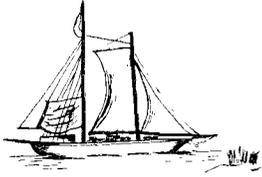


SAN JOAQUIN HISTORIAN



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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THE NEW LOOK

With this issue of the *San Joaquin Historian* the San Joaquin County Historical Society marks the beginning of its eleventh year of the publication of its quarterly. Although organized in October of 1954, its first historical publication, simply called the *San Joaquin County Historical Society Bulletin*, did not make its debut until January of 1963.

Under the *Bulletin* title ten issues were published covering Volume I, numbers 1 through 5, and Volume II, numbers 1 through 5, between January, 1963, and the end of 1966.

In February, 1967, Volume III, Number 1, appeared sporting a new masthead. The *Bulletin* became the *San Joaquin Historian*, and four numbers per year were published under this title through January of the present year.

Miss Gladys Boynton of Lodi served capably through all those years as the Society's Publication Committee chairman and editor of the quarterly. Only another editor can truly appreciate the effort and many hours she put into this labor of love to make the publication the success that it was. Miss Boynton is now taking a long-deserved rest, and we sincerely hope that we can continue to build upon the foundation she laid.

With this aim in mind, we now present issue number one of Volume IX. We hope to be able to maintain the high caliber that has been a mark of this publication since its inception, while making the quarterly more appealing to both young and old through the use of our new format and the inclusion of photographs.

We hope that you will enjoy reading it as much as we enjoy producing it.

Robert Bonta, Editor
San Joaquin Historian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . .

We commence publication of the new *San Joaquin Historian* with a brief sketch of the founding of Stockton during the fabulous Gold Rush Days of California's mid-1800's, and of the man most responsible for its settlement, Captain Charles M. Weber. The author of the article, Dr. R. Coke Wood, a member of the Society, graciously agreed to lend his talents to this first issue despite his many other commitments. Dr. Wood was named "Mr. California" by a concurrent resolution of the state legislature in January, 1969, and he was presented with a copy of the resolution, as well as with a commendation for his contributions to California history, by Governor Ronald Reagan.

He is an author and a recognized authority on the history of the Mother Lode, and an instructor at the University of the Pacific. He has also taught at San Joaquin Delta College and

(Continued on Page 6)

THE RISE OF STOCKTON

BY R. COKE WOOD

Stockton owes its existence to the efforts of Captain Charles M. Weber who was born near Homburg, Germany, on February 16, 1814.¹ He had come to America in 1836 when he was twenty-two years old. He settled first in New Orleans, then went to Texas for five years, where he got in on some of the boundary skirmishes with Sam Houston between the new Republic of Texas and Mexico. However, he suffered a severe illness and his doctors advised a change of climate. Weber decided to visit his uncle who lived in Illinois but he was destined never to arrive there. En route in 1841, he stopped off at St. Louis. There he found the Bidwell-Bartleson Party preparing for their trek to California. Attracted by the



CHARLES MARIA WEBER, founder of the City of Stockton. This portrait photograph was taken in Stockton by J. Pitcher Spooner on July 4, 1880. This was just ten months before the Captain's death.

THE RISE OF STOCKTON (con't)

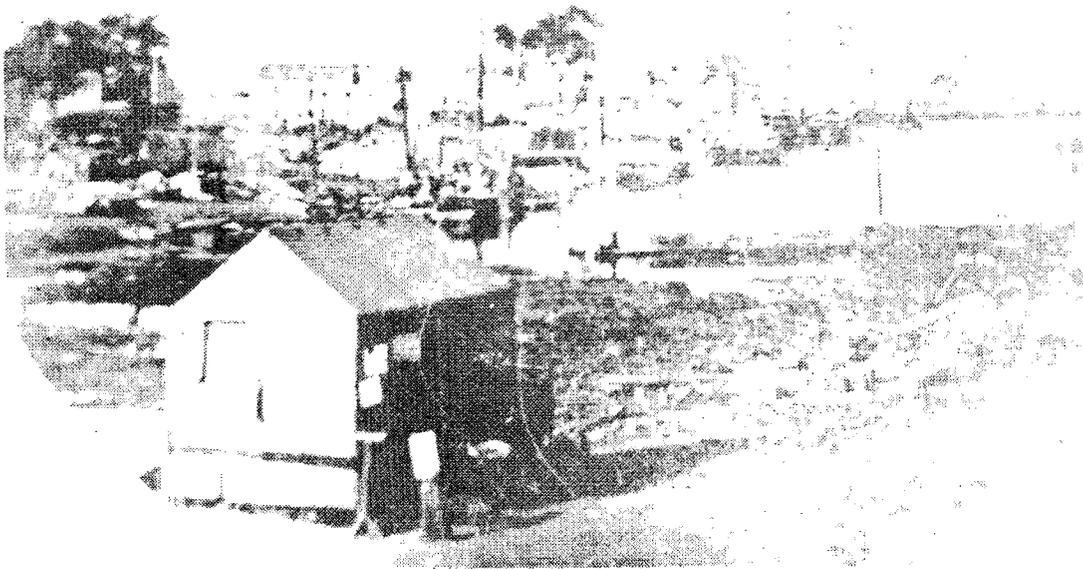
glowing descriptions of California he joined the party, and was one of the thirty-two persons who continued through to their original destination. Among the larger party leaving for Oregon was a group of Jesuit missionaries, led by Father Pierre Jean De Smet, and Weber was converted to Catholicism although he was the son of a Protestant clergyman. Weber spent his first California winter at Sutter's Fort, where Sutter gave him employment. He had come into California over what is known today as the Sonora Pass and arrived at John Marsh's ranch² on November 4, 1841.

In 1842 Weber passed through the present site of Stockton on his way to San Jose. While en route, his eye was caught by the general region where Stockton now stands. At that time it was called El Campo de los Franceses, after the French Canadians from the Hudson's Bay Company who trapped otter and beaver near the site of what is now French Camp.³ Here Weber saw grass as high as his horse's head, magnificent shady oaks, and numerous water courses, and he realized that it would make excellent cattle country. He then became associated in San Jose with William Gulnac, a Mexican citizen by marriage and naturalization, in several businesses and persuaded Gulnac to apply for a land grant. In 1843 Guillermo (William) Gulnac petitioned the governor for a grant of eleven square leagues of land lying east of the San Joaquin River.⁴ Weber joined with William Gulnac in an effort to occupy the land and ended up buying him out for about \$60.00. Gulnac was afraid of the Indians⁵ but Weber

had made friends with Jose Jesus, a powerful Indian chief of the Siyakumna tribe,⁶ and with the latter negotiated a treaty for the peaceful settlement of the land. They became firm friends and Weber never had any Indian problems.

In 1847, Weber erected the first structure upon the present site of Stockton. It was a log cabin store, located at what is now the corner of Center Street and Weber Avenue. His goods were transported from San Francisco in a whaleboat. His customers were mainly passing travelers and a handful of nearby settlers. Then came the historic year of 1848. One afternoon late in March a messenger from Sutter's Fort reached Weber's settlement with the announcement that gold had been discovered at Coloma on the American River. Like everybody else, Weber hiked for the mountains where he spent several months digging for gold⁷ but as he thought things over, he decided that there was an easier way for him to get rich. Stockton was at the head of navigation on the San Joaquin River. It was the logical port of entry for all those heading for the Southern Mines.⁸ Weber decided to return home and make his fortune by selling goods at gold rush prices to the eager prospectors. It was a sound hunch, and before long Weber's little settlement had become a colony of 1,000 tents and houses.

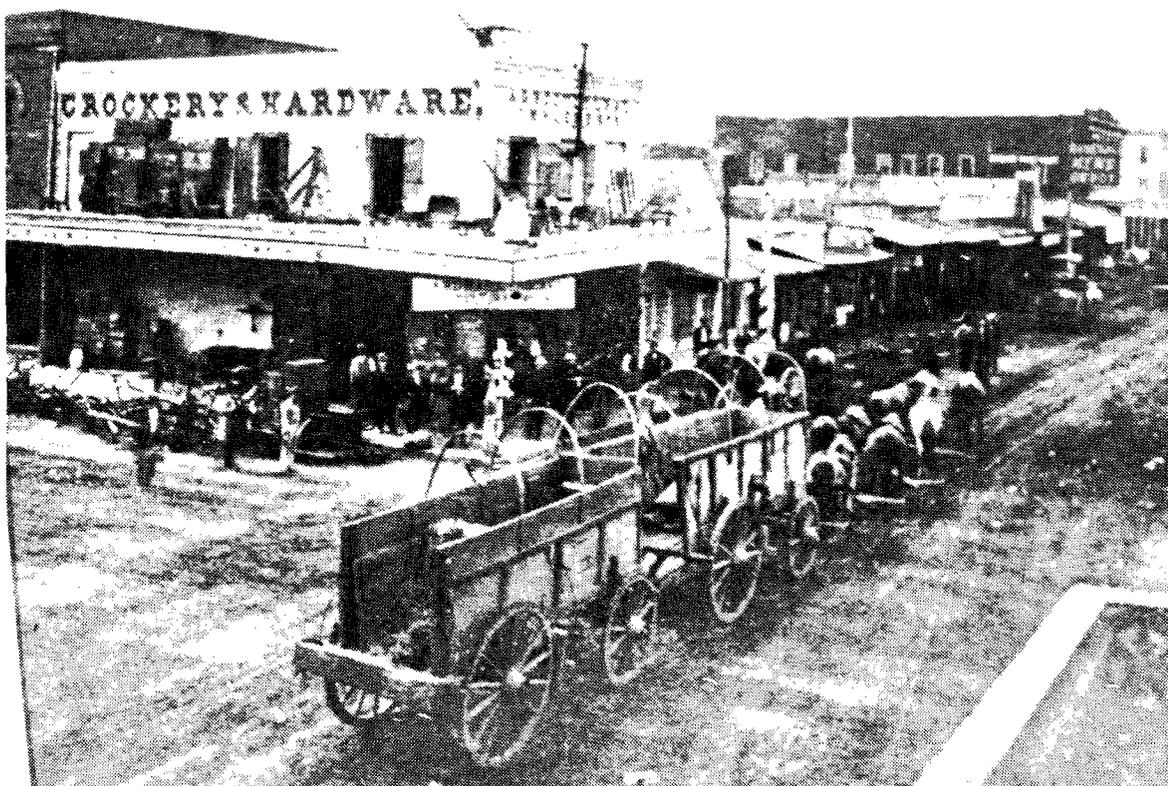
Describing the transformation which the gold rush brought to Stockton, Bayard Taylor the poet wrote in 1849: "A view of Stockton was something to be remembered. There, in the heart of California, where the last winter stood a solitary ranche [sic] in the midst of tule marshes, I found a canvas town of a thousand inhabitants, and a port with twenty-five



LOOKING WEST from the head of Stockton Channel near Hunter Street. The exact date of this photograph is unknown, but Hammond and Morgan, in their **Captain Charles M. Weber, Pioneer of the San Joaquin and Founder of Stockton, California** (1966), list it as 1850. This is probably the earliest photograph of Stockton extant. Note the top of the sailing vessel

(partially obscured by a bank of dirt in the center right edge of the photograph) listing at a 45 degree angle into the channel. It probably served as a means of transportation from San Francisco for prospective miners who abandoned it upon arrival in Stockton.

Courtesy of the V. Covert Martin Collection in the Stuart Library at the University of the Pacific.



AN EIGHT-HORSE TEAM and double freight wagons at the intersection of Main and El Dorado streets in downtown Stockton sometime in the 1850's. Wagons like these were loaded with mining supplies and general merchandise at the waterfront for hauling to

the Southern Mines in the Sierra Nevada. Numerous roads fanned out eastward from Stockton to take the miners as well as their supplies into the "diggings."

Courtesy of the V. Covert Martin Collection in the Stuart Library at the University of the Pacific.

vessels at anchor! The mingled noises of labor around — the click of hammers and the grating of saws — the shouts of mule drivers — the jingling of spurs — the jar and jostle of wares in the tents — almost cheated me into the belief that it was some old commercial mart, familiar with such sounds for years past. Four months, only, had sufficed to make the place what it was; and in that time a wholesale firm established there (one out of a dozen) had done business to the amount of \$100,000. The same party had just purchased a lot eighty by one hundred feet, on the principal street, for \$6,000, and the cost of erecting a common one-story clapboard house on it was \$15,000.⁹

While in San Jose Weber had become associated with John Murphy of the Martin Murphy family and soon fell in love with and married his sister, Helen Murphy, in November, 1850. In 1851, Weber built a fine new home for his bride on Weber Point. It is claimed he paid a dollar a foot for the lumber and a dollar a brick for the chimney. This house was long the leading showplace of Stockton and its garden was famed for its gushing fountains, grape arbors, orange trees, shrubs and flowers imported from Europe.

In its early days, the town had been known as Sloughtown or Tuleburg. Weber's partner, William Gulnac, wanted to call it New Albany after his birthplace in Albany, New York, but Weber preferred Tuleburg. It was in 1850 that it was officially given its present name. On a visit to Los Angeles, during the Mexican War, Weber had met Commodore Robert F. Stockton, a proud, dignified, egotistical naval officer who had played an important part in the California conquest during the Mexican War. Stockton apparently gave Weber a line that you could hang the family wash on. He promised to do all sorts of favors for him when he got back to Washington

and even promised to send him a government steamer for his own use. Weber decided that this was a good man to be on the good side of and he hastened home to rename the old home town in his honor. It was officially rechristened Stockton on July 25, 1850. The first survey of Stockton was made by Jasper O'Farrell in 1847 as Tuleberg. The second survey was made in the spring of 1849 by Major R. P. Hammond. In 1851 Weber donated all the streets, channels and public squares to the city. By the first census of 1853 Stockton's population was 4,000; by 1890, 10,228 and by 1900, 17,506. In size it grew from 1½ square miles to over 12 square miles during this same period.

Early Stockton seems to have been a colorful place in which life was never dull. An old Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, newspaper of the gold rush days carried the following letter describing this region: "At the juncture of these streams (Sacramento and San Joaquin) commences a plain, covered with Bulrushes of Tuilbies [tules], which grow to the height of 12 or 15 feet. The River San Joaquin being narrow and crooked and the night dark, our craft ran into the Tuilbies and occupied us until morning to get her off. We were almost devoured by mosquitoes. It is bounded on both sides with Tuilbies as far as we navigated it.

"On Saturday afternoon we entered the Stockton slough and made the city at nine o'clock. Stockton extends over more ground than San Francisco. The population is increasing rapidly. This is the head of navigation for all the miners going South of the Sacramento. There is one or two hundred houses in the city, principally occupied as warehouses, groceries and grog shops. . . Two persons, one called "Mickey", the other "Red Davis" were hung in Stockton on August last. Davis confessed five murders that

innocent men have been hanged for."¹⁰

As there was no place of confinement for criminals until July, 1849, when Captain Jung's rented his brig *Susanne* to local officials, the punishments were immediate — floggings, banishment or hanging.¹¹ However, between 1850 and 1856 local government in Stockton could not cope with the criminal element and vigilance committees were organized. The Hounds, "Sydney Coves" or Ducks and border ruffians escaping from San Francisco to the mining camps made murder, robbery and banditry a common occurrence. On June 9, 1851, the citizens of Stockton organized the Vigilance Committee to curb crime. The Committee not only attempted to clear the city of felons but to prevent them from entering. A group representing the Committee met all boats and sent suspicious characters back to San Francisco. The Vigilance Committee did tend to establish security for life and property when there was a real struggle for law and order.

Once having reached Stockton, the would-be miner could get to the diggings by horseback, by wagon, or by stage-coach. The latter was the best of the lot, but even it was none too good. Consider the indignant protest of this English visitor who made the trip from Stockton to Sonora by stage:

"Of all the public conveyances I ever encountered, the stages here take the lead in discomfort and vulgarity. . . . As many persons can jam themselves into one; they have no regard for those who are already in possession of seats . . . the new passenger coolly gets into the vehicle, and placing himself between two others, sits down, and relies upon his own weight making the other two sufficiently uncomfortable to aid him in establishing himself between them. They all smoke, and unceremoniously discharge occasionally across you, and in every other respect are usually dirty citizens; and, for some incomprehensible reason, when stages meet,

the recognition of friends is announced by enormously swearing at each other."

As a supply base for the miners, Stockton was at the head of navigation on the San Joaquin River, and soon many vessels were bringing freight and passengers. Shipping began with the purchase by Captain Weber in 1847 of the two-masted sailing sloop *Maria*. It was small with a length of 38 feet and depth of 39 inches. On her first voyage in 1848 Weber loaded her with 13 tons of supplies. It was reloaded with hide and tallow for the return trip and became the pioneer ship and mail packet between Stockton and San Francisco. As Stockton became a terminal for transportation to the gold mines of the Southern Mines, large numbers of small ships with flat bottoms and shallow draft were used and in 1849 Stockton became a center for water transportation. (It was claimed these shallow draft boats could come in on the morning dew.) Passengers and freight from San Francisco took from two to fifteen days on sailing vessels, depending on the winds. Steamboats began arriving in Stockton by 1849. So many were abandoned at the head of the Channel they had to be burned to clear it for navigation. During the 1850's river steamers became more numerous and efficient and by 1860 both freight and passenger fares were greatly reduced.

Stockton's first newspaper was the *Stockton Times*, first printed on July 6, 1850 as a four column enlarged double sheet. It lasted until April 7, 1851 when the newspaper was purchased by Captain George Kerr and the name changed to the *San Joaquin Republican*. In 1854 it became a daily newspaper.

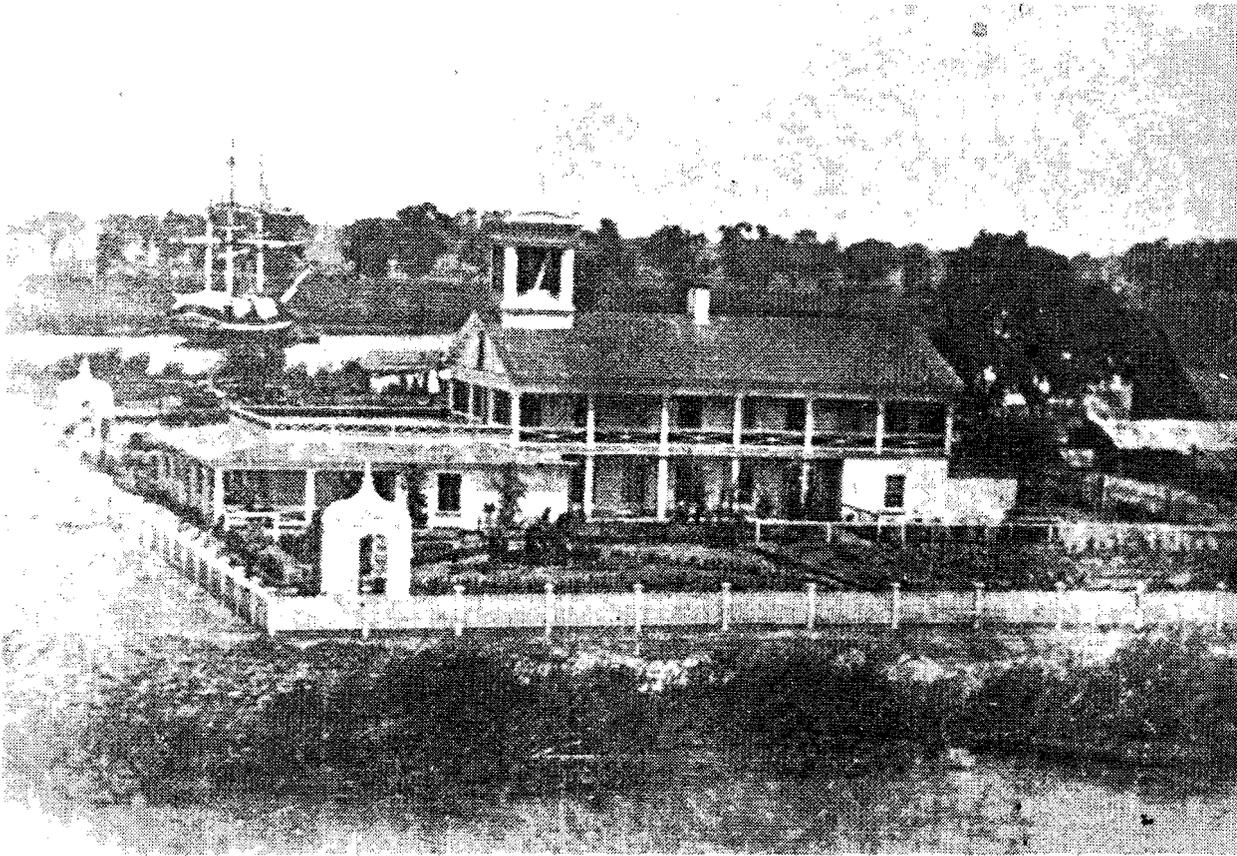
There were a number of early fires but the first great fire came on May 5, 1851, destroying most of the business section of the town.¹²



"DOWNTOWN" STOCKTON in the early 1850's. This view looks south along El Dorado Street at its intersection with Weber Avenue. The building on the southeast corner of the intersection was the United States Hotel and the post office was in the Buffum and

Cook building next to it. A team of oxen appear to be resting on the street on the left-hand edge of the photograph.

Courtesy of the V. Covert Martin Collection in the Stuart Library at the University of the Pacific.



CAPTAIN WEBER'S HOME out on "Weber's Point."

The site now lies just west of the present Holiday Inn on Center Street in downtown Stockton. This view shows the south side of the home and garden with Fremont Channel in the background. The home was abandoned about 1891 when Mrs. Weber constructed another one on the Point. In 1900 their daughter Julia moved this newer house to her ranch on West Lane

along the north bank of the Calaveras River. A granddaughter of Captain Weber, Mrs. Helen Weber Kennedy, still resides in this home today. In the meantime, the original home on the Point (above) burned to the ground in 1916.

Courtesy of the V. Covert Martin Collection in the Stuart Library at the University of the Pacific.

Captain Charles Weber died on May 4, 1881 from pneumonia. His funeral procession of 105 carriages, the

longest in history, traveled from St. Mary's Church to the cemetery. Archbishop J. S. Alemany came from San Francisco to conduct the Requiem High Mass.

EDITOR'S NOTES

- 1 For an interesting and scholarly account of Weber's German background see Hartmann, Ilka: **The German VORMARZ and the Youth of Carl David** [Charles M.] **Weber**, Master's Thesis, University of Pacific, 1967.
- 2 John Marsh had arrived in California in 1836 and in the following year purchased Rancho Los Medanos (or Meganos) in present-day Contra Costa County. Many pioneer travelers, weary from overland travel, sought haven at Dr. Marsh's ranch, but unlike his neighbor to the north, Captain Sutter at Sacramento, he was not known for his generosity. Marsh's stone home, built in 1856, still stands today about four miles southwest of Brentwood, a silent reminder of the area's interesting past.
- 3 The Hudson's Bay Company, with headquarters at Fort Vancouver, sent an expedition of French-Canadian fur trappers down into Central California in 1828-29. They traveled as far south as present-day French Camp, where they set up a base camp. Each year thereafter, for the next seventeen or eighteen years, companies of these French Canadians made their way down to "El Campo de los Franceses" (as the Spanish called the area), trapping along the numerous waterways as they traveled.
- 4 The grant, one of the largest ever made by the Mexican government, contained approximately 48,700 acres. The grant lay generally between the San Joaquin River and Jack Tone Road, and extended from the proximity of Hammer Lane southward to the French Camp area.
- 5 Gulnac had reason to fear the Indians. The latter naturally resented the intrusion of settlers into the valley, and a raiding party of Amador Indians killed the first resident on the land grant, Thomas Lindsay (for whom Lindsay Point and Lindsay Street in Stockton were named).
- 6 Jose Jesus was baptized at Mission San Jose, but years later returned to his people. He hated the Mexicans, but remained on peaceful terms with the Americans. The Siyakumna Indians claimed the general area from the San Joaquin River eastward into the foothills, between the Calaveras and Stanislaus rivers. Until the time of the Civil War Grant Street in Stockton was officially named Jose Jesus Street.
- 7 Weber was instrumental in organizing the Stockton Mining Company, which traveled up the Stanislaus looking for gold. Unsuccessful, the group decided to move north toward Sutter's Mill at Coloma. Time was taken to work the streams traversed in their northward journey, and they found their first gold in a creek which fed into the South Fork of the American River. The creek thereafter bore Weber's name (incorrectly spelled Webber). For a more complete account of Weber's experiences in the Mother Lode, see Hammond and Morgan, **Captain Charles M. Weber, Pioneer of the San Joaquin and Founder of Stockton, California**, pp. 17-20.
- 8 The term "Southern Mines" generally referred to the portion of the Mother Lode from Mariposa north to and including Amador County. The area north of Amador County was usually referred to as the "Northern Mines," and was served by Sacramento.
- 9 Taylor passed through Stockton again just one week later, and once more he could hardly believe the changes that had occurred. "I found Stockton more bustling and prosperous than ever," he wrote. "The limits of its canvas streets had greatly enlarged during my week of absence. . . . Launches were arriving and departing daily for and from San Francisco, and the number of mule-trains, wagons, etc., on their way to the various mines with freight and supplies kept up a life of activity truly amazing."

EDITOR'S NOTES [Con't]

- 10 Thompson and West, in their **History of San Joaquin County, California**. **With Illustrations**, p. 23, have an interesting account of the episode involving Mickey Lyons and Red Davis, and the subsequent capture of Davis near San Jose. They were evidently the first two of some twelve persons hanged in San Joaquin County up to the 1870's when the State assumed the responsibility for all executions.
- 11 While traveling from Mokelumne Hill to Stockton on one occasion Bayard Taylor reported meeting a man who had been found guilty of stealing gold; for punishment he had been given one hundred lashes and both ears had been cut off. As inhumane as it may seem to us today, one must remember that effective local government did not exist at this time (1849) and the alternative would probably have been hanging.
- 12 Fanned by a northwest wind, the fire raged uncontrolled for hours. Property loss was estimated at \$1,500,000, but rebuilding began almost immediately. Brick buildings replaced the earlier wooden structures in the business district, giving the young settlement a greater look of permanence.



Persons interested in doing research on local history, whether members of the Society or not, are invited to submit their manuscripts for publication in the **Historian**. The editor must, however, reserve the right to accept or reject and/or edit all material and photographs submitted.

While none of the original material printed in the quarterly is copyrighted, we would appreciate acknowledgement of the source by anyone using any portion thereof.

The San Joaquin County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets the fourth Monday of each month except for July and August. Annual memberships are: Individual — \$5.00, Corporate — \$8.00, and Junior — \$1.00, and include a subscription to the **San Joaquin Historian**. Non-members may purchase copies from the Society's Secretary. The Society also operates the San Joaquin County Historical Museum at Micke Grove. Persons wishing to donate items should contact the Museum Director.

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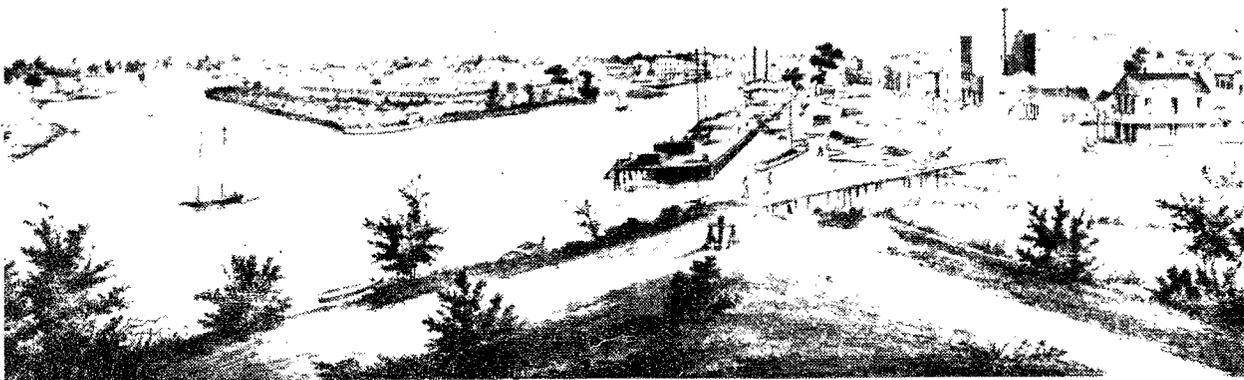
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR [Con't]

is now Executive Secretary Emeritus of the Conference of California Historical Societies. Dr. Wood presently serves as the Director of the Pacific Center for Western Historical Studies at the University of the Pacific.



STOCKTON LOOKING EAST. Stockton Channel lies in the center of the scene, with wharf facilities and the business buildings fronting Weber's Levee (Weber Avenue) to its right and beginning near the small bridge

in the foreground. This was an 1855 lithograph. "Stockton, . . . From Nature and on Stone by Kuchel and Dresel," printed originally in San Francisco.

Courtesy of Edward Pico.