

SAN JOAQUIN HISTORIAN

Volume IV

Number 4

OCTOBER 1968

Published Quarterly by San Joaquin County Historical Society
P. O. Box - Lodi, California, 95240

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY FERRIES

By Robert Angermeier

To the traveler of a century or so ago, nature had placed very effective obstacles across all routes to San Joaquin County, which resulted in frustrating and, in some seasons, almost insurmountable problems.

To the East was the towering Sierra Nevada, which until very recent times were impassable during the winter months and permitted a most reluctant passage even during the summer season.

To the West lay the labyrinthic Delta region, which in early days was a vast trackless area of swamp land and dead-end sloughs, in which even seasoned boatmen became lost or stranded on mud flats at low tide.

The North and South approaches were traversed by many rivers which were too deep to be forded even in the dry season.

These challenging obstacles which primarily involved the crossing of the various waterways, resulted in the establishment of many ferries. The very early ones were rafts, rowboats and yawls, which were almost all abandoned after a few years when cable controlled types became available. The early models were mostly homemade and sensitive to the whims of flood and wind, and travelers were subject to delays caused by broken cables and undependable operators, who, however, fared very well financially inasmuch as the traveler was totally dependent on their services and in no position to bargain or complain.

An indication of the importance attached to the operation of ferries at a very early date (1850's) is evidenced by the fact that anyone wishing to establish ferry service was required to submit a request for a permit to the Board of Supervisors.

All early ferries, and most of the roads leading to them, were known simply by the name of the ferry operator. These historically descriptive road names are now being changed and will soon join the old ferries in the chronicles of the past. For example: "Murphy Ferry Road" is now "Murphy Road"; "Durham Ferry Road" is now "Airport Way", etc.

Probably the first regular ferry (1848) in the area was "Doak's", which crossed a former channel of the San Joaquin River near the present Mossdale Bridge which carries the heavy traffic of State Highway N. 50. Other early ferries prior to 1870 were "Johnson's", "Garwood", "Stocum's" and "Durham's" also on the San Joaquin River; "Stoke's and Wood's" ("Benson's"), "Wood's", "Benedict's" and "Laird's" ("Staples") all crossing the Mokelumne River;

"Taylor's", "Murphy's" and "Burney's" on the Stanislaus River, "Davis" crossing Dry Creek, and "Davis and Atherton's" on the Calaveras River. These sites were fairly well spread out over the courses of the rivers and indicate the locations of the then existing main Roads.

Within the period from 1870 to about 1885 the only new ferries to appear were "Lindstrom's" and "Frewert's" on the San Joaquin River, and "Naglee's" on Old River which indicate the first large scale assault on the pristine acres of Roberts and Union Islands.

Between the years 1885 to approximately the turn of the century there was a great flurry of activity on Union Island, and "Winter's", "Lammer's", "Bell's" and "Hulbert ford" ferries appear on Old River, and "Brant's" ferry crossed the San Joaquin River to Roberts Island.

By the turn of the century almost all of the old ferries, with the exception of the Delta area, had been replaced by bridges, or their sites abandoned in favor of roads and bridges in more suitable locations.

The early years of this century which witnessed the gradual increase in the number of automobiles and trucks, both of which steadily replaced passenger boat service and produce barge usage in the Delta area, ushered in a last - almost frantic - boom for the little ferry boats which shuttled back and forth between the many Islands.

These Delta ferries, which can carry four autos or two trucks, have an almost monotonous similarity both in appearance and setting. They in turn, having had their day, are now fast disappearing, bowing before the relentless advance of the concrete bridge. Of the many which formerly operated in the Delta only four remain in service at this writing, and they too are doomed to oblivion within a very few years. No attempt will be made to list all of the Delta ferries which were, and are still operated by the County, as their names in all cases were of the Islands they served such as "McDonald Island Ferry", "Venice Ferry", etc., and also because they are not in a strict sense open to public travel. These ferries are actually extensions of County Roads which cross the waterways over to private property.

Following is a listing and key map of the various ferries which operated in areas other than the Delta. The names and locations have been gleaned from various sources. There were undoubtedly many other ferries whose names have not survived, and also a few whose names are known but not their locations.

The dates given are in most cases only indicative of the general period of activity.

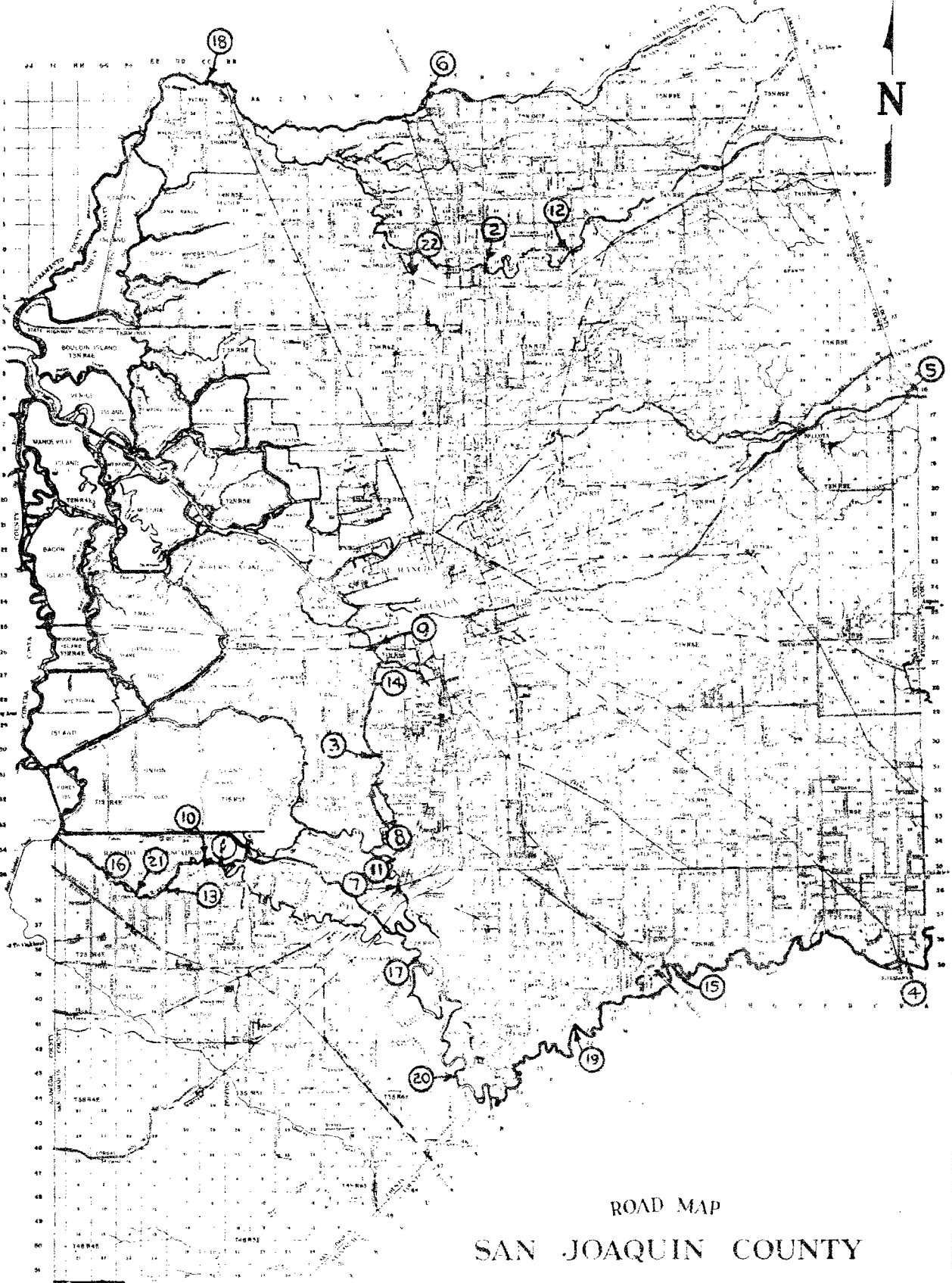
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ORGANIZATION

San Joaquin County Historical Society meets on the fourth Monday of each month except July and August, at Micken County Park, at 8 pm. Visitors are always welcome.

The Society is organized to discover, preserve and spread the knowledge of historical records and events, particularly those involving the history of San Joaquin County and the State of California. Anyone interested in the activities of the Society is invited to join. Dues are \$3.00 per year. Contributions to the Society are deductible for income tax purposes.

Number	Name	Date
1.	Bell's	1890-1900
2.	Benedict's	1850-1870
3.	Bowman's Brandt's	1870-1890 1890-1900
4.	Burney's	1850-1870
5.	Davis and Atherton's	1850-1870
6.	Davis'	1849-1870
7.	Doak's Doak and Bonsell's Shepherd's Moss'	1848-only 1849-1851 1852-1855 1856-1890
8.	Frewert's	1880-1900
9.	Garwood	1860-1890
10.	Hulbert ford	1890-1900
11.	Johnson's	1860-1890
12.	Laird's Staples' Miller's	1849-only 1850-only 1851-1880
13.	Lammer's	1890-1900
14.	Lindstrom's	1880-1900
15.	Murphy's	1850-1870
16.	Naglee's	1880-1900
17.	Slocums'	1860-1870
18.	Stoke and Wood's Benson's	1849-only 1850-1870
19.	Taylor's	1850-1890
20.	Titus and Manley's Durham's Ingnam's	1850-1860 1860-1883 1883-1905
21.	Winter's	1890-1900
22.	Woods and McQueen's Wood's	1852-1853 1854-1858



ROAD MAP SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY CALIFORNIA

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1/2" = 1 Mile	1/4" = 1/2 Mile
1/8" = 1/4 Mile	1/16" = 1/8 Mile
1/32" = 1/16 Mile	1/64" = 1/32 Mile
1/128" = 1/64 Mile	1/256" = 1/128 Mile

TRAFFIC SIGNALS

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