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San Joaquin County Historical Society meets on the fourth Monday of each month, except July and August, at 8 p.m., at Micke Grove Park. The society is organized to preserve and spread the knowledge of historical events in California and especially those in San Joaquin County. Anyone interested is invited to join. Dues are five dollars a year.

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### TEENAGERS OF A YESTERDAY

Glenn A. Kennedy

When the word "gold" was shouted around the world, men by the thousands headed for California. They were natives to all parts of both North and South America, Europe, Asia and the islands in the Atlantic and Pacific. They came from all walks of life by their own choice.

Most were young men, ready for adventure, opportunity and financial success, so they hoped. Some six per cent were teenagers, more than fifty-two per cent were in their twenties, twenty-five per cent in the thirties, and the small balance were mostly forty and a few in the fifties. It was a young man's world.

In 1850 approximately four thousand of these men were in San Joaquin County according to the census of that year. Of the total, five per cent or two hundred, were teenagers. In that man's world, they readily assumed the responsibilities of manhood. It was the yearning of a boy, who chose to cast himself ashore upon a desert of newness, perhaps ugliness and sordidness, yet with the thought of achievement uppermost in his mind.

Three were only thirteen, eight were fourteen, twenty-three were fifteen, twenty-nine were sixteen, and thirteen were seventeen. As could be expected, most were in their later teens with seventy eighteen years of age and fifty-four nineteen years old.

They came from twenty states east of the Mississippi and twelve foreign countries. Thirteen were from the New England states, with nine from Massachusetts. The Central Atlantic states are credited with thirty, fifteen of whom came from New York. The South and Border states listed twenty-six with thirteen, or one half, from Missouri. Twelve came from the Central states with Ohio leading the list with five.

As California was originally settled by the Mexican people, it was only natural that eighty-three came from there. South America sent seven sons, four of whom were Argentinians. The British Isles accounted for ten with six from England. Continental Europe teenagers included four from France for a total of ten. Four came from China. Five of those registered did not give their birth place.

Upon arriving in California, all had to compete on equal terms with the older men. The list of occupations is a long one including laborers, farmers, drovers, cooks, servants, a newsboy, an actor, hotel keepers, porters, cutlers, butchers, carpenters, a painter and one speculator. There were forty-eight muleteers or mule skimmers as they were called, and fifteen teamsters. Merchants, traders, clerks, and shopkeepers were all engaged in a similar occupation with a total of forty-four. There were twenty-one miners and seven seamen or sailors. Of the few women included in the listing, one was a seventeen year old actress from New York, a nineteen year old seamstress, and one boarding housekeeper. Although jobs were plenty, nine were not working at the time for one reason or the other.

It seems almost impossible that two thirteen year olds were full fledged mule skimmers. One miner was fifteen, one trader was fourteen and a shopkeeper was fifteen. Two of the butchers were only thirteen.

A merchant was usually a large store owner and his help would be classified as clerks or traders. A trader in his own right could have been a small shopkeeper or one who peddled his wares from place to place for sale. The miners were probably coming or going to the mines and had laid over in the particular place when the census was being taken.

The muleteers or mule skimmers were the backbone of the transportation system, and a very necessary person on the ranches and farms for plowing scraping and a dozen other important jobs. A mule can be a very stubborn animal if he wants to be and sometimes it took a lot of will power to handle twelve or sixteen pulling a loaded wagon. Yet they had an endless capacity for the hardest of work and could thrive under conditions that would kill a horse.

The muleteer had to know his animals, especially the two "wheel" mules immediately in front of the wagon. He had to know how to use the "jerk" line of the leaders in front with which he cleverly directed the course of travel. He had to know how to put on the tackle or tackling as the harness was called. It is hard to understand how those two thirteen year old boys did that job.

It would be impossible to tell the full story of each of the two hundred teenagers, but we can use a few examples of teenagers who came West and have been marked in the annals of history as successful.

He was fifteen years old when he left Germany for New York and then to California via Panama. He arrived in Stockton with \$25 in his pocket and could speak no English. He got a job with a tanner, then at the brewery, opened a small grocery store, ran a hotel, then farmed in the delta, raising 28,000 sacks of potatoes one year. He became vice-president of a building and loan association, and for many years was a director of the local county fair.

A seventeen year old girl from Scotland was working as a waitress when she heard about a wagon train headed West with a large herd of cattle, sheep, and many horses. She signed on as a cook and at the end of the journey married the wagon master. Once here they moved to a barren 160 acres in the eastern part of the county as sod-busters of the Far West, to be later rewarded with fields of golden brown grain.

The first job for the seventeen year older from Ireland was driving a six mule team from sunrise to sunset for seventy-five cents a day. Some years later he worked for a nurseryman and with his savings bought a ten acre farm. Still more years passed before he became a well known vineyardist in the northern part of the county.

A ten year old Irish lad came to New York and worked as a harness maker apprentice. Seven years later at the age of seventeen, he came to California via Panama. He found a job in the same trade and a few years later opened his own business for there were plenty of horse and mule teams to be harnessed. He was a volunteer fireman, was chosen chief of the fire department, was a member of the city council, was elected sheriff of the county, and became one of the most notable lawmen in the entire state.

A teenager of eighteen left his well-to-do home in Massachusetts to prove himself in the Far West. He came by ship around Cape Horn and upon arrival was a carpenter's helper. He then drifted around in the goldfields with both good and bad diggings, then became a drover, bought and sold cattle, and finally settled down raising mules with a soap factory on the side. He served many years as a city councilman.

A fourteen year old Scotsman sailed around Cape Horn and started out as a miner. He then sold coffee and spices, opened a restaurant and later ran one of the best hotels in the county.

A wagon train headed West had a fifteen year older from Virginia. He tried out a lot of short jobs like digging water ditches for the miners, wood chopping, dug potatoes, drove a team, was a surveyor's helper and a ranch hand. He saved his earnings and bought a two hundred forty acre ranch in the central part of the county and did very well.

This young fellow was schooled in private academies in the New England states. He boarded a clipper ship headed around Cape Horn at the age of eighteen. He mined, then traveled as an Indian trader along the entire coast and in the Sandwich Islands. He worked for an implement store and before long he was manufacturing and selling farm implements under his own trade name.

These eight short sketches represent the typical teenagers who came to California in those early days. Some weren't sure what they were looking for but finally found their place. They learned the hard way that no one makes it to the top of the ladder in one jump. Only through many long years of good hard work could their success be measured.

There were many others who did their part, and whether they were merchants, the big farmers, or the mule skimmers, or just laborers, all are to be remembered for helping to make this county what it is today. A few of the successful are named and they will be handed the glory for years to come. We must never forget those others whose names no one remembers. Without them the named could not have won the glory that belongs in part to the many other unsung hardy pioneers. As someone once said - some leave big marks, others only a tiny scratch, but without those scratches, the picture is unfinished and untrue.

All of those two hundred teenagers were competing in a man's world. As youths, they worked shoulder to shoulder with the older and more experienced. It didn't take them long to develop that something that makes a man out of a boy. What is that something? It is called maturity, a very important part of growing up.

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