. The ranch contains 4200 acres. Amount of the deed \$16,000.00.

From the Journals of the California Legislature, First Session 1850

The boosters of Yuba City were somewhat confused these days. February 7th, a petition from Yuba City prayed that the city be named as the seat of justice of Brannan County. The petition was referred to the Committee on Counties, but two days later the Committee reported that they

failed to discover a county by that name, and, asked that they be discharged from further consideration of the petition.

This is a footnote by Earl Ramey and appears in "The Beginnings of Marysville" as published in California Historical Society Quarterly, Volume 14.

Marysville Appeal, November 15, 1879

Sharp Practice. The Truckee Republican tells the following "sell" on Sam Brannan. In the palmy days of Sam Brannan one of Joe Potter's pals at an agreed moment, made a furious and ruffianly assault on the Capitalist. Potter, elegantly dressed, was standing close by, and gallantly rushed to the rescue, drew a revolver, fired at the assailant and succeeded in putting him to ignominious flight. Brannan having been slightly acquainted with Potter before the adventure was ever afterwards a firm friend. He supposed that Potter had saved his life or at least had protected him from robbery and great bodily harm.

Marysville Appeal, October 24, 1914

Plan Election Dinner

Yuba City, October 23 - Members of the Terra Buena improvement club have completed plans for an election day dinner to be held on Tuesday, November 3rd. The charge will be twenty-five cents a plate. The proceeds to go towards the building fund. The next meeting of the club will be held at the home of Mrs. Vogan on next Thursday. Yesterday the club met at the home of Mrs. D. J. McLean of Terra Buena.

Sutter County Farmer, July 19, 1907

Trolley poles on Plumas & B Streets. This week the Northern Electric workmen began setting poles along B and Plumas Streets, and we understand that work will begin at once on laying the track for the local services over that route, in addition to the service on Bridge Street. Spurs will be run from B Street to the canneries and packing houses.