SOME NOTES ON EARLY YOLO COUNTY AND DAVISVILLE

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Though Yolo County is larger than only 17 other counties of California's 58, it is nevertheless almost as big as the State of Rhode Island. Largely a level plain, its slope from the mountains on the West to the Sacramento River on the East is so gradual as to be imperceptible to the naked eye. Besides the Sacramento River on its eastern border, Cache and Putah Creeks, which come down from the western mountains, are its main water courses, and these two streams dissipate themselves upon the plain and sink into the ground before reaching an outlet. Aside from oaks that grow beside these streams and lesser water courses, the county is devoid of much natural timber. Yet, writes one history, "Imagination would hardly picture a country more attractive to the pioneer--a country whose soil is more productive of agricultural staples, whose climate is more healthful, and whose native growths of vegetation are more luxiant." (Sprague & Atwell, Western Shore Gazetteer, p. 4)

So thought some of the Anglo-American pioneers in the days before the gold rush, long before there was such a geographical and political entity as Yolo County. Legend has it that the first Anglo-American in the area was a Scotsman who deserted a British vessel in San Francisco Bay, fled northward and settled down with the Indians near Grand Island. He married an Indian woman, fathered several sons who are said to have been from 25 to 30 years old in 1941, and died before he could tell his story to other whites coming into the area. (Sprague & Stwell, p.7)

More easily substantiated is the story of Yolo's second Anglo-American settler, William Gordon. A native of Ohio, trapper and frontiersman, he came to California from New Mexico with the Workman party in 1841. In 1842 he "moved with his family from Los Angeles----and located on the north side of Cache Creek, where he built a (crude) house by setting poles on end, filling the cracks between with mud and covering the structure with oak shakes." This was probably the first white house in Yolo County. (Gilbert, Illustrated Atlas & History of Yolo County, p. 30)

Within the year Gordon was joined within the present Yolo County by John R. Wolfskill, who settled on Putah Creek, and William Knight, after whom Knight's Landing in Yolo and Knight's Ferry in Stanislaus were named. Here and there in the county a sprinkling of settlement occurred before the conquest of California, and the discovery of gold in 1848, changed the whole complexion of California history. A revolt of American settlers in June 1946, which resulted in the

capture of Sonoma and the proclaiming of an independent republic, soon merged into the Mexican War, in which American armed forces defeated Mexican opposition and held California as a military territory of conquest. By treaty in 1848, before James Marshall's discovery of gold at Coloma while building a sawmill for Captain Sutter had become known outside this area, California was formally ceded to the United States, and almost immediately there was agitation to supplant the government of the military with that of civil government. As the news of gold spread beyond California's borders and argonauts began to flock in, the exploding population overwhelmed the facilities of a government adjusted only to military occupation of a territory. In 1849, then, at the invitation of the military governor, delegates met, drew up a constitution for state government, which was ratified by the people, and before California had even been admitted to the Union as a state, a legislature, a governor and other state officials were elected. The first legislature met late in 1849 and the first part of 1850, laws were passed, and California was actually operating as a state before it was a state. Counties, including Yolo, were outlined and established by the legislature in February 1850, and local government was soon set up. The population of California, swelled greatly by the gold rush, was now nearly 100,000.

Yolo County, though a child of the gold rush, being one of the original 27 counties established in 1850, was not greatly affected at first by the great surge to the mines and the fevered grubbing for mineral wealth. Without any great gold deposits itself, it saw the first horde of gold-seekers pass it by, tramping overland from the bay area or sailing along its shores up the Sacramento River to the jumping off point of Sacramento City. Some of the early Yoloans even joined the miners on the Sierra creeks.

Though the greater part of the county was undisturbed by passing events, a few spots along the Sacramento did benefit by the rush to the mines. Immediately across the river from Sacramento the town of Washington developed on the overflow from the great bustling entrepot to the northern mines. Dr. J.D.B. Stillman, who arrived in Sacramento in the fall of 1849, described that city as "dust, men, mules, oxen, bales, boxes, barrels innumerable piled everywhere in the open air. The trees were all standing--magnificent great oaks--and a crowd of ships were fastened to the trees along the bank. We pitched our tent on the west bank to escape from the dust and confusion on the other side." As a suburb to Sacramento, with gardens and some businesses, Washington actually served as the county seat of Yolo from 1851

to 1857. Farther up the river, opposite the mouth of the Feather, the town of Fremont was founded when Jonas Spect erected a trading tent there in March 1849 at what was thought to be the head of navigation. For a time Fremont had high prospects as a major transfer and supply point for the mines and became the county seat in 1849. But when a small steamboat sailed right past the supposed head of navigation and up the Feather River to Marysville, a general exodus from Fremont began. By 1851 the town had declined to such a state of somnolence that the prize of government was shifted to Washington. Knight's Landing began in 1849 as a ferry crossing, and Cacheville started the same year with the building of a hotel for travellers at the creek crossing.

The real development of Yolo County began, however, as the first wave of gold-seekers receded from the foothills. Many of the 49ers were farmers. They saw that their best opportunity lay in the occupation they knew best, tilling the soil or raising stock, for there was a tremendous market for farm products among the unproductive miners and traders. Thus it was that many of the newcomers, after a season or two of varying luck in the mines, came down from the creeks and began to spread out upon the valley floor, setting up tent or brushwood hut or selected acres on the wide plain. Some were wealthy enough from their mining to lay out broad farms and begin to stock them. Others, with little success in the mines, were forced to begin their farming on a shoestring, squatting on a few acres and gradually acquiring a few head of cattle or turning over enough of the tough valley sod to plant a small garden. The broad clear flatland of Yolo County, still largely unoccupied, attracted an increasing number of these settlers.

The census records from 1850 to 1900 show this increase. In 1850, with gold supreme in the state, Yolo County had only 1086 inhabitants, while the mining counties were teeming. For comparison, let us take the two new mining counties of El Dorado and Calaveras in relation to Yolo. Though there were only those 1086 people in Yolo in 1850, El Dorado population had zoomed to 20,057 and Calaveras to 16,884. There was little change for El Dorado and Calaveras in the next census of 1860, but Yolo's population had grown to 4,716.

The shift was even more significant by the census of 1870. El Dorado dropped 50% to 10,309, and Calaveras dropped nearly as great a percentage to 8,895. Yolo really reached its stride in this decade of 1860-1870, more than doubling its population to 9,899, to go ahead of Calaveras and challenge El Dorado.

By 1880, though Calaveras and El Dorado made small gains over 1870 figures, Yolo went ahead of both of them with a population that marked its first break into five figures, 11,772. In the next two censuses, 1890 and 1900, Yolo maintained its advantage. Though it is really senseless to hurl all these figures at you, for you can't possibly remember them, I do hope they have at least given you an idea of the pattern of change from mining to agriculture in the years succeeding the discovery of gold (Calif. Blue Book 1909, p. 322.)

The decade of 1850's was a pioneer period. Men, far from the ties of home and society and sensing the weakness of the new judicial system, sometimes dropped their honorable qualities when they reached the frontier. Settlers on the lonely prairie were still largely strangers to one another; the influence of close-knit circles of friendship, lodge, and church was not yet strongly developed. In Yolo County each man was trying to build up his farm and herd as quickly as possible as the most direct road to wealth, comfort, and respectability, and sometimes herds grew with unbelievable speed.

It is said of one early settler that when he arrived in Yolo County he had barely the means to purchase a single ox, and had no visible means of support except the increase of his stock. So ideal, however, was Yolo County for stock raising, and so prolific was his animal, that in a little more than a year he is said to have had several hundred head of yearlings and calves! The older established settlers, with sizeable herds that somehow did not seem to multiply took a rather unsympathetic view of the phenomenal increase in the herds of some of the late arrivals and felt that a little united action was called for. A group of the older stockmen seized a man named James, whose herd had been so prolific as to border on the miraculous, and brought him to trial for cattle rustling before Judge Lynch, that omnipotent extra-legal gentleman who seemed always available for duty in early California when the duly authorized officers of the law were a little lax in prosecuting evildoers. Anyway, Mr. James was tried before a group of somewhat incensed Yolo stockmen, duly sentenced to 50 lashes on his bare back, which were laid on, appropriately enough, with a cowhide whip, and banished from the county. It is understood that as news of Mr. James' fate got about, herds in Yolo County suddenly reverted to the average rate of return.

The sensitivity of Yolo farmers to the appropriation of another man's stock once became a matter of considerable concern to John C. Murphy, a substantial citizen who later became a judge in Mono County. One winter Mr. Murphy was driving his mule team across Yolo's rain-soaked prairie when his wagon got stuck in the mud. He could find no one to help him, but not far off was a corral in which were several horses. He caught two of them, attached them in some way to his team, and with the combined strength of the mules and the horses, managed

to get himself out of his difficulty--but only to get himself into a greater one. It so happened that before he had an opportunity to return the horses to the corral, he wasseen, and the owner of the horses, by a strange quirk of fate the local justice of the peace, was notified. A warrant was immediately issued, and the unfortunate Mr. Murphy was quickly seized and brought before a rather steamed up justice of the peace. Mr. Murphy asked for a jury trial. The court, however, shifted his terbaccer quid from one side t'other and allowed as how the job of a jury was only to determine guilt or innocence, and of the court to pronounce sentence, and since the court knew of his own knowledge that the prisoner was quilty, a jury was unnecessary. The court then ordered the constable to take the prisoner to a convenient tree and string him up forthwith. As the constable was about to lay hand on the speechless Murphy, Mr. A. McDonald, a friend of both parties and later county clerk of Yolo, arrived on the scene, and only with a power of persuasion inspired by the seriousness of the situation, at last managed to soothe the court enough to prevent the execution.

On another occasion the ownership of a particular mule was in dispute before a Yolo justice of the peace. On the strength of theevidence, he became convinced that the animal belonged to the plaintiff and informed him that if he would swear the mule was his, it should be so adjudged. "Well,'' said the plaintiff, "I will swear that it is my mule." "When you swear to the mule," said the justice, "it shall be delivered to you." "I am ready now to swear to its being my mule," said the plaintiff. "When you do so swear," said the justice, "you shall take the mule." "I'll be damned if it ain't my mule," exploded the plaintiff in exasperation, "and by God I'm going to have him," whereupon the court promptly allowed that the ownership had been properly sworn, and the plaintiff was awarded the animal in question (S.&A., p. 23, 26-27)

Farms in Yolo County in 1850 were valued only at $47,000 but had 7000 head of stock. By 1852 134,000 bushels of grain were being raised. (Bancroft, History of California 6:499). By 1855 the cream had been skimmed from the gold placers, and the small miner began to give way to the capitalist and the moneyed companies able to put in ditches and set up expensive hydraulicking equipment, or to build stamp mills to get gold out of the quartz. More small miners, without sufficient capital or particular mining ability to propser under the new conditions in the mountains, went into farming. Yolo County, as we have seen, began to fill up, and its agricultural production climbed steadily. Toward the end of 1855 the Sacramento DEMOCRATIC STATE JOURNAL (11-22-55 2/3) reported that Yolo County had

23,000 head of cattle, 35,000 hogs, 6,000 horses, 2000 sheep, and 14,000 poultry, and was raising 600,000 bushels of wheat, 866,000 bushels of barley, and 120,000 bushels of oats, not counting the wild oats.

By 1880, Bancroft reports in his HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA (6:499), Yolo County farms had grown to a value of $10,937,000, which is a tremendous increase in 30 years from the $47,000 of 1850. In 1880 there were 929 farms in the county yielding $2,761,000 in produce and with livestock valued at $1,014,000. The population of the county then stood at 11,772.

From all these figures you gather that Yolo County was primarily a livestock and grain county. It is interesting to note, however, that it was also a pioneer in a number of other agricultural developments. In 1853, for instance, Dr. Joshua S. Curtis, with a garden along the Sacramento River, planted 50 pounds of peanuts he had brought from New Orleans. This planting is said to have been the first experimental raising of peanuts in California. The doctor's efforts were successful and remunerative and, as is always the case with success, his activity attracted others, so that the price of peanuts on the San Francisco market gradually dropped from 25 cents a pound to eight and 10 cents a pound. Within a few years some 300 tons were being grown in the state, most of them in Yolo County.

Silk culture also received its greatest impetus when I. N. Hoag, at one time an assemblyman from Yolo and for many years associated with the State Agricultural Society which put on the State Fair, in 1867 began growing mulberry trees on his place just above Washington. He obtained some 10 ounces of silkworm eggs, and to the worms he fed the leaves from his bulberry trees and cleared over $3400. By 1869 a number of plantations of mulberry trees had sprung up in various parts of the state. Among the largest companies formed to promote this new product was the California Silk Culture Association, located at Davisville, made up largely of San Francisco capitalists but including one of Yolo's chief promoters of new projects, Charles W. Reed. The Association within a year or two was processing two million cocoons, some of which they allowed to hatch and reproduce eggs to the amount of 3000 ounces, most of which were sold for four dollars an ounce for export to Europe. (S. &A., p. 104-9)

For a time considerable chicory was grown in Yolo County, having been introduced in 1860 by Adolph Palm and Henry Harmes on their farms below Washington. Chicory, when properly prepared, was often used as a substitute for coffee, and much of the ground doffee sold in California formerly contained about a third chicory. When the chicory was ripe, it was pulled, and the tops were cut off and discarded. The roots were then cut into long strips, dried in the sun for several days, roasted in a furnace, and then ground, packed, and shipped. (S&A 153-4).

Into this rich agricultural county came Jerome C. Davis, a native of Ohio and pioneer of 1845 who came to California with Fremont. He is said to have been one of the American settlers who captured Sonoma in June 1946 to set up the Bear Flag Republic. When American armed forces seized the northern California ports in the Mexican War, he joined the California Batallion which marched into southern California under Fremont. I do not know what he did in the next few years, but he may have gone to the mines, since he must have had considerable capital by 1855 when he acquired several thousand acres of land in Yolo County in the area where Davis, named for him, now stands. He laid out large orchards, pumped water from Putah Creek by steam power to irrigate his land, and raised quantities of stock and grain. With the many improvements built on his farm, including some 33 miles of fence costing up to $700 per mile, he was one of the heaviest taxpayers in Yolo County. In a period of nine years, between 1855 and 1863, he paid $6,295.63 in taxes into the county's coffers.

The Davis farm became one of the outstanding in the valley. In schedule 4, "Productions of Agriculture," for Putah Township of Yolo County, in the 8th census of the United States, taken in 1860, the original hand-written compilation of which is in the State Library, J. C. Davis is listed as owning 7000 acres of land with a cash value of $70,000. His implements and machinery were valued at $4775, and he had livestock valued at $29,087, plus some $3120 in the value of animals slaughtered. The value of his orchard products totalled $2500, and he also raised 2000 bushels of wheat, 10,000 pounds of wool, 200 bushels of barley, 300 tons of hay, and produced 520 pounds of butter and 1500 pounds of cheese. The census volume containing schedule 5, "Products of Industry," listed J.C. Davis & Co. as owning and operating a flouring mill in which some $10,000 was invested. It ground annually 20,000 bushels of wheat and corn valued at $18,000 and employed five hands, each of whom received the munificent wage of $50 a month. The mill was powered by steam and turned out 4,445 barrels of fine and superfine flour annually, valued at $24,447. I might say that if any of you are particularly interested in the minute details of operation of the Davis farm, we have in the State Library six of his original account books, large ledger volumes bound in leather, for about the 1859-1862 period. They tell every expense of the farm, every payment made, every penny taken in. They would provide the raw material for an interesting study in early agricultural economics.

In 1867, for $80,000, Davis sold some 3000 acres of his land to five men who were the prime movers in the construction of the California Pacific Railroad,

a new line projected to run from Vallejo to Sacramento with a branch to Marysville, the junction point to be on the Davis farm. Since there was a delay in their conclusion of the purchase, Davis rented the land to William Dresbach, who opened a hotel in the Davis home which he called the Yolo House. The railroad men came forward the next year, 1868, and completed the purchase of the land from Davis, and Dresbach and his successors then rented the Yolo House from them.

Near the Yolo House early in 1968 Dresbach erected a large building 40 feet by 110 feet for a general store under the name of Fresbach, Bane & Co. It was later moved down near where the railroad depot was built, and was the first building located there, becoming the nucleus for a town that gradually developed at that point. Dresbach called the place Davisville, and some months later, in November 1868 the town was formally laid out.

In the fall of 1868 the second building in Davisville was erected by F.G. Crawford and Joel Parmeter who opened a hotel called the American House. The third building was the inevitable saloon, erected by George Webber in the southwest part of what became the town. One assumes that, in that embryo period when plowed fields, rough paths and unobliging weed clumps were more to be found than streets, sidewalks, and corner lights, patrons, after a long evening at Mr. Webber's place of liquid refreshment may have experienced difficulty in finding their way back to their lodgings in the American House. In any event, it was not long before Webber moved his Yolo Saloon closer in to the center of activity.

The YOLO DEMOCRAT, published weekly in Woodland, took cognizance in July 1868 of the birth of Davisville in a story picked up by the Sacramento Union (July 7, 1868, p. 3,c.3). "The proposed location for the depot of the Vallejo Railroad, on Putah Creek,"said the DEMOCRAT, "is now being laid off in lots, and a town of considerable importance will soon spring up in that locality. The site is on the bank of Putah creek, at Davis' ranch, in a healthy and rich agricultural district settled by farmers, most of whom have secured a competence to themselves as the reward of energy and frugality. A large store is already in process of erection. The hotel there is thronged with visitors attracted thither by the promising business character of the place. The new town is to be called DavisVille."

Then the Democrat reporter, in an unwitting preview of the undreamed of experiment and research that were to take place at a great university at Davis years later, noted that many valuable crops were being destroyed in California by sparks from steam threshers, and that he had just seen demonstrated at Davisville an excellent device to prevent such accidents. This was a newly developed extinguisher attached inside the top of the smokestack, by which "every spark is precipitated by the action of steam into a reservoir of water."

It was not long before Davisville had become one of the important communities in Yolo County. Frank T. Gilbert, in his ILLUSTRATED ATLAS AND HISTORY OF YOLO COUNTY, said it was "a young metropolis" from which during the first year between 14,000 and 20,000 tons of wheat were shipped. As an indication of its growing importance, some choice business lots sold for as high as $700, but the going price for most of them was from $100 to $250. But laments, Mr. Gilbert with all this prosperity there was the accompanying wave of debauchery and crime that seems to have become the never failing companies of excessive prosperity in new towns.

The founding father of Davisville, William Dresbach, was doing quite well in the new community. He was not only the first merchant, the first postmaster, and the agent for Wells, Fargo & Co., but his business transactions are said to have reached as high as $15,000 per month. But he soon had competition, for by 1870 there were several stores, seven saloons, three hotels, three Chinese laundries, a restaurant, a livery stable, two saddle-and-harness shops, two large lumber yards, two wagon-and-blacksmith shops, and "several minor places of trade", according to Sprague & Atwell's WESTERN SHORE GAZETTERR, published in 1870 (p. 531, f, 522).

Since we are meeting in a school, it probably should be noted that the first such was held in Davisville in the term of 1868-9, with one A. Jones in charge. One historian states that "There were more scholars than room in the house, and when a class was reciting, the balance of the school took recess and studied mischief outdoors." A temporary larger site was obtained, and then the school funds gave out. More funds were raised by subscription, and a lease was taken for six months. In 1870 the school was set up with two teachers in what had been a grocery store, but difficulties continued, for in about a month, to the delight of the youngsters, the building was sold, and the school was forced out. The trustees were determined men, however, and before long they had secured Clark's Hall as a temporary location, and the pupils themselves, in a mild sort of poetic justice, were put to carrying the furniture over. This place served until the end of 1870, by which time a new two-story shcool building, costing about $2500 was completed. From that time, can we say, there have been no school housing problems in Davis?

While prospects for Davis seemed, at the beginning, unusually bright for rapid growth and progress, development of the new town soon hit a plateau, on which it rested for years. As the railroad was built up the valley toward Marysville, much of the traffic that had originated at Davisville, now started at points farther up the line. Too, most of the land about Davisville was held in large acreages which owners were unwilling to cut up.

In its issue of July 23,m 1887, the Sacramento UNION ran a long article on Yolo County and its agricultural activities. The author of the article, after noting that the early settlers did grazing, later changed to wheat growing, and were now beginning to subdivide their large farms into orchards and vineyards, remarked, "The day will come when the 1,000-acre wheat field will be turned into at least twenty happy homes." In his coverage of Davisville, the author stated that that its population was 700, and "It is surrounded by the richest of fruit-bearing soil, as is abundantly proved by the Oak Shade orchard and Briggs' vineyard. The great drawback of this town, and in fact to the whole county, is the fact that the rich lands are held in large tracts by men who refuse to divide them and permit colonization."

The Oak Shade orchard referred to was that of the Oak Shade Fruit Co., 350 acres of trees and vines, producing pears, almonds, apricots, plums, peaches, nectarines, black walnuts and cherries. The Briggs vineyard mentioned was then said to be the largest raisin vineyards in the state and was owned by Mrs. G.G. Briggs.

The Davisville newspaper, the SIGNAL, remained optimistic for the growth of the town, however. In an item picked up by the Sacramento UNION in 1888 the SIGNAL pointed out that Davisville had the number one railroad facilities to Sacramento and the East, to San Francisco and points south, and to points north through Oregon. Construction of a railroad from Davisville to Winters was expected, which would mean railroad shops and a roundhouse for Davisville. "It is only a matter of a short time," predicted the SIGNAL, "until Davisville will throw off her swaddling clothes and step forth in all her beauty and grace, and take her place among the thriving cities of the Sacramento Valley." Then, setting a high cultural and economic level to which Davisville should aspire, the SIGNAL said: "We want men to come here who secure a small piece of land...We want men of good habits and progressive ideas, who will assist in building up our schools, churches and public instituitons."

Over the years, apparently, Yolo's fruit-growing potential was gradually developed. In 1887 25 growers around Davisville founded the Almond Growers Association, which did much to maintain prices and market the nuts. By the turn of the century, Davisville almonds were acknowledged to be the best in the state (Olney, Overland Monthly Aug 1902, p. 182). and it was Walter G. Read of Davisville who invented, built and sold a crack almond huller. He also developed a machine to crack apricot pits, the kernels of which were shipped to Europe for the manufacture of oil. By the turn of the centry, too, Davisville had become quite a railroad center. The Sacramento UNION reported in 1901 (9-11-01 3/1) that 32 regular trains and a number of extra trains stopped daily in Davisville. Considerable freight was passing through, and as many as 165 carloads accumulated at the railroad yard during a night. The grandparents of you Davis natives evidently heard plenty of these things that go bump in the night.

Wages paid in Yolo County in 1870 may be of some interest. The census of that year states that farm hands, hired by the year and boarded, received $25 a month, while day laborers received $1.50 with board or $2 without. Prices of food in relation to the above wages are interesting. The YOLO DEMOCRAT on June 11, 1870 ran a list of prices of groceries on the Woodland market as follows:

Choice Oregon hams	19¢ lb
Chicagocheese	22½ to 25¢ lb
Granulated sugar	13½ to 14¢ lb
Dutch herring	$1.50 a dozen
Kerosene	70¢ gal.
Tea	$1.25 lb
Coffee, fresh ground	38¢ lb
Old Goverment Java	30 to 33½¢ lb

That last, I suppose, was an early example of G.I. surplus!

You know, the thing researchers in old California newspapers find hardest to do is to keep from playing hookey in the advertisements. I felt a little guilty myself as I looked through the Sacramento UNION, until I remembered that Sprague & Atwell in their WESTERN SHORE GAZETTEER (p. 178) remark that the Sacramento UNION led all other outside newspapers in circulation in Yolo County, so I could easily imagine Yolo folk 85 years ago reading these same advertisements that amused me today.

Sapolio cleaner was advertised with the slogan, "Well bred, soon wed. Girls who use Sapolio are quickly married." Anybody here remember Sapolio? Hall, Luhrs & Co. advertised its cans of tomatoes as "containing as many of the best ripe color tomatoes as the can will hodl without danger of scratching," whatever that meant! Anheuser-Busch said that nursing mothers could do themselves and their offspring a lot of good by using its Malt-Nutrine, and the Buffalo Brewing Co. informed its readers that "Youth and beauty are strengthened by the use of New Brew Lager." Cockney cigars were advertised as "the finest cagar in the world for 5¢," but one look at the villainous roll of tobacco in the picture and you readily understand why Vice-President Thomas Marshall said that what this country needed was a good 5-cent cigar.

A look into the YOLO DEMOCRAT revealed equally interesting advertisements. An obvious example of the simple joys, before such necessities of life as radio and television had come along to distract the homebody, is seen in Nathan Elliott's advertisement of his tract of small farms south of Woodland: "It is splendid soil, is easily tilled, and has a good view of the railroad." Selig Hyman, who sold dry goods, groceries, clothing, etc., said in his advertisement: "Parties who have not received courteous treatment formerly will not have every attention paid to them."

While I have said that Yolo County was poor in mineral wealth, there was one occasion in its history when there was really a feverish gold hunt in the eastern end of the county. Let us reduce the story to a title and call it The Mystery of the Great Yolo Train Robbery.

At 9:15 on the night of October 11, 1894, the overland express from San Francisco pulled out of Davisville for Sacramento, with engineer William Scott at the throttle and fireman E. S. Loncoln stoking coal. They had proceeded only about as far as Swingle's Station, a few miles east of Davisville, when two torpedoes exploded on the track, and they brought the train to a quick halt. Out of the darkness and into the engine climbed two masked men, armed with rifles and six-shooters. Each man wore a crude mask made from the leg of a pair of long underwear, with holes cut in it for eyes, nose, and mouth. They forced Scott and Lincoln down out of the locomotive and along the track to the express car.

The robbers then ordered the messenger, J. F. Paige, to open his door, but he refused and began shooting at them through a small window. One of the robbers quickly put a stop to that by putting a bullet through the window, the flying glass cutting Paige about the face. The lives of the engineer and fireman were then threatened by the robbers, and Paige opened up the door. The robbers quickly went through the express matter and seized three bags of gold coin, worth about $51,000 and weighing 185 pounds, which Wells, Fargo & Co. was shipping to Ogden, Utah, and Bodie. The engine crew was forced to drag the heavy bags along the track and wrestle them into the locomotive, whereupon the robbers ordered the trainmen away, unhooked the engine from the train, and went rolling off toward Sacramento. Several miles beyond Swingle's was a hobo camp. Here the robbers stopped, got the sacks out of the engine, took $1700 and buried the rest. They then broke the headlight, let out most of the steam, set the engine in reverse--and disappeared into the night. The locomotive slowly retraced itself and crashed into the standing train, jamming the tender tightly into the mail car.

The Southern Pacific and Wells, Fargo promptly offered a reward of $5000 for each robber and another $5000 for recovery of the gold or a proportionate reward for any part of it. The express company called out its veteran detective, J. B. Hume, and within a short time Hume had a crew of 20 men on the job, including Detective J. M. Thacker, who gave the case special attention. To Wells, Fargo the first consideration was the recovery of the gold, and knowing that the robbers could not easily have carried away 185 pounds of it, they made a thorough search for it in the hobo camp. But it, like the robbers, had vanished completely.

The whole Sacramento-Yolo area was agog with excitement. Any stranger about was viewed with suspicion and more than likely reported to the police. Two men, heading fo the river, were reported seen on Dr. G. M. Dixon's ranch just below Washington. Each carried a valise and one had a rifle. Another two strangers, one tall and one short, reportedly bought a drink one morning in a Woodland saloon, ordered a bottle of whisky and asked for arnica and bandage to bind up a cut hand. Leaving hurriedly, they got into a buggy and went off in the direction of Merritt's Station. The suspicious barkeeper notified Sheriff Wyckoff, who promptly sent searchers out in all directions. The sheriff himself, with the barkeeper, went off in a buggy to give Davisville a close scrutiny. But these leads turned out to be false clues, and the train of the robbers got colder and colder.

For months nothing further developed in the case. Then, on March 30, 1895 two men boarded the Oregon express and, crawling over the cars, reached the engine while the train was about six miles south of Marysville. The two forced the engine crew to stop the train and then, with the trainsmen as hostages, managed to get into the express car. The safe was locked, and the messenger was able to convince the robbers that he couldn't open it. The holdup men then turned to the passengers, sending the engineer and fireman down the aisle to collect jewelry and money in a bag made from an overalls leg tied at the bottom. There's that leg of clothing again.

It so happened that among the passengers travelling in the Pullman car was John Bogard, sheriff of Tehama county. He heard the train grind to a stop, became urious when it didn't continue on its way, and finally crawled out of his berth, strapped on his six-shooter, and started down the train to investigate. He soon saw what was going on, pulled out his shooting iron and plugged one of the robbers; but before he could fire again he was shot and killed by the other robber, who quickly scrambled out of the train and made his escape.

Detectives promptly went to work on the case, and in the course of considerable questioning arrived at the belief that the would-be robbers were two brothers named McGuire who often worked as ranch hands up and down the valley and were known as accomplished cyclists who sometimes bought and sold bicycles in between ranch jobs. It was then discovered that the one killed by Sheriff Bogard was really named Sam Browning, alias McGuire, and that the one who escaped was known as Jack Brady in San Francisco and elsewhere as Harry Williams.

There was an excited beating of the brush for the escaped man, but he managed to slip away, and this trail also grew cold. Then, nearly four months later, on July 23, 1895, Sacramento County's Sheriff Johnson and a deputy went over to the Rancho del Paso, somewhere near where North Sacramento now is, to exercise some bloodhounds the sheriff had recently purchased. They had strayed some distance from their buggy when along came a horseman carrying a sawed-off shotgun. Sheriff Johnson became suspcisious and felt that he might be the JackBrady sought for the murder of Sheriff Bogard. The officers hurried back to their buggy and began to follow the lone horseman, but at the north end of the American River bridge he took the rough Nicolaus road, and the pursuers could not keep up. They returned to Sacramento and then, reinforced Undersheriff Reese, returned to the chase. They found that the horseman had stopped at a ranch some seven miles up the Sacramento River, left his horse and saddle at the ranch, and hired a woman to row him across to the Yolo side about five miles below Elkhorn. The horse was found to have been stolen in Gridley three days before. It was thought that the man had walked into Woodland. He might have been the stranger who had dinner in Doose's restaurant and then disappeared.

A day or so later Sheriff Johnson received word that a man resembling Brady had passed through Freeport, back on the Sacramento side of the river. With three deputies he hurried off in pursuit and there, under a bridge between Courtland and Franklin, found his man hiding. Realizing that further flight was hopeless, the man admitted that he was Brady, and Sheriff Johnson hustled him off in triumph to Sacramento jail. Here at last, after so many false clues and vain pursuits, was in custody the man accured of shooting Sheriff Bogard and committing heavens knows how many other crimes, perhaps even the great Yolo train robbery.

Everybody had a go at questioning him, but Brady stoutly denied that he had had anything to do with the Yolo train robbery, though he did admit that his companion, Browning, the man shot by Sheriff Bogard on the train near Marysville, had told him about his participation in the robbery. The gold had been too heavy to carry far or fast, Brady said Browning had told him, and it had been buried near the hobo camp where the robbers had stopped with the engine. In fact, Brady admitted that he had helped Browning search for the gold about a month after the robbery, but that they could not find it.

Detective Thacker of Wells, Fargo once more came into the case. From Brady he obtained a description of the place where Browning had allegedly told Brady he had buried the coin, and forthwith went out with a search party. They dug up

and prodded a good part of the hobo camp, but the only things they turned up were a number of little cans containing combs, razors, knives and forks, clothes, and food, that tramps had buried there against the time when they might again winter at this favorite resort by the tules. Thacker and Sheriff Johnson then took Brady himself to the scene for another search, but though he located the spot where he and Browning had searched, no gold was found. That did not, however, deter a number of Yolo and Sacramento citizens, armed with shovels, from doing some feverish prospecting and major excavation work in the tramp camp. After all, a 50,000-dollar gold pocket would have been a sizeable find even in the Mother Lode, but out here among the Yolo tules it was a veritable bonanza. Detective Thacker finally had to organize an armed guard to keep the volunteer diggers away.

Well, Brady was soon carried off to Marysville to stand trial for the murder of Sheriff Bogard. In due course he was convicted of the murder, and on November 26, 1895, was sentenced to life imprisonment in Folsom Prison.

In the meantime the indefatigable Thacker continued his weary search for the gold. Through the rest of July and into August he and his men sweated through tons of sand and chopped through yards of soil that had turned to iron hardness in the summer heat. Then one day the sacks that had held the $50,000 in gold were found under some debris, and Thacker realized that someone had beaten him to it and made off with the treasure. Discouraged, sunburned, and eaten up by mosquitoes, Thacker was just about to give up when his diggers unexpectedly dug into a cache of gold coins, $18,900 worth.

But what of the rest of the $51,900? He did not know, but he was convinced that someone would come back for the $18,900. Removing $11,000 of his find, he put guards on duty nearby to watch. Unfortunately, the San Francisco newspapers got wind of Thacker's discovery of part of the money, and the detective, in disgust over the publicity, removed the rest of the $18,900 and abandoned watch on the place.

In the following months he patiently searched for the unknown party who had made off with the bulk of the loot, but with little success, until one day a rather nervous little man visited him in San Francisco and urged him to go to a certain saloon where a man was to deliver a package to a friend. Thacker hurried off to the saloon. There the little man suddenly plucked at his sleeve and pointed out a well-dressed man who had just arrived. Thacker promptly accosted him, learned that his name was John P. Harmens, and after some whispered conversation, induced Harmens to go with him to the Wells, Fargo office. There Harmens was charged with stealing

$30,000 of the Yolo train robbery plunder. With little hesitancy Harmens admitted his guilt, confessed that he had $2000 of it left, deposited with the Garman Savings Bank, and agreed to go with Thacker to Sacramento and show him where he had found the money. In Sacramento, on February 9, 1896, Harmens was promptly arrested by the efficient Sheriff Johnson on the charge of secreting money believed stolen or lost, and while Harmens reposed in the county jail, Johnson and Thacker repiard to San Francisco to search Harmens' quarters, where the sheriff made an inventory of the goods they found. These included an assortment of fine clothing, three French ash-trays, a gold pen in case, a corkscrew, a can opener, a wire-cutter, two manicure scissors, a curling iron, a bottle of smelling salts, an atomizer, opera glasses, two silk umbrellas, a lady's hat, a silk plush armchair, and 15 books.

In San Francisco Thacker also found a number of people who knew Harmens, some of whom had borrowed money at interest from the whilom capitalist. As the evidence began to pile up, Harmens became willing to tell the rest of his story. In October 1894 he was living, he said, in the hobo camp in a little shack of willows, sacks and boards only 80 to 100 yards from the spot where a locomotive mysteriously stopped one night and two men got off. Harmens declared that he saw enough to guess what was going on, and after the men had sent the locomotive back and disappeared, he began to investigate. It was not long before he had unearthed the coin and had most of it in a Yolo County Bank--a nearby sand bank, that is. He said that he carried away about $20,000 of it in his blankets, which meant a load of about 75 pounds. Wells, Fargo, however, was certain that he had made off with over $30,000. In any event, Harmens got to Sacramento and took a room in a hotel not more than 50 yards from the police station. There on his bed he counted his money. He kept low for about a week and then went to San Francisco, outfitted himself with a wardrobe of fine clothes and began to live in style. He went to the races, bought imported cigars and wines and diamond jewelry, and maintained several female companions in a manner to which they readily became accustomed. By the time Thacker caught up with him Harmens had spent or lent all but $2000 of his bonanza. It had been a grand and glorious 16-month spree in the life of a tramp.

When property unlawfully acquired is carried from one county to another, courts of either county have jurisdiction, the Sacramento UNION informed its readers, and since Harmens had carried the gold from Yolo into Sacramento, the latter took jurisdiction. On February 18, 1896, at the hearing on Harmens, Harry Williams, alias Jack Brady, alias Jack McGuire, was brought down from Folsom Prizon. For the first time he admitted that he and Browning had robbed the train at

Swingle's Station and hidden the gold, a point Wells, Fargo needed to prove what money Harmens had been spending. The evidence seemed claar, and Harmens was bound over to the Sacramento Superior Court on $3000 bail, but, since he remained in jail, he evidentaly could no longer raise that amount. On April 29, 1896, the jury found him guilty, and on June 1, 1896, he was sentenced to three years in Folsom Prison.

So ended the mystery of the Great Yolo Train Robbery and the story of what was probably the greatest gold hunt in Yolo history.

And now, as a parting salute to your county, let me quote from an article in the Sacramento UNION of 1887 (7-23-87 1/2): "...Yolo County is not noted for its grandeur of scenery, for nature has done but little for her in that direction... but the man who enjoys nature in birds and flowers, in trees and running brooks, who can extract mental pleasure in the midst of growing grain and blooming vine and fruit trees will have at his command a scenery that will rival the finest aspect obtainable from the loftiest peak of the Alps."