

## **Many manifest Solano's destiny**

**By Kristin Delaplane**

Sunday, February 15, 1998

Many who eventually settled in Solano County first arrived in California to try their luck in the gold fields.

Robert Campbell emigrated to California in 1850, first arriving in Placerville. He farmed, teamed and mined on the American River until 1854.

After moving to Vacaville, Campbell planted grain for hog feed. He was appointed road master of Vacaville in 1875.

Henry Eversole arrived at Grizzly Flat in 1854. For four years he mined and worked as a carpenter. He moved to Vacaville in 1858 and established an undertaking establishment, later with a branch in Winters.

James Monroe Elliott, who in 1874 settled in Lagoon Valley, came across the Plains in 1849 with his brother and several neighbors. He mined for a short time and then sailed home.

Elliott crossed the Plains again with his family and some friends. Others joined them, making Elliott the captain of a train of 40 wagons. He lived in Oregon for 17 years before making his way to Vacaville.

William Getchins came seeking gold in 1850 and worked in the mines until 1861. In 1875, he arrived in Vacaville where he engaged in the saloon business.

S.W. Long was one of Vacaville first settlers. He arrived in California in 1849 after he was discharged following the Mexican War. He mined for one year and then came to Vacaville.

Pleasants Valley's prominent orchardist, G.W. Thissell, arrived in Placerville in 1849 where he engaged in mining until 1851 and where he established a hotel. In 1851, he joined with others in a company to begin the second tunnel ever run in the state. Here he was taking out as much as \$125 a day. In 1853, he returned to Ohio to wed and returned across the Plains to settle in Pleasants Valley.

George Troutman came to the mines in 1855 and continued in that pursuit until 1861, when he moved to Elmira and Vacaville. In 1866, he bought property in Gibson Canyon.

In 1877, it was reported that "G. Troutman's had just settled on 105 acres within the last two years. In that time he had built a cozy cottage and his wife had planted an extensive front yard flower garden."

#### Rio Vista miners

Joseph Bruning came to California in 1850, worked in the Yuba River mines and then was in the hotel business in San Francisco until 1858. He then moved to a ranch located at present-day Rio Vista.

The year 1862 marked the great flood, which completely washed out the town of Rio Vista northeast of the current town. The people approached Bruning, a rancher, about establishing the town at a point on his ranch. He agreed to donate the land, took an active role in its beginnings and, hence, is looked upon as the town's founder.

Newton C. Butler crossed the Plains in 1850 and mined the Yuba River area. He moved to Suisun Valley in 1852 where he farmed. He then moved to Fairfield in 1859.

In 1863, it was noted that the Monitor Feed Stable near the courthouse was operated by Butler. He also was the constable in Fairfield for four years. In 1869, he moved to Rio Vista and settled on 320 acres.

John H. Gardiner arrived by sea in 1849 and promptly went to the New Diggins mines at present-day Auburn.

Being successful, he and his seven partners went to San Francisco and established a merchandise business, Cooper & Co. with three stores in operation. They built the first building on the southwest corner of Montgomery and Washington streets. A fire in 1850 wiped them out and Gardiner moved to the banks of the Sacramento River.

Jacob Gurner arrived by steamer in 1851. He mined on the American River for six months. He returned to New York, but came back to take up mining at Downieville. Then was a pilot on a steamer on the Sacramento River until 1862. In 1870, he purchased the Eclipse Saloon in Rio Vista.

J.M. Sidwell arrived in 1852 after crossing the Plains with an ox team. He mined on the Feather River.

He opened a general store at Grand Island in Sacramento County. In 1857, he moved his thriving business, building and all, to what would be the site of the first Rio Vista.

Sidwell built a hotel and contracted to build levees and flood gates. He remained after

the flood, helping to build the new Rio Vista, where he built another hotel.

William Squires came to the mines in 1852, via Panama. He mined on the Cosumnes River for about a year. In 1859, he came to Rio Vista and built the first public house there. In the new Rio Vista he was postmaster in 1863 and he rebuilt the Squires Hotel, opposite the steamboat wharf. His hotel featured a stable and he served meals.

#### Silveyville and Dixon miners

Thomas Dickson arrived in Diamond Springs in 1853 and mined for a year. In 1854, he leased land east of present-day Dixon where he built the first house.

In 1868, when the railroad was being established Dickson, by then a prosperous farmer, gave the railroad 10 acres to locate the depot at present-day Dixon. He successfully convinced the residents of Silveyville to move to this new site. He is noted the founder of Dixon.

Napoleon Coleman crossed the Plains in 1853 herding 2,000 cattle. He and his brother opened a mercantile and mining business in Volcano. In 1859, he moved to the present site of Dixon. In 1869, he was elected county assessor.

James Cotten came in 1855 by way of Panama and worked the mines in Placer County until 1857. In 1868, he moved to Dixon and was in the real estate business by 1872. In 1878, he was named the justice of the peace.

Edward Weihe arrived in El Dorado County in 1850 and mined for five years. Then he pursued the cigar trade in San Francisco and Stockton. He then moved back to the gold fields for nine years, opening a general store in Mokelumne Hill. In 1871, he came to Dixon and was in the liquor and cigar broker business.

Darius Mack traveled to Sutterville in 1854 where he operated a ferry. A year later he opened a hotel in that place. Then he mined near Folsom. He settled in Dixon in 1857.

#### Elmira's miners

Joseph McMurtry came across the Plains in 1853. He worked in the mines of Sierra County and clerked in a general store until 1858.

In 1859, he started up an express business between Downieville and Minnesota. He moved to Dixon in 1862 purchasing 540 acres to farm.

#### Green Valley and Suisun Valley miners

A.T. Hatch herded sheep across the Plains in 1859 and bought an interest in the Dutch Hill mine where he had much success.

In 1863, he went to the Monmouth district where he located the Niagara Falls mine and here he extracted a fortune. He moved to the Green Valley and Suisun Valley area in 1871 and bought 264 acres. He was one of the most successful orchardists in the Solano County and is credited with establishing Big Camp on his land, a camp for the Chinese laborers in the area.

### Vallejo's miners

Robert Brownlee crossed the Plains in 1849, went to Mariposa, and in the first hour and half panned out \$80 worth of gold. He came to Vallejo in 1851. Brownlee is credited with one of the first buildings there, a dwelling from which he operated a milk ranch. He eventually owned 1,100 acres in Vallejo.

J.G. Hanks traveled to California by sea, being shipwrecked twice en route. He arrived in Vallejo in 1850 and then opened a blacksmith shop in Benicia. Then he went to the mines in El Dorado County and stayed there in 1860.

For a time he was a lawman in Virginia City. Then he returned to Vallejo and established a brickyard in 1871.

Isaac Hobbs traveled across the Plains in 1849. He mined in the southern mines. He moved to Vallejo in 1855, locating on 160 acres on the Suscol Grant. In 1863, the land was returned to its original owner who claimed it under the Spanish grant.

Daniel Kloppenburg arrived by way of the Plains in 1849. He traveled with a pack mule and on horseback, and then joined in with a wagon train. He mined Weber Creek and then moved to the Nevada County and the Rough and Ready mines where he was successful. In 1853 he opened a bakery in Placer County and moved to Vallejo in 1868.

H.R. Shirland arrived via Panama in 1849. On his first trip to Rose's Bar on the Yuba River, he mined \$3,300. He followed the teaming business until 1850 and then sold the business for \$76,000. With that money he purchased Clear Lake County, then 64 square miles, along with 10,000 head of cattle and 1,000 horses. This proved to be a disastrous venture and he moved to Vallejo in 1869 where he worked as a butcher.

Resources of local interest about the California Gold Rush:

For more about the miners of Solano County see, "Pioneer Collections of Solano County," compiled by Mary Higham. Available at local public libraries and for sale at

the Solano Genealogical Society in Vacaville's Old Town Hall.

"A Gold Hunter: Memoirs of John Berry Hill," by Kristin Delaplane, includes her great-great-grandfather's tales about traveling across the Plains and mining during California's Gold Rush era. Illustrated with maps and historic photos. Available at the Vacaville Museum for \$20.

"The Golden Dream," with photographs by Kerry Drager. A photographer and writer, Kerry graduated from Vacaville High School in 1971 and was the sports editor for the Daily Republic. Available at bookstores for \$32.50.

World Gold Panning Contest Sept. 28 through Oct. 5, in Coloma. This event is sponsored by a worldwide organization that holds their contest each year in different countries. Jerry Bowen, Vacaville writer and historian, along with his wife, Annie, is co-sponsoring this event through his organization, United Prospectors, a recreational gold panning organization.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/649>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/649/>