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Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society  
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## MORE CALAVERAS FAMILIES

From time to time we print stories of our pioneer families, to record this information before it is lost. Always popular with our readers, these family chronicles invariably describe the many obstacles that had to be overcome, and the lives so often filled with hardships, and lives in which arduous work was a necessity. It is well that we remember the part these families played in the development of our county as we enjoy the high standard of living today.

Ranching was a much more significant part of the local economy and of the community in the "horse and buggy" era than it is today. Blacksmithing, teaming, driving sheep and cattle to and from summer ranges,

and the many ranch chores occupied much of the time of the early families like the Thompsons. We are pleased to have Eunice Thompson recall not only her own early years, but also pass on to us the earlier history of her family, as it was related years before to her.

Some of the Calaveras communities, originally boisterous gold rush camps, lingered on and took their place as community centers for the surrounding ranches and the surviving mines nearby, and in newer times, for the influx of people escaping from city life below. Jenny Lind was and is such a community, and Edna Dickhaut Snyder has recorded her memories of Jenny Lind and her family stories for us. We are grateful for Mrs. Snyder's contribution to our pages.

## THE SAMUEL THOMPSON FAMILY

*by Eunice Thompson*

The Samuel Thompson family came to California from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. They came by ship by way of Boston and the Isthmus of Panama. Grant Thompson was not quite two years old. An older boy, Robert, was left in Boston with an aunt and uncle, with the understanding that they would return and bring him West later on, but that never came to be. Years later, some of the family visited him when on trips to the East.

Mr. Thompson soon moved to Columbia in Tuo-



**ALEXANDER  
THOMPSON RANCH**  
The ranch at Nassau, with  
the house, barn and out-  
buildings at the left.

loumne County, where he operated a blacksmith shop. A few years later he and his family moved to Eldorado (now Mountain Ranch), where he continued in the blacksmith business. They had some terribly wet winters in those days. I remember him telling of the Pillsbury Dam giving way and flooding the town. Some of their neighbors lived on the creek bank several feet above any high water mark. When the dam broke, the water came up to their doorsteps, right to the top step, but didn't come into the house. Our neighbors in Eldorado included Raggios, Pillsburys, Doogans, and many more.

As business changed, so changed the blacksmith. In a few years the Thompsons moved again, to Smith's Flat, a stopping place for freight teams, about two and a half miles east of Altaville. There Mr. Thompson did blacksmith work for Mr. Grider.

In those days all the freight was hauled by teams of horses or mules, usually eight, ten or twelve to a team. Freight for Angels Camp, Murphys, and other towns in the area came by rail to the depot at Milton and there was transferred to teams for the haul up. Later a railroad was built into Angels Camp, and so the Milton line was discontinued.

Many times in the winter the freight teams would get stuck in the muddy, boggy and rutted roads. Sometimes they would make only a few hundred feet from early morning until noon, and the teamster would eat his lunch at the same stopping place where he had breakfasted.

Samuel Thompson later went into the freighting

business himself, hauling wheat on the "West side" in San Joaquin County, from San Joaquin City to Stockton. In those days there was no town at Patterson, just open fields of grain. There were few bridges, and the teams generally had to ford the rivers and streams. They often had doubts whether they could make a ford successfully. Sometimes they would be washed down the river for several hundred feet before they made it across.

While in the teaming business, Samuel Thompson acquired a ranch located four miles southwest of Angels Camp. The beautiful two-story home still stands at the ranch, where Thompson busied himself farming and stockraising for a number of years.\* In those days land could be acquired by homesteading and by sometimes buying school sections. By buying up the rights of homesteaders and squatters, a ranch could be obtained for a minimum outlay.

The Samuel Thompsons had nine children: Robert (left in Boston), Alexander Grant, George, Samuel, Jr., David, Charles, Ida, and two other girls who died in infancy. They were educated at the Altaville Elementry School. The little old brick building still stands but in tattered condition. When Alexander went to Altaville, they had an enrollment up to eighty pupils. One teacher taught from kindergarten through ninth grade. Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, grammar and spelling were taught, Schools each had their own library, so books were read between classes or taken

\*Now the property of Tiscornia Ranches, Inc.



#### THE ALEXANDER THOMPSON FAMILY

The family gathered at the ranch in 1938 to celebrate Alex and Margaret's Fiftieth anniversary. Standing, left to right, are William, George, Irene, Walter, Eunice and Charles.

home to read. Later Alexander Thompson was trustee of this same school for a number of years.

One of Alec's jobs was roadmaster, responsible for maintaining a section of county roads. He would have several men working on the road. They would haul wagonload after wagonload of rocks to put in the bog holes to help keep the freight teams from bogging down in the mud in winter.

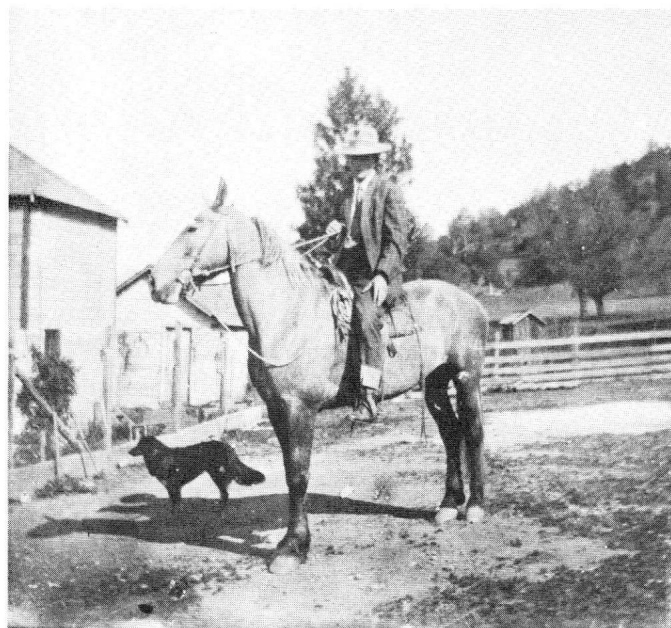
One time three local teamsters were sent to Jackson to haul some mining machinery to Angels for Mr. Charles Lane who operated the Utica mine there. It was a terribly wet winter and the roads were almost impassible. It took them three months to make the trip. While in Jackson they had quite an experience with a hotel manager there. Joe Ross, one of the teamsters, was a colored man very respected by the other men. But the hotel man refused to serve Joe. When the other teamsters heard that, they all walked out much to the surprise of the innkeeper. He immediately wanted to know what was the trouble. They politely let him know—if the place was too good for Joe, they were certainly not going to stay there. They found another hotel.

Alex owned a band of sheep when he was a young man. Each spring they were driven to the high Sierras and over the summit into Nevada, along the Walker River, for summer range. They usually went in the spring, before the snow was gone. Oftentimes Alex was unable to remove his sodden boots at night, so swollen were his feet. He was often alone on the summer range. He told of frequently having to calm Indians who didn't want the sheep to graze where the wild sunflowers grew. So he would give them just so many days to harvest. The Indians would come from near and far to gather the crop. On one occasion he had a misunderstanding with an Indian over some sheep pelts. The Indian thought he was cheated, so he brought the whole tribe over to discuss the matter. The tribe finally discovered that the Indian was mistaken and had the right number of pelts, so they all began with an Indian serenade on the savage. What a war whoop ensued!

Walking was a tradition in those days. Many times Alex walked from his sheep camp along the Walker River to Genoa for supplies. One time he had to go to Genoa to have a tooth pulled, as that was the nearest dentist. That time he was more fortunate, for he stopped at a ranch in Carson Valley to see a friend, and was able to get a horse to ride into Genoa.

On the summer range they would often fix a barbecue dinner in a pit to cook while they took the day off to go fishing. One time, some cattlemen came along during their absence and devoured the entire meal. What a disappointment when they returned from fishing!

Alex Thompson married Margaret Murphy of San Andreas on August 5, 1888. The Murphy family had come to California from Boston in 1858, by way of the Isthmus of Panama. The Thompsons purchased a ranch



**GEORGE THOMPSON**

**On horse "Joe" at the back gate on the Thompson ranch.**

in Nassau Valley, about six miles from Angels Camp, and only a few miles northwest of the Samuel Thompson ranch and near Elkhorn Station. At one time there was a postoffice at this way station.

The Thompsons had a family of six children, William, George, Charles, Walter, Eunice and Irene. They attended the Keystone Elementary School and Bret Harte High. Mr. Thompson remained in the sheep business and also ran cattle. With so much freight being hauled by the teams in those days, there was always a good market for hay. Many times there would be as many as 120 or more horses in the stables at Elkhorn Station in Nassau Valley, less than two miles from the Thompson's. Mr. Thompson planted in the fall and cut the hay in the spring. He sold it to the various stables for \$15 to \$20 a ton.

The fields in Nassau Valley in the spring were a mass of wild flowers, mostly bluebells and spotted bells. It was a lovely sight. Many people from Angels would drive out just to see the whole valley in bloom.

In later years, Mr. Thompson retired on the ranch, but continued to have a small herd of sheep. He always had some occupation with which to pass the time, cutting wood, tending the vegetable garden, and the flower garden. Often he had more flowers in the yard than vegetables. He also passed many hours playing solitaire. In 1938, the Thompsons celebrated their Golden wedding at the ranch, Mr. Thompson passed away on May 1st 1941, at the age of 81. Mrs. Thompson later sold the ranch and moved to Angels Camp. Four-

teen years later she passed away at the ripe old age of ninety. Grandchildren still living in California include: John and Earl Thompson, Evelyn Gallager, Clarabelle Shidelen, and Dorothy Thompson Faist. A grandson, Omar Thompson, died in 1976.

## MEMORIES OF JENNY LIND

by *Edna Dickhaut Snyder*

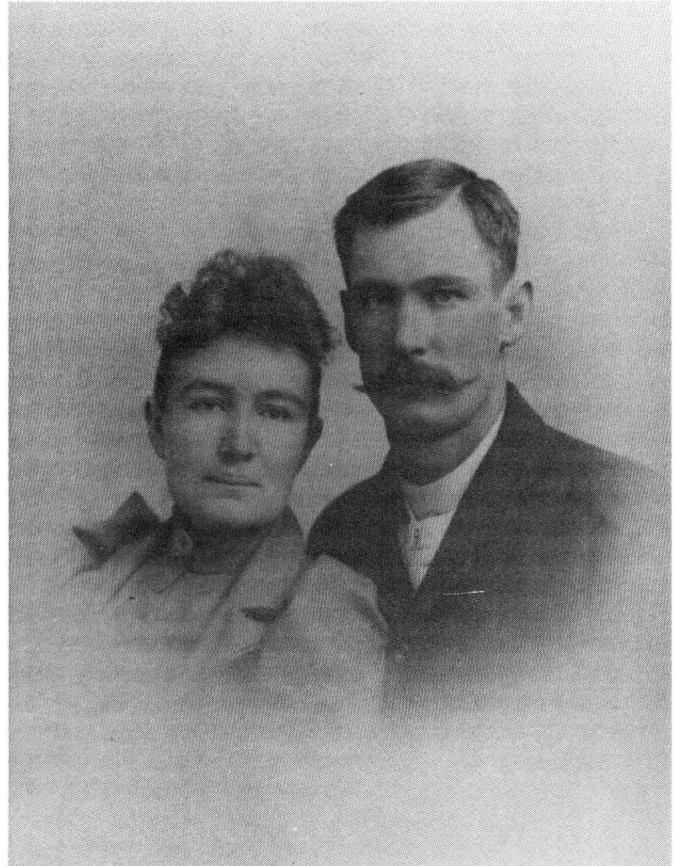
The Calaveras River was always a rewarding stream for the early day seekers of gold. This was the reason for the town of Jenny Lind. Mark Hatch is recorded as the first to build a house there. Many Chinese and Mexican miners, in addition to Anglo-Saxons, made it their home. The river at Jenny Lind and the hill diggings in the surrounding country were mined mostly by hand in early days, by panning, rocker and long tom. My grandfather Hildebrand panned for gold in the river.

In contrast, Milton, across the river and to the south, founded a number of years later, was a railhead mainly for receiving copper ore from Copperopolis and sending it by rail to the smelters. Great wagons loaded with ore were hauled by large teams of horses each with bells on their harness. The bells warned anyone on the narrow road with many sharp turns that a load was coming down. The teams hauled back supplies brought in by the railroad.

In later years the gold dredgers came to Jenny Lind. Three of the massive "boats" were located in town and one to the south in the Rogers area. Dragline operations followed and one of these was operated on the Dickhaut Ranch under the ownership of Irene Hildebrand Dickhaut, my mother.

The first person to own the Dickhaut Ranch where I grew up was my great uncle, William Carson of Pennsylvania. He had come overland to California in 1848, possibly first to Butte County, as census records show. It is also possible that M.F. Gregory was there before Carson as records show a purchase of a small bit of acreage by Carson from Gregory in 1870 to add to his holdings. It is said that Mr. Gregory walked up the river from Stockton until he found this location and that property remains in the Gregory name to this day.

Greatgrandfather Richerson Powers brought his family from Tennessee via Kentucky and Indiana to California and settled in Salt Spring Valley. This family had to winter over in Utah and probably would have starved except for assistance from the Mormon people. From Salt Spring Valley he went to Tuolumne City near Modesto and then back to the Powers holdings near Milton. Ed and Louise, Richerson's children, settled on South Gulch near Milton. Joe and Elmira Jane were the



**IRENE AND WILLIAM DICKHAUT**  
Irene Hildebrand of Milton was married to  
William Dickhaut of Jenny Lind in 1892.

younger Powers children.

On the Jenny Lind side of the river, William Carson sent east for his widowed sister, Anna Titia Dickhaut, to come to California on the new transcontinental railroad. This she did with her two small children, Will and Mary Jane. While fighting a wild fire in 1892, William Carson died from a heart attack. His property went to his sister (my grandmother), Anna Dickhaut.

The Hildebrands also came from Pennsylvania and settled near Gilroy after unsuccessful mining around Shaw's Flat in 1853. Stephen Hildebrand, who had served in the State Militia during the Civil War, married Elmira Jane Powers at Stockton in 1870. My mother, Irene, and her sister Dessa were born at Gilroy.

Later, in 1874, Grandfather Hildebrand bought 65 acres near the Powers holdings from Benito Arata. Here he settled, and planted an orchard in which grew the largest walnut tree in the area. His son, Stephen, was born in this place. Richerson Powers, Hildebrand's father-in-law, called himself a "wood butcher". He made much of the furniture for the Hildebrands and no

doubt helped build the house. Water was pumped by windmill to the hand pump at the back door. Later this property was purchased by the Hatler family.

William Dickhaut and Irene Hildebrand were married in 1892 and came to live with Anna Dickhaut on the Jenny Lind side of the river. "Bill" Dickhaut grew alfalfa and fed cattle in the winter for Nuland of San Andreas. Nuland and Walters owned the butcher shop there. We two girls, Edna Elmira and Marion Carson, were born here on the Dickhaut ranch. Aunt Mary Jane had married Frank Sinclair, and their children were Jesse, Froane, Paul, Esther and Pete.

Bill Dickhaut had some dairy Holsteins and sent the cream with Percy Hunt to the Douglas Creamery in San Joaquin County. Percy went to school there down river after he delivered cream from the Dickhaut and neighboring ranches. Dickhaut had a band of sheep in later years.

My mother, Irene, who had trained for a teacher and had taught at Glencoe in 1890, found many extra tasks like growing thoroughbred Plymouth Rock chickens and sending them on the railroad down to the Levy Zenter Company in Stockton. She also gathered the wild grapes and elderberries on the river bank, cured the pork from our own pigs, and made potato chips and gelatin molds before they could be obtained commercially.

In 1900 she took the census in our supervisorial district, riding horseback all the way. Grandma Dickhaut took care of us children when Mother had to be gone. After Father's death in 1920, Irene attended the Chico Normal School and later took a B.A. degree from the College of the Pacific in Stockton.

Ah Lin, a beloved Chinaman from Jenny Lind, walked through our yard to work in the fruit at Mr. Gregory's and always had a pocket full of fresh chinese candy for us girls. At the same time he offered condolences to Mother for having only girl children and no boys. Girls were not held in much esteem in China.

In the evenings, Father read to the children from "Youths' Companion" and "Little Folks". Often we spent the evenings in Grandma Dickhaut's room where we sat with her in her big rocking chair and she either read to us or sang for us. We went to visit the cousins (Sinclairs) when Grandma went to see her daughter, Mary Jane. At that time the Sinclairs lived out in the Chaparral area. They later moved into Jenny Lind when they purchased the McComber General Store.

Our parents took us to the communion service of the Dunkard (Brethern) Church which was led by white-haired, Pastor Shank. We went to see the baptism by immersion in the Stone Corral Creek. Dinners after church were with the Hatlers and Dix Kirks or they came home to dinner with us.

Our cousin, Paul Sinclair, near our age, often came to visit Grandma and she must have been out of patience

with us at the times when we climbed up the ladder on the side of the huge water tank beside the windmill and peeked over the top. We always found something exciting to do when Paul visited. Once we three played with the calves until our father caught us. He tried to calm the milk cows and exclaimed, "Why don't you go and play in the pig pen." We did until our mother took a hand in that expedition.

When I was eight and Marion was six, we were given a horse and cart and sent two and a half miles to the Chaparral School. Our dog went too and often chased the coyotes. They would finally chase the dog back to our horse. Our Chaparral School library received ten new books per year.

We had playmates such as Anita Gall Hunt visiting her Gregory grandparents. Christmas at the Gregory home is one of my most precious memories.

Haying season at the home ranch was a busy time. In the evenings the sounds of the Mexican guitars were brought into full play and the time passed all too quickly.

Peddlers of all kinds passed along the road which ran through our yard. Dondero had fresh vegetables he had grown. The tin man stopped to solder milk pans. A little Jewish man with a pack on his back came walking to bring an array of buttons and laces. Then one day came a brilliantly-colored circus wagon drawn by two beau-



**EDNA AND MARION DICKHAUT**

**A portrait taken at the turn of the century when Edna was about eight and Marion was six.**

tiful horses. Here were carried fruits we had never seen before; coconuts, oranges and nuts of all kinds as well as the common local melons. The driver was worn and tired, so Father put him up for the night, feeding the man and his horses. But we never saw that peddler again.

For recreation, the Masonic order at Milton and the I.O.O.F. in Jenny Lind were attended regularly. The Hildebrands went to Milton where Stephen was Master of Keystone Lodge in 1885 and '86, and again in 1892 and '93. My family went to the lodge in Jenny Lind.

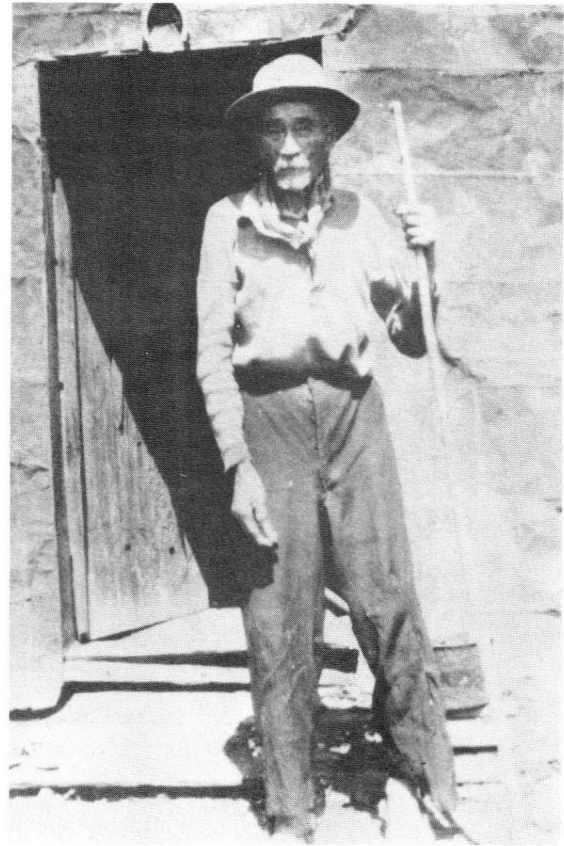
High school at San Andreas was always a great adventure—no going home on the weekends. From fall until Christmas when Father again came with the team to take us home we were on our own. O.F. Barth was the principal in those days. He was a great influence in our lives as were his assistant teachers at school which was held in the Masonic Building.\*

One year we went by horseback and wagons to visit Big Trees and Mercer's Cave at Murphys. Other expeditions were basketball trips to Angels Camp and Sutter Creek, a hike to Bear Mountain, and another down the Calaveras River for several miles.

High school was followed by Normal School in San Jose. Marion went along to graduate from San Jose High School. My dearest friend, Annie Grenitta, went to Normal with me. Marion went to U.C. in Berkeley where many of the Calaveras High graduates attended.

Our family carried on the tradition of teaching. I taught at Jenny Lind, in a one-room school for two

\*The Dickhaut girls are in the student-body picture for 1911-12 in "Las Calaveras" for April, 1976, at page 35.



**AH LIN**

**One of the last and a well-known Chinaman living at Jenny Lind.**



**JENNY LIND  
SCHOOL**

This is how the little one-room school looked in World War I days when Edna Dickhaut taught there. Note the various functional furnishings as well as the flowers in the deep adobe window casement.

years. We had everything to work with and great pupils as well. The building was of adobe and Mrs. Harriet Stackpole kept the deep windows full of growing plants.

When I taught at Jenny Lind, our baseball team was packed into John Meyer's "jitney" and was driven to Hodson to play there. After the game we were taken to Copperopolis and given a tour through the copper mine, then in full operation.

Marion went into extension work at U.C. Berkeley after some years of teaching. She married Raymond Burgess, City Engineer of Gilroy. They had two sons, Raymond, now teaching in Watsonville, and Charles who was killed in an airplane accident. After her husband's death, Marion married Marc Lindsay of the Extension Services. They retired to Mariposa where she enjoyed painting. They are no longer living. Marion's son, Ray has three children, Ann, Ray Marc, and John, and five grandchildren.

I married James Snyder, USN, and after years in Vallejo, we retired to Paradise. Here we became involved in the Senior Citizen activities. With Jim's help, I have been in that work for over a quarter of a century, entering into all sorts of local groups including the White House Conference on Aging in 1961.

Jim is gone now, but the teaching goes on. Bill, our son, graduated from U.C. Berkeley. He, his wife and family have given all their efforts to what was the Belgian Congo (now Zaire), and are now retired in Portland, Oregon.

Our daughter Elizabeth is also gone. Her life included seven years in Hawaii where her husband R.D. Thomas

was in the Navy. Previously she had been married to Rudy Adams who saw service at Mare Island and in the U.S. Marine Corps.

There are ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, all of whom keep in close touch with me at Paradise. I get back to Calaveras County occasionally to stay with Leona Vogelsang Sinclair and to review our rural lives over the many years filled with such happy memories.

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## SOCIETY NEWS

Last May we received a settlement from the contested estate of charter member Eunice Beal Van Winkle of some forty thousand dollars. These funds are being invested so that the Society may use the income to help support its activities. Another of our long time and esteemed late members, Kathleen Mitchell, named us in her will for certain of her possessions and as the recipient of the residue of her estate. At this time we have no idea of the size of this bequest, but expect it will be more substantial than the Van Winkle funds. Plaques in grateful memory to Mrs. Van Winkle and Miss Mitchell will be placed in our headquarters. The responsibilities acquired with this fortunate change in our financial future will require changes in the Society's conduct of its business and activities. These were begun under the direction and leadership of past-President Bob Finnigan, and will be continued by our incoming

### BUCKET-LINE DREDGE

The "Isabel II" was one of the three large "boats" built for dredging in the Jenny Lind area. James Snyder worked on "Isabel II's" construction.



**Calaveras County  
Historical Society**

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The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas — except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

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Are you receiving your copy of “Las Calaveras” late? Don’t blame our efficient production editor. Rather, look to the editorial staff who seem always to be several months behind in their work. Any volunteers to help out?

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President, Betty Snyder.  
We hope to establish part-time office hours at our Archives Room in the old Hall of Records at 30 Main Street, with an office attendant to work on our archives. We also anticipate increased publishing activity in the form of special papers of hitherto unpublished material, and the reprinting of rare, out-of-print publications relating to the county’s history.

**New Members**

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Lowell Airola, Tiburon  
Magnus Bergland, Wilseyville  
Arthur I. Bernhard, Sacramento  
Maxey Callahan, Sheep Ranch  
Gay Callan, San Andreas  
Mr. & Mrs. C.T. Carver, Glennville  
Allin Copp, Stockton  
Mike & Joyce Cuslidge, Pacifica  
David & JoEllen Gano, Arnold  
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Laurie Huffman, Novato  
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Mr. & Mrs. M. Ruthrauff, San Andreas  
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Mrs. Clyde Sherwood, Mountain Ranch  
Mr. & Mrs. Roland Soracco, Altaville  
Charles A. Stone, Copperopolis (Deceased)  
Jeffrey W. Tuttle, Mokelumne Hill  
Joe W. White, San Andreas  
Mrs. Helen J. Zumwalt, Sacramento

**Illustrations**

The photographs in this issue were kindly furnished by the Thompson and the Dickhaut-Snyder families.

<p><b>IN MEMORIAM</b></p> <p>John Huberty</p>
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