WAGONS HO!
A Spotlight on the Gold Rush and San Joaquin County

Michael Bennett, Director of the San Joaquin County Historical Society & Museum and Wayne Shrope, singer and entertainer, give a brief overview of the gold rush in Stockton and San Joaquin County—enriched with bits of writings from the period along with both traditional and original songs. (A 30-minute presentation.)

BRIEF VITAE

Michael Bennett is the Director of the San Joaquin County Historical Society & Museum. He has been working for the Society & Museum since 1977 and is a Past President of the Lodi/Tokay Rotary Club. He is currently serving on the San Joaquin County Sesquicentennial Commission and the Board of Directors of the California Sesquicentennial Wagon Train.

Wayne Shrope took an early retirement in 1991 from his position as chair of the Speech-Communications Department at De Anza College in Cupertino, California, to allow more time to pursue his interests in theater and music. In solo appearances and as lead singer for The Sierra Sidekicks, he has appeared in Northern California and Nevada on concert series, at civic celebrations and for special events.
WAGONS HO!

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GOLD RUSH AND SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

By

Michael Bennett and Wayne Shrope

This article was originally prepared in 1998 as a promotional speech designed to kindle the interests of county residents in California's Sesquicentennial Commemoration. In a meeting with Historical Society Volunteer Wayne Shrope, the concept of illustrating the presentation with songs and poetry was developed. As a talented performer and songwriter, Wayne has taken a few liberties with some traditional lyrics and a few more with contemporary music and poetry. He has also included some of his original works. We have given credit to the artists when known and made modifications to fit the story of the Gold Rush and San Joaquin County. We apologize to anyone who does not care for the changes. Our goal was to use story, music, and rhyme as traditional storytellers would in order to pass on the story and entertain as well. This article is presented here as part of our documentation of the Sesquicentennial as we presented it in San Joaquin County and for the many readers that we did not have the opportunity to sing and talk to in 1998 and 1999.

Michael W. Bennett

Blow ye winds hi ho, to California,
There's plenty of gold
So I've been told
On the banks of the Sacramento.

Welcome to the California Sesquicentennial, a commemoration of 150 years of California history beginning with the Gold Rush.

To Sacramento we're bound away...
To me doo dah, doo dah...
For there the gold's
More bright than day...
To me doo dah, doo dah day...

Blow ye winds hi ho, to California,
There's plenty of gold so I've been told
On the banks of the Sacramento.

Join us as we revisit a time in our history that changed California for all time. A time of growing illusions and changing visions.

Those were the days
Of the good old times...
To me doo dah, doo dah...
Back in the days of the 49...
To me, doo dah, doo dah day...

(The Banks of the Sacramento [Traditional] based on The Camptown Races by Stephen Foster.)

The California Gold Rush captured the thoughts and dreams of people around the world. A Spanish myth had described California as an island populated by Amazons whose only metal was gold. It is thought that Chinese mariners sail-
ing off our coast in the early 1600s saw the golden glow of summer grasses and wild flowers on our coastal mountains and described it as a mountain of gold. News of the gold strike only confirmed these myths and spread the infection we call "gold fever"...

Oh California [Traditional]
(based on Oh Susanna by Stephen Foster.)

I come from Salem City
With a gold pan on my knee
I'm goin' to California
The gold dust for to see
It rained all night the day I left.
The weather it was dry
The sun so hot I froze to death,
My brothers don't you cry

Oh California, oh that's the place for me
I'm going to California
With a gold pan on my knee

And when I get to Frisco town,
I think I'll look around
And when I see them gold lumps there,
I'll pick them up off the ground
I'll scrape the mountains clean,
My boys, I'll drain the rivers dry
I'll come back home with a pocket full of gold,
So brothers don't you cry

Oh California,
Oh that's the place for me
I'm going to California
With a gold pan on my knee

Serious interest on the part of Easterners began in earnest because of the letters and tales of the early mountain men and surveyors who wrote and told glowing and dramatic accounts of the great and terrible beauty of the West. Westward expansion soon began. Here is an old Californio folk song describing California in the spring.

La Primavera [Traditional]

Ya viene la primavera sembrando flores
Sembrando flores-Ay, Ay.
Y ya los campos
Se smaltan de mil colores
De mis colores
Cantan las aves- cantan las aves
Los oteros repitan sus trinos soaves
Sus strinos soaves

The Spring [English paraphrase]

The Springtime in California
Brings flowers—
A myriad of beautiful flowers
And the fields are painted
With glorious colors—
A million vivid colors
And the birds sing—
Oh, how the birds sing
And the hills echo their sweet songs
John C. Fremont camped right out here on the end of what is now Eight Mile Road. It was a young man’s adventure. French Canadian fur trappers working right here in French Camp authored some of the tales that paved the way for the electrifying news of gold in California.

The road to California was mapped and described by these independent sojourners in their quest for beaver pelts. Ships accustomed to carrying goods between the East, Europe, South America, and the Sandwich Islands, soon began delivering passengers to Yerba Buena and other ports along the California coast and to California’s oldest inland port—Stockton.

Soon the crush of foreigners became overwhelming, some with names such as John Sutter, Sam Brannan, John Bidwell, John Marsh, and Charles Weber, a great annoyance to the Mexican governors, especially with the added threat of Russian trappers operating on the North Coast. Also concerned were the native Californians who not only had the harness of missionary expansion forced on many of them, but many of the new arrivals failed to learn and appreciate the lifestyle and structure of the Native American communities they found here. Disrespect, distrust, disease, and destruction of the native peoples was prevalent.

Remember that gold was discovered on January 24, 1848 in Coloma. The Bear Flag Rebellion and the subsequent treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded most of the West including California to the American States, is proof that timing is everything. The War with Mexico substantially ended with the negotiation of the Treaty on February 2, 1848 in Mexico. If communication had been any faster, if Mexican government troops had been more numerous, or if the discovery at Sutter’s Mill had been much sooner we might all be citizens of Mexico. It is doubtful, however, that the Mexican government, whose lines of communication were strained by distance, could have withstood the wild onslaught of immigrants who rushed to California.

This led to lawlessness on all sides. The miner Joaquin Murrietta became an outlaw after claim jumpers raped and killed his wife.

[Americans had to quickly supply and serve a newly populated, wild region. Legitimately established codes of law, courts, and police were not established until a provisional state government was established. In the meantime people often took the law into their own hands. In the mining camps the vigilantes began to drive the Mexican and other foreign miners out of the diggings. By passing the Foreign Miner Tax, the California legislature reflected the hysteria of the Yankee miners in regard to the non-Anglo miners. Ed.]
The Ballad of Joaquin Murrieta
—by Wayne Shrope

There's a legend in old California
Of a miner Joaquin and his wife
Some gringos decided to take her;
She fought them and paid with her life
They say on the day that he found her,
He knelt by her body to pray
They say he caressed her
And he tenderly kissed her,
And then they heard him say:

Adios, adios, Querida, adios
I love you forever,
I promise forever
Adios, Querida, adios

With a scream
Then he mounted his pinto,
Like a wild man he rode into town
He hunted the gringos who killed her—
And one by one gunned them down
He knew that the gringos would hang him
For all the killing he'd done
He would never get justice,
He would settle for vengeance,
And then he went on the run

Adios, adios, Querida, adios
I love you forever,
I promise forever
Adios, Querida, adios

Then freely he roamed California
Becoming an outlaw of fame
“The Robin Hood of California”
Was added to his name
The Mexicans called him a hero;
The gringos just called him a thief

Joaquin Murrieta, El Famoso, as we believe he appeared in 1853, a disillusioned '49er.

But all who had seen him
Would agree that they heard him
In a voice aching with grief

A deputy sheriff and posse
Took two years to catch him they say
To prove that they really had killed him,
They put him on public display
But some don't believe that was Joaquin,
"He's up in the mountains," they say
For down in the valley
You can hear his voice crying
In an echo that won't fade away

Adios, adios, Querida, adios
I love you forever,
I promise forever
Adios, Querida, adios
On February 10, 1848, John Augustus Sutter attempted to file a claim in Monterey. Sutter wrote to Mariano Vallejo, “I have made a discovery of a gold mine.” By March 1st the news and a gold sample had reached San Francisco.

The real Gold Rush begins.

*The Song of the Wagon Master*

--by Stan Jones

(From *Wagon Master*, a John Ford film, 1950)

*I left my home a way out yonder,*
*Fell in 'hind the wagon train*
*I'm lonesome 'cause I had to wander,*
*Fell in 'hind the wagon train*

*Oh the white tops are a rollin' rollin'—*
*The big wheels keep on turnin'*
*When I reach the Promised Land,*
*For my gal I'll still be yearnin'*
Prior to the discovery of gold and thereafter, Charles M. Weber still held the dream of developing a mercantile center surrounded by rich agricultural properties. Weber by design and accident found himself the owner of the gateway to the Southern mines. His good fortune was that gold was not discovered in Tuleburgh. Except for his partnership in the Stockton Mining Company (which did not produce much gold), Weber did not do much mining. He did, however, resurvey his holdings and rename his town Stockton in September 1848.

Weber’s “Gateway City” probably grew at a much greater rate due to the onslaught of gold rush business. Even the meanest of miners could process twenty dollars worth a day and that was twenty times what they could make in a day back in the eastern states. However, dinner could cost between twenty and thirty dollars, a shovel 50, and a pound of coffee ten (not much different than 1999 prices). The real richness of what was to become San Joaquin County, on September 9, 1850, was the diversity of the people who settled here, either directly or via a return from the gold camps.

Here is an excerpt from a series of letters that appeared in Stockton’s San Joaquin Republican in 1853. Supposedly written by immigrant Tse Chong-Chee to his cousin in China. Chong-Chee was probably a fictional creation of a white newspaper writer. The letters do reveal an obvious consciousness of East/West differences, using the guise of Chinese culture to satirize American idiosyncrasies.

Chong Chee—“(American Women) are remarkable for the length of their feet, which results, I presume, from their incessant travel on foot from their very infancy. And what is very strange about it is, they consider their feet and...the extremity of their leg a beautiful portion of their persons, and they have a most captivating and sly way of displaying beauty in this respect... Many of (them) could be considered extremely beautiful if it were not for the largeness of their feet... and the way their eyes are set in their heads. The squarish set of their eyes is far from being agreeable... your illustrious cousin, Tse Chong-Chee.

Whether they were farmers, ranchers, bakers, and restaurateurs...teamsters, river boatmen, innkeepers, bar tenders, carpenters...laundresses, importers, politicians, brewers, singers, tailors or tarts, or from Great Britain, China, Japan, the Mediterranean, Africa, Europe or South America, each brought their expertise to the commerce of the area, along with the traditions and lifestyles of their homelands and shared them with the others.

Jeremiah Burke Sanderson, for example, was part Native American and part Scot, but he identified most closely with his African American heritage. Sanderson was an associate of Frederick Douglass and a leader in the early movement for Black civil rights in the East. According to Stockton historian Leon Ross—

“Sanderson, like many Easterners, was fascinated by tales of gold in California, so in 1854 he traveled to San Francisco. There he learned of the African American communities in Sacramento and the adjacent mining towns. Upon relocating to Sacramento, Sanderson found that many persons there were seeking an education for themselves and their children.... On his own initiative he petitioned the Sacramento School Board for an African American school. In May of 1855, the Sacramento School Board opened such a school. Sanderson taught there until he was hired as the principal of a school in San Francisco. After eight years, he left San Francisco and came to Stockton to establish a school where he taught from 1863 to 1875. Sanderson and his school developed an outstanding statewide reputation as a model of how education should be conducted. Jeremiah Sanderson and his school have been honored with a plaque that has been erected at Washington and Madison Streets in Stockton.”

[The Elk Street School continued to operate until 1879, when the separate school was abolished. Ed.]
California with its diversity of climate and geography, and San Joaquin County with its deep soils, teeming port, and benevolent climate were the "right places" for people from all over the world to find a new place to work and live.

Let's jump back to 1847. Weber's little town was already recognized as... "A town [that] is building of promising importance." (Bayard Taylor.) With the discovery of gold on the American River, the eight families and general store in Stockton were changed forever. Weber went to San Francisco for additional supplies destined for the mines and the boom was on. A branch of the Weber store was established in Weberville near Hangtown to better serve the growing population of miners working the diggings. Weber and company profited mightily and only prospected in their spare time (Davis). Weber sold his share of the mining company and returned to his businesses in Stockton.

Weber then purchased a small sloop, which he filled with tools and provisions to be resold in Stockton. He continued to build his city by his own efforts and by offering lots to anyone who would build on them.

A noted correspondent of the time, Bayard Taylor, passed through the new town on the San Joaquin in the fall of 1849 on his way to the gold fields and described it this way:

"A view of Stockton was something to be remembered. There in the heart of California, where last winter stood a solitary ranch in the midst of tule marshes, I found a canvas town of a thousand inhabitants and a port of twenty-five 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 commercial mart—I was 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 here (one of a dozen) had done business to the amount of $100,000."

Primitive law and justice systems were operating in Stockton just as it was in the gold towns. Here is a bit of cowboy poetry—a humorous example of frontier justice. (Note: We took the liberty of substituting "Stockton" for "Elko," as it actually appears.)
The Prospector
—by Jack Hannah
(From Waddie Mitchell: The Buckaroo Poet, Warner Western, CD 9-45325-2)

They headed out the canyon
Late autumn in the snow.
The old prospector and his mule
Were loaded, traveling slow.
He'd buttoned down his collar;
His hat was stuck down like glue,
And they headed straight for Stockton,
Because, well, they wanted to.

He chewed a twist of something
That would surely curl your hair.
His long grey beard matched his steel
Grey eyes with their penetratin' stare.
He moved with calm demeanor,
Seemed fearless through and through
As they headed straight for Stockton,
Because, well, they wanted to.

When they hoofed it into Stockton,
A bunch of cowboys gathered 'round
See, they'd just come off together,
And they was shootin'
When they spied that old prospector,
They knew just what they'd do.
They circled up around him,
Because, well, they wanted to.

One asked the old prospector
If he'd ever learned to dance.
"No," he said real cautious,
"I ain't never had the chance."
So the cowboy pulled his six gun and
Said, "Well, I'm up to teachin' you!"
And he danced that night in Stockton,
Just as if he wanted to.

Yes, he danced and dodged them bullets
Like a jumpin' jack
Until he counted six.
Then he ceased dancing,
Stepped quickly to his pack.
He held a shotgun in his hands,
His voice was calm and cool.
He said, "Tell me somethin' Sonny,
Have you ever kissed a mule?"

The young man's face contorted
As he pondered his disgrace,
And he stared 'Hith consternation
At that shotgun in his face.
He swallowed hard before he spoke,
His voice came sharply through,
"No! I ain't never kissed no mule!
But I've always wanted to!"

An early form of government was under construction, supervised by a Provisional State legislature. The prevention of crime was the primary reason for developing Stockton city government. The brig Susanna was pressed into service as the local jail. An election of aldermen and city officers was held at the Central Exchange Saloon and the city of Stockton became a city in California on July 23, 1850, just over a month before California became a State on September 9, 1850. Now the real rush was on!

Labor was short, so orders were placed in the Eastern states and Europe for young men and women to work in the new businesses of this bustling riverside town. Stockton was truly a gateway city. In the first year of the gold rush 90,000 new people came to California, over a third through Stockton. By 1854, 300,000 new faces gazed upon the landscape.

In 1859 a Stockton paper reported that "fifteen Yankee girls arrived Tuesday from Boston, a part of a consignment which had been previously
promised. It is presumed that they will apply for positions as help, but will accept the position of wives from eligible parties.” If it can be said that the men tamed the West, then it must be added that the women civilized it. After women came to the frontier, there were families....and there were schools....and there were churches...the frontier became a civilized place to live.

By the Old San Joaquin  
—by Wayne Shrope

I ride along and sing a song  
About the land I love—  
By the old San Joaquin  
My spirits high,  
A clear blue sky,  
A summer sun above.  
The earth's warm and green  
There's peace and joy for this old boy  
Beside the San Joaquin.  
Here I'll stay  
Under California sky.  
I will live until I die—  
By the old San Joaquin

Roll on, you old river, I'll follow along,  
Just guide me back home to my love  

For now it seems  
I'm dreamin' dreams  
About the one I love—  
By the old San Joaquin  
My pretty gal,  
My saddle pal,  
My little turtle dove,  
My sweet prairie queen.  
We'll build a nest out in the West,  
Here I'll stay  
Livin' on the land I love  
With the only gal I love—  
By the old San Joaquin

(From The Sierra Sidekicks, Home on the Range, Cassette album, independent production, 1996.)

Stockton businesses fought for the repeal of the Foreign Miners Tax, the repeal of which restored the mercantile economy of Stockton. The miners, who were previously excluded now went back to work and again required supplies.

Despite frequent fires (a form of urban renewal in early California), Stockton stood as a major transportation hub in the state. In 1859, Dr. Erastus Holden, a Stockton pharmacist and mayor, began to work on bringing rail service to town. With improved transportation, trade in raw materials and finished goods skyrocketed. The Yaple and Beardsley Blacksmith shop opened and the Stockton Gangplow was born. The Samson plow soon followed. The H.C Shaw Company was formed. The Haines Houser and Stockton Wheel Company harvester soon graced the landscape.

By 1891, San Joaquin County had its second courthouse and by 1893, Cunningham’s Castle (the county jail) was built. More and grander hotels were built. Emergency medical facilities served Stockton. By the turn of the century Stockton was home to the State Insane Asylum. Stockton Iron Works, Samson Iron Works, Colberg Ship yards, Holt Manufacturing, Harris Manufacturing and the Stockton Woolen Mills began production.

Agricultural production soon outstripped gold from the mines and proved to be the “real gold” of California. In one year, the current agricultural production of this state exceeds all the gold ever recovered from the hills of the Mother Lode.
I Belong
—by Sheb Woolley

As I look from the hills
To the green land below
My faith in the future is strong
And I feel a thrill for my heart is filled
And I know that I belong
For the sun and the soil
Are my treasure
And the wind in the trees is my song
Let me live and die
Under this clear, blue sky
For I know that I belong

(From Sheb Woolley: Rawhide: How the West was Won, Bear Family CD DCD 15899-AH).

Opening and keeping land in production meant that delta reclamation projects, levee building and upstream flood control had to be constructed. Channels were dredged and larger ships could then serve California’s oldest inland port. In addition to local shipping, Stockton and San Joaquin County businesses have supplied and repaired America’s war machine for every conflict since the Civil War. In addition to climate, soils and a “go ahead” attitude in our people, the development of transportation systems was a case of perfect timing. The river and port, the roads up into the foothills and through the Sierra, the upper and lower Sacramento roads, the coming of the railroad, were innovations that helped get our county’s goods and crops to market. It is still happening—look at Farmington Fresh.

[Farmington Fresh is considered the latest development in the transportation of fresh San Joaquin County produce by air to markets around the world. Shipment by air is not a new strategy but Farmington Fresh has substantially advanced the technology and facilities necessary to do so. Ed.]

The “go ahead” spirit, the diversity of our people, innovations and inventions, diverse climates and crops, new machines, high tech indus-
Our commemoration of the last 150 years, since the discovery of gold, is alive and well in San Joaquin County. If all goes as planned, 91 wagons and 500 head of stock will arrive in our county on the 25th of June 1999. On the 26th the Sesquicentennial Wagon Train will leave the Clements Rodeo grounds and travel to the San Joaquin County Historical Museum at Micke Grove Park for a day celebrating our Western history with cowboy music and poetry along with exhibits, demonstrations, and activities recreating life in the last century. The evening will find us inside a circle of wagons enjoying a campfire and the music and stories of our westering people.

Song of the Wagon Master
(from the John Ford film, Song of the Wagon Master by Stan Jones, words by Wayne Shrope used in this context only)

They’re comin’ like the 49ers,
Fell in ‘hind the wagon train
Like them settlers and them miners.
Fell in ‘hind the wagon train
Chorus: (as above)

The next day the Wagon Train will proceed to the port city of Stockton to meet the tall ship Californian, the scow schooner Alma and possibly two other tall ships, for another day of sharing our history. This promises to be one of the single most important events of the California Sesquicentennial celebration.

Now, to wrap up our program, we’d like to present California’s almost forgotten state song. A couple of years ago I heard that the Sesquicentennial Commission was considering commissioning an official Sesquicentennial State song. Wayne asked, “Don’t they realize that they already have an official state song? Whatever happened to I Love You, California?”

Well, I didn’t remember hearing the song, so some research was indicated. I plowed through the County Archives and collections at the museum without any luck. I then called Dr. Don Walker, our Archivist/Librarian, who splits his time with the University of the Pacific and the Museum. Well, he found a yellowed and ragged old copy of the sheet music in the UOP Library and these facts about the song.

I Love You, California was introduced in 1913 by the great opera soprano Mary Garden. It was the official song of the San Francisco and San Diego expositions of 1915, and it was played aboard the first ship to go through the Panama Canal (1914). It became a popular but unofficial state song until 1951, when a resolution designating it as California’s state song was adopted by both houses of the legislature. Here it is—
I Love You California
(words by F.B Silverwood,
music by A.F. Frankenstein)

I love you California,
You're the greatest state of all
I love you in the Winter,
Summer, Spring and in the Fall
I love your fertile valleys;
Your dear mountains I adore...
I love your grand old ocean
And I love your rugged shore

I love your redwood forests—
Love your fields of yellow grain
I love your summer breezes
And I love your winter rain
I love you land of flowers;
Land of honey, fruit and wine
I love you California
You have won this heart of mine

Where the snow crowned Golden
Sierras
Keep their watch o'er the valley's
bloom
It is there I would be
In our land by the sea
Every breeze bearing rich perfume
It is here nature gives of her rarest
It is home sweet home to me
And I know when I die
I shall breathe my last sigh
For my sunny California

I love your old grey missions—
Love your vineyards stretching far
I love you California
With your golden gate ajar
I love your purple sunsets.
Love your skies of azure blue
I love you California—
I just can't help loving you

I love you Catalina—
You are very dear to me
I love Tamalpais and I love Yosemite
I love you Land of Sunshine.
Half your beauties are untold
I love you in my childhood—
And I'll love you when I'm old

As that old California cowboy Roy Rogers
used to say "Good luck, good health and may the
good Lord take a 'likin' to you."
A General Bibliography

Note: While the secondary sources cited below contributed directly to this project, there are other sources that have contributed to our general knowledge of the subject. We hereby thank many of our friends who have shared their knowledge with us over the years: Olive Davis, Howard Lewis, members of the Weber/Kennedy family, Dr. Don Walker and others.


Hannah, Jack. *Poetry, The Prospector*


Photography and Graphics

Photo search by Deborah Mastel, Collections Manager, San Joaquin County Historical Society & Museum. The images are from the collections of the San Joaquin County Museum.

This program is delivered without fee but with the intention that those who hear and enjoy it will be supportive of the museum and the Sesquicentennial Commemoration and the events that will benefit and entertain the citizens of San Joaquin County. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law under 501-c-3 IRS Code. To book this program please call: Michael Bennett, San Joaquin County Historical Museum at 331-2055 or FAX 331-2057 or E-mail> michaelbennett@sanjoaquinhistory.org. Or write: San Joaquin County Historical Society & Museum P.O. Box 30, Lodi, CA 95241
California Sesquicentennial Wagon Train visits Micke Grove Park and the San Joaquin County Historical Museum Saturday • June 26, 1999

Activities include:
Western Music • Cowboy Poetry Roundup and
Springtime on the Farm

Farm Life Demonstrations

Entertainment Food

Address correction requested
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