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DAVID H. KETTELMAN
by Mrs. Orrin D. Kettelman, Sr.

David Henry Kettelman was born at Osnabruch in the Kingdom of Prussia, in what is now Germany, on February 23, 1826. Osnabruch was a major city at that time in the northern Rhine River area, about fifty miles west of Hannover and halfway between Hannover and the Dutch border.

Here he was raised to a lad of twelve years. Young men were forced into military service for unpopular causes so young Dave decided he would go to America to join an older sister who had emigrated to the United States several years before. With a party of immigrants made up from his home town he made the journey across the Atlantic in 1838, landing at the port city of New York. One story is that he ran away from home and hid aboard ship.

What young Dave did during the eleven years before he came to California is not known. We do know that it was not long after reports of gold having been found in California that he left New York in April of 1849, on the vessel "Panama," rounded the perilous Cape Horn on the 149 day voyage and arrived in San Francisco on August 3, 1849. By this, Dave Kettelman is numbered among the earliest pioneers to California. The ship landed where the Call Building stood in San Francisco for many years.

As did all gold seekers upon arriving to the west coast, Dave headed for the gold fields. After a short stay in San Francisco he went to Mokelumne Hill where he engaged in mining for about a year. He prospected and hunted gold with the rest but some say he met with poor success. He went to San Andreas in Calaveras County and started a mercantile business, which proved to be very successful, selling hard to get supplies and equipment to the miners.

After a year of business there was a rush of miners to the new diggings at Winters Bar on the Mokelumne River. He decided it was time to move his business operations. In a partnership with S.V. and J.P. Tredway he started a trading post at the new settlement. As business grew they mined and operated stores at San Andreas, Poverty Bar, and Diamond Bar, transporting their supplies from Stockton with bull teams. While this, too, proved successful the partnership branched off into stock raising and buying and selling cattle. This partnership within the next few years made them among the wealthiest cattle barons of their time in California.

As the increasing flow of foreigners came in search of gold, food to feed the new population became a problem. Many miners, such as the Mehrtens, moved down into the San Joaquin Valley to produce grain for bread, hogs for pork, and cattle for beef, to supply the need.

In 1851 or 1852 Dave Kettelman came up with a plan to help solve the beef problem. He rode across the plains and mountains to Missouri and from the surrounding states purchased a large herd of cattle and horses, obtained drovers, and brought this herd back to the west coast. A number of California pioneers worked their way west by helping drive the Kettelman-Tredway herds to California.

The cattle drive arrived here in the fall of 1853 and was taken to a large open elevated valley south of Paso Chana, south of the present city of Coalinga. This valley was covered with waist high dry Alfilaria (filaree) remaining from the extremely wet winter of 1852. The cattle grew fat on the plains and the surrounding hills. They sold cattle and hogs to Miller and Lux partnership, and they stored grain in Stockton warehouses and shipped it by boat to Benicia and San Francisco. Everything went by barges or steamers on the rivers. During these early days squatters on their land were a problem and owners had to ride horseback by day and night to keep them off.

The partnership continued in the cattle business for about 12 years and they settled in San Joaquin County, in the Kingdon area west of Lodi, upon property they had purchased. During this time they owned about 7,400 acres in San Joaquin and Fresno Counties.

In 1864 Dave Kettelman married Margaret Mehrten at Poverty Bar in Calaveras County. Their first years were spent at Kingdon and Fresno. Following their marriage they lived on the Tredway place, then after some time moved to old Fresno, now covered beneath the waters of Millerton Lake behind Friant Dam. Here Dave supervised the live stock operation on their southern properties. Kettelman and the Tredways had several ranches in that area including one called the California Ranch. After the San Joaquin River flooded during the winter of 1871 they decided to return to San Joaquin County. Everything in the house had been ruined by the water. The trip home was made by boat due to the flood. They went to live at the home place south of Lodi.

The home was located along the main road from Stockton to Lodi. Cherokee Lane was a dusty country road traveled by horse teams of eight to sixteen animals. The home was at the intersection of Cherokee Lane and Kettelman Lane. The old home was known as the Sunbonnet House because of its three rounded dormer front windows in the roof, second story. Its builder is unknown, but he built the finest home of its day. The walls in the original building were three widths of brick or 18 inches thick. The bricks were made in a kiln across Cherokee Lane where the Lodi Academy is now located. It was here that Dave Kettelman brought his four children, Clara, Dave, Jr., and the twins George and Rebecca. Afterwards Fred was born in this home. The home had five generations of Kettelmans live within its walls, and was finally torn down in 1968. The last occupants were the family of Orrin, Jr., great-grandson of George Kettelman.

After a period of years the partnership between Sylvester V. and James P. Tredway and Dave Kettelman came to an end and their holdings were divided. This partnership was not only in mining, land, and cattle, but the partners had established a number of butcher shops which were supplied meat from the Kettelman-Tredway ranches.

Dave Kettelman always remained interested in mining and owned and operated several mines through the years, among them the Lily May and the Last Chance mines.

One of Dave Kettelman's major interests was water and irrigation and because of this an early dam near Camanche was a reality back in 1870.

Besides the home ranch, his acreage west of the S.P. tracks, at Kingdon, and the Tule Ranch, the Kettelmans rented and farmed the property between present day Lodi Avenue and Kettleman Lane west of the highway, known as the Barnhardt Tract. This was all in grain. Early agricultural crops in Lodi area were watermelons and grain. As the liveoak trees were cut down and the land cleared the water table began to drop and men began to think in terms of supply in irrigation water to their crops. The Keytelman home had a tankhouse containing two tanks holding 7,500 gallons of water for both domestic use and field irrigation.

The grape industry was beginning to come into the area and the grapes required supplemental moisture. The first grape cuttings were brought to the area in 1872 from vineyards up the Mokelumne River. To supply needed water irrigation canals would have to be constructed. Dave Kettelman was one of the founders and principal stockholder of the Mokelumne Ditch and Irrigation company. It was incorporated in 1875. Mr. Kettelman was the first treasurer and his former partner S. V. Tredway was the first president of the company. Due to complications the project was never completed. Dave Kettelman later remarked that the situation was dominated by those who held a nickel so close to their eyes that they couldn't see the dollar behind it. About eighty years after the company was formed a much larger dam than Dave Kettelman ever dreamed of was built at Camanche carrying out many of the plans of the original founders.

In addition to his ranching and agricultural interest "Uncle Dave" Kettelman, as he had become known, was wholeheartedly interested in community affairs. In 1871 he signed as one of a list of subscribers to establish a Methodist Church for Mokelumne Station as Lodi was then called. He served many years as trustee of the Salem School Board and was one of the original directors of the school district. He planted at his own expense the elm trees that adorned the grounds of Salem School for many years. His interest in education was natural as he had five children to educate. He was always helping other children and people in time of need. He was very trusting and generous.

He was a charter member of both the Lodi Lodge of Odd Fellows and the Masons. He was a member of Lodi Hall Association and the Knights of Pythias.

David Henry Kettelman was known as a very progressive citizen of his community and was identified as a leader in many enterprises in his part of the country. He passed away February 28, 1911 at the age of 85 years.

Many places bear his name. There is Kettleman City, Kings County, California, a town of over 400 population on Highway 41. It was named for its proximity to the Kettleman Hills. Kettleman Hills, Kings County, is named for David Henry Kettelman who brought a large herd of Kettelman-Tredway cattle to the hills and plains nearby in the fall of 1853. Kettleman Plain, Kings County, was also named for him. Kettleman Lane, a twelve mile long road south of Lodi, intersecting the 99 Freeway, was also named for him. It was made a state highway in 1942. Kettleman Station on the California Traction line, a train stop, is at the junction of the rail line and Kettleman Lane. The Kettelman name can not be forgotten, nor the community interest it typifies.