

**CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM
North Highlands Annex, Joint Forces Headquarters
3900 Roseville Road
North Highlands, California 95660**

William Brown Ide
Pioneer, Bear Flagger and Builder
By George R. Stammerjohan

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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin M. Hughes

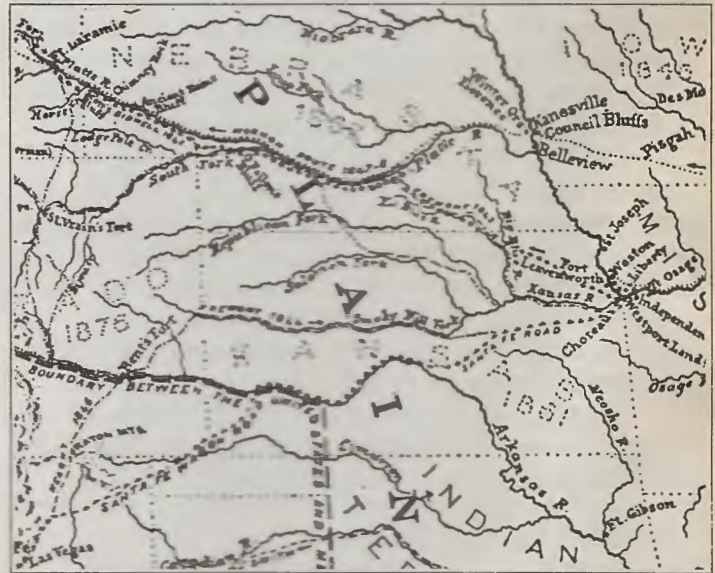
Who was William Brown Ide, this man who played a role in the Bear Flag Revolt and the birth of American California? Some claimed that he was the Governor of California. Others have made the claim that he was the President of the California Republic. And there are some who claim that his selection as leader at Sonoma was a joke. Regardless of the claims, the fact remains that his is the only signature on the proclamations made by the Bear Flaggers.

Ide arrived in California in 1845, and by the standards of most of the immigrants of the time, he was well off. He came with his family, and wagons, and cattle. Hubert Howe Bancroft and others made vague suggestions that Ide was a Mormon. Later, after his activities with the "Osos," he was a miner in the gold fields; a land owner; a surveyor, clerk and judge in the newly created Colusa County. At the time of his death in 1852, he was regarded as a man of wealth and position, yet few today outside of Colusa and Tehama counties [or readers of the Territorial] have heard of or know much about him. So, to borrow a phrase from a once popular radio show, "Return with me now to those thrilling days of yesteryear..." and get to know the man who was William Brown Ide.

William Brown Ide was born on March 28, 1796, in the town of Rutland, Worcester County, Massachusetts. His ancestry, on his father's side, has been reliably traced back to the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth.¹ His formal education was sparse by modern standards, as his "schooling" privileges were limited to the common schools of the district, which were seldom kept open for more than four months of the year. He spent much of his time until he came of age working with his father, who taught him the skills and art of the carpenter and joiner. In 1819, he used his skills to build a house for his older brother, Simeon, in Windsor, Vermont. This house was still occupied in 1900.² He also engaged in building houses at Winchendon and Keene, New Hampshire and at Newfane and Woodstock, Vermont until 1833. His work was well thought of and Ide, himself, was regarded as a "good and thorough workman."³

On April 17th, 1820, he married Miss Susan G. Haskell in Northborough, Massachusetts. He practiced his trade in Vermont until his adventurous turn of mind, which he had inherited from his father, made him a "victim" of manifest destiny and he began a westward trek which would eventually take him to Mexican California.

In June of 1833, accompanied by his wife and six children, he packed his possessions and moved to Canton, Kentucky. When he arrived in Canton, he quickly became dissatisfied with the prospects, and he remained there only three



THE WAY WEST

months before he was on the move again. This move took him and his family to Madison in Montgomery County, Ohio, about eight miles from Dayton. While in Madison, Ide suffered from bouts of poor health. He wrote to his mother, in a letter dated "Madison, Ohio, Feb. 23, 1835," "When I first arrived in Ohio, and commenced teaching, James was sick and I was scarcely able to walk. I could not look after and take care of my children at school - was frequently under the necessity of being carried home."⁴ When his health would permit, Ide worked at his trade much of the spring, summer and fall, when he was not working his farm, and taught in the district schools during the winter months.⁵

Although Simeon Ide, in his biography of William B., does not mention any economic hardships or trials in William's early life, there must indeed have been some, as, in a letter to his mother, asking her to join him in Ohio, dated "Madison, O., Sept. 13, 1835," William alludes to previous difficulties in making ends meet, paying bills and dodging creditors. He wrote:

"...Though it may be true that I have not been able to find the country exactly, in all things to answer the 'picture of my youthful fancy,' yet I have by far 'bettered myself'; and my father's injunction was (after having done so), 'next to seek to better my friends of my father's house.' I have sought to do so. Here is a wide field for industry and usefulness; and although you, dear mother,

*may be too old for much labor, yet your presence will cheer the hearts and enliven the countenances of those that can labor. ...I have a plenty. We are not now in Vermont, eating flour at eight dollars per barrel, and corn at one dollar a bushel. Yet the price of labor is not diminished - nor am I beset, on either hand by duns and unpaid accounts - by notes over-due, while I have little or no cash to spare I do not now anticipate the errand of every stranger who approaches me to be the collection of some note he has bought against me. But now, when I see an unexpected neighbor or stranger coming, I begin to anticipate - he comes to ask a favor, not to claim justice - he comes to borrow money, or to pay what he owes - to solicit conditions, not to enforce them."*⁶

Even though he could not find his ideal country, it is apparent from Ide's letter and from comments made by his eldest daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, that things went well for the Ides in Ohio. She wrote, that the farm was:

*"a very good one - having good buildings, being well fenced, and under a good state of cultivation: he paid a part down for it, and the balance in less than two years, which we made off the farm - father and brothers (as well as the rest of the family who were old enough) all working; for we did not hire any help and were soon out of debt. This was a comfortable and pleasant home, with kind and intelligent neighbors."*⁷

The Ides remained in Madison until October, 1838, when William sold the farm and once again loaded his family and their belongings into two covered wagons "comfortably fitted up." He, to use Simeon's term, "removed" again, this time with the intention of going to Missouri. However, four weeks of traveling in bad weather over bad roads, forced him to stop for the winter in Jacksonville, Illinois, where he, once again, worked as a carpenter. In February of 1839, he moved his family onto a farm eight miles east of Springfield, Illinois, where they settled until 1844.

In all likelihood, sometime during this period William B. Ide became an adherent of the Mormon faith. The exact date of his joining the church was not recorded. Bancroft felt that conflicting charges and silence in Ide's own statements left the question of Ide's being a Mormon in doubt.⁸ However, Mormon Church records make it clear that Ide was, in fact, a member of the church. Brigham Young's brother, Lorenzo Dow Young, visited the Ide home, at Springfield, in 1844, and later wrote, "He [Ide] joined the church in the early day but at that time was rather in the background." Mormon Church records of August 12, 1838 list a "Brother Ide who resided near the city of Dayton" as a member of Zion's Camp, and Temple records of the W.B. Ide family indicate that two of Ide's sons were born at Madison, Ohio.⁹ An article in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* for May 22, 1844, notes that Ide was a delegate from Sagamon County, Illinois to the May 17, 1844, Mormon convention which nominated Joseph Smith as a

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William Brown Ide From page 5


candidate for President of the United States in the 1844 election.¹⁰ Ide's participation in a political convention is consistent with comments made by Sarah Elizabeth, who, writing to Simeon, said that her father held no public offices in either Ohio or Illinois, but that he:

"took a great interest in politics; and, while in Madison, O., he wrote a great many articles of agreement for his neighbors, and was often consulted by them on occasion of disputes occurring between them, about rights to land and division lines, and other misunderstandings. Even our Justice of the Peace consulted him a good deal."¹¹

During the fall and winter of 1844-45, Ide's recurrent "western fever" struck again and he began to make plans to move to Oregon. Simeon says of him:

"He had not realized the fond hopes inspired by the glowing accounts of 'the West.' And he had heard of a still more promising field of enterprise in the far off - still farther off 'land of promise' - and thither he concluded to direct his steps... Mr. Ide made ample preparation for his advent into the Pacific solitudes, by the purchase of a large and well-assorted herd of cattle - a competent outfit (as he supposed) of provisions and other necessities, for a six month tour; with his wife and five children, and the necessary assistants, to accompany him - Oregon being his objective point."¹²

In the fall of 1844, Ide sold his Springfield farm and moved his family to live in the home of his brother Harrison Lemuel Ide. They stayed there until April 1, 1845, when, two days before his 49th birthday, he began his trip to the Pacific Coast. For William B. Ide, this was no precipitous "pick up and leave" enterprise. Once he made the decision to move to Oregon, he proceeded deliberately and carefully to plan for the trip and the resettlement at the end of the journey. Sarah Elizabeth, who was eighteen at the time of the trip, recalled the preparations and much of the trip in notes prepared for Simeon. She wrote that:



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A letter, attributed to Ide, which appeared in the *Sangamo Journal* on March 20, 1845, stated in part:

"On that day (April 1, 1845) we bid our good friends farewell. It was a sad day to us. All our old neighbors came to help us pack our things into our three wagons, and to see us off. My father selected the timber for two of these wagons, and had them made to order during the winter. He also made the beds, bows and covers at our home - Mother and I sewing the canvas covering, which, being fastened to the bows and side-boards of the wagons, were painted a light slate-color, the same as the bed or body of the wagon.

"Our wagons were very neat looking, and attracted a good deal of attention while passing through Illinois and Missouri. Many questions were asked as to our destination, etc.

"We had a sale the morning we started and sold off the greater part of our furniture. We packed our cooking utensils, tin cups, tin plates - with provisions to last us six months. Mother, my little brothers - Daniel, age 10, and Lemuel, aged 8, and Thomas Crafton (a little boy that had been given to my mother), all rode in a wagon. I rode in horseback 3 days, to help drive the cattle; riding on a side-saddle. The drove of cattle numbered 165, including 28 working oxen. We camped the first night 10 miles from our old home - cooked our supper by a camp-fire. Mother and I slept in a wagon all the way to California. Some of the men slept in the tent, when not too tired to pitch it. Brother William came with us and drove an ox team from Fort Hall to Sutter's Fort, and drove cattle the rest of the journey. Our number, all told, young and old, was thirteen - five of these were young men, who drove the teams for their board and passage."¹³

"That great and incalculable advantages to the United States will result from the settlement of Oregon by American citizens, can no longer be doubted; neither can we for a moment suppose that party politics, or party prepossessions, can so far derange that generous love of country, ever predominant in the breast of every lover of American freedom, as to cause division, concerning the propriety of maintaining unimpaired American Liberty, over the whole territory of Oregon.

"Encouraged by considerations like the foregoing, we are led to look calmly forward to the train of privations and hardships naturally consequent upon a journey of some 2,000 miles, thro' savage wilds and desolate, craggy, mountain cliffs, interspersed and broken by rivers and dandy deserts, till the mind's eye rests quietly on the valley of the 'promised land.' Nor do we feel that we, by prosecuting our design, desert our country, or are to be forsaken by our countrymen. Nor is it to be supposed, that we have hardened our hearts, and shielded our bosoms against the tender sympathies naturally

growing out of our connection with civilized, and christianized Society.

"But with feelings and habits congenial to friendship and social order, we trust we may be pardoned if we express the fond hope that we may be able to extend the love of freedom; to contribute our mite, towards enlarging the dominion of rational liberty and social happiness, and ere long, under circumstances of comfort, to receive with joy and gladness, many of those friends we shall have left behind.

"April 1st, 1845, is the day agreed upon by those who have been, and are making preparations to emigrate from Sangamon County, Illinois, to meet at the nearest camping ground west of Springfield. Seven families and five single men have agreed to start. Is expected that this company will consist of upwards of fifty persons, -among who are Messers. Nathan Hussey sen, Job Burden, Nathan Hussey and H. Bird, of Fancy Creek, and W.B. Ide and others of Wolf Creek. Ten wagons are in preparation to be drawn by two or three yokes of oxen each, carrying five months provisions.

"There is room for more. Who comes next?

"Our intention is to join the Independence expedition, either at Council Bluffs, or at Independence, Mo. and pursue our way with them."

"For Oregon." 14

If this letter was written by Ide, and the fact that he was, later, a frequent correspondent for the *Journal*, providing updates on the expedition's trek to Oregon, lends credence to this supposition, it exhibits much of the wordiness and high idealism which was to characterize his later writings. It also clearly demonstrates that his original goal was the Oregon country, not California.

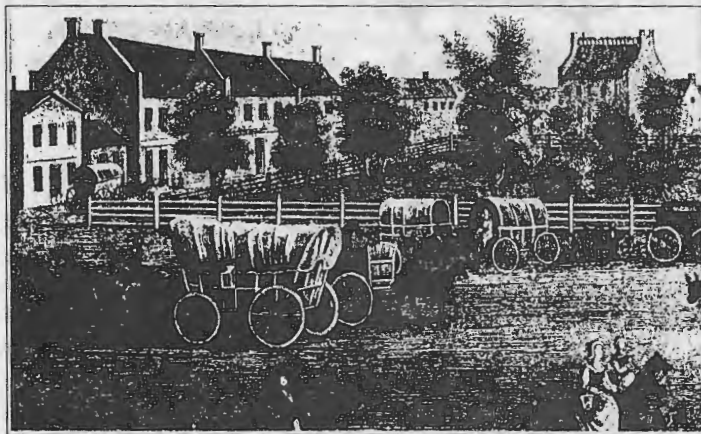
On the third of April, the *Sangamo Journal* reported that:

"The Oregon emigrants from this country, passed through our city Tuesday afternoon, and encamped for the first time some three miles from town. The expedition consisted of about forty-seven persons, old and young - 16 wagons with ox teams and quite a number of young cattle. With most of the emigrants we are personally acquainted, and regret that our county will lose them good substantial farmers." 15

If it were not for recollections of Sarah Elizabeth little would be known of the Ide's journey west. Simeon, referring to her by her married name of Healy, relied heavily upon her notes and letters in his biography of William B.. Ide, himself, other than his letters to the *Sangamo Journal*, apparently wrote little about the trip. If he did make any notes, they have subsequently been lost.

Sarah Elizabeth wrote that they accomplished the first leg

of the journey to Independence, Missouri, in four weeks without any major accidents, though her parents were quite concerned with the welfare of her brother, James, who was twenty-four at the time and in poor health. He had gone on a trip to buy cows and was gone for a protracted period of time.



INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI IN 1853

Happily, he rejoined the family while they were camped near Independence. Sarah Elizabeth wrote:

"We camped one week within one mile of Independence, Mo, to lay in ammunition, guns and pistols - clothing for the men, and many little things needful on so long a journey. Father made a iron to brand his cows with his name (Ide) on the right-side horn. This was hard work for him, but very necessary.

"On the 10th of May we left Independence and traveled to the 'Big Camp,' where we spent a week or two," 16

During the 1845 travel season, the Ides were taking part in a major movement to the West. H. H. Bancroft estimated that 3,000 people arrived in Oregon alone and Col. Stephen W. Kearny estimated that there were "about 850 men, 475 women, 1,000 children, about 7,000 head of cattle, 400 horses and mules, with 460 wagons." 17

The 'Big Camp' referred to by Sarah Elizabeth was apparently on the bank of the Kansas River. On the 13th of May,

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William Brown Ide From page 21

1845, Ide wrote to the *Sangamo Journal* from the camp:

"My teams, waggons, cattle and all concerned, have stood the trip, so far (all things considered) better than I expected. My cattle are thriving. I kill all of my calves.

"The present party consists of about five hundred waggons - one hundred and seven are in our company - thirty-five are a few miles ahead, and some seventy are a few days behind. But it is impossible to speak definitely as regards the number of teams. The number of souls is said to be between six and seven thousand. The number of cattle is immense - exceeding in all probability ten thousand head. Our teams, horses, mules, ponies, cattle and waggons, stretch out in a procession some three miles in length on the broad prairies, present a grand spectacle. The Caw Indians flock around us like cows. Their business is to 'swap' ostensibly, but in reality it is begging and stealing. More or less cattle are stolen every night. These Indians are great cowards, poor and faithless. They meet you with an air of courtesy, extend the hand of friendship in graceful waving circles to all, and shake hands most heartily with any one of the company, who notices them most; and the next business is 'swap', 'swap.' In this traffic the supplying of their present want is the standard value they attach to their money. To all appearances these Indians are in a wretched, starving condition...

"Our road so far, has been very good, although apparently not very direct in its course. I can say but very little of the prospects of the Oregon emigration. I can now only give you a faint idea of its magnitude, and the character of the people who compose it. From the best information I can obtain, the number of emigrants will be five-fold what it was last year; - but you must be in mind that it was then greatly exaggerated. Of its character, I assure you so far as I can judge, I can speak in the most flattering terms. Agree acquaintances are every day formed. Gentlemen and ladies, too, of liberal minds and means are in the midst of our social circle. Finally, there is something ennobling in the very idea of an expedition so fraught with consequences, so self-devoting in its effect. No narrow minded soul is fit for Oregon. If such embark, discord and confusion follow - they will shrink from the undertaking and escape to the States. But those whose minds are congenial to the enterprise, present their shoulders to its hardships, their breasts to its dangers, and their means and talents to the accomplishment of its purpose, will I doubt not, be well rewarded.

"I have written this in a great hurry. The country as we advance becomes more interesting, and in my next I hope to be able to give more information in regard to 'fitting out.' I fear we have more cattle than we can

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protect. We are now obliged to have one hand to every twelve head.

"The emigrants are all in good health and spirits.

*Respectfully yours, W. B. Ide."*¹⁸

Sarah Elizabeth wrote that the cattle of the party were so numerous that it was hard to find enough grass for them and that it was difficult and dangerous work to control them. Eventually, after several weeks,

"...a 'cattle guard' [was] organized. My father was the captain of this 'guard,' and the chief herdsman. Any one losing an ox or cow came to him at once, and he would send a man or go himself in search of the lost - after supplying an ox, if an ox of a team were missing - so that the train could move on; for it was moving so slow, it was necessary for us to keep moving.

*"At one time when father remained behind to look after the missing cattle, the report came to the company, that he was last seen surrounded by Indians. The train halted quite a while; but mother and I did not know why; all being careful not to cause us alarm. A number of men went back, who met him coming in, driving the missing cattle. They said father saw an Indian party hid in grass and willows, with arrow on bow, ready to shoot him: on which he raised his gun and took aim at the Indian, who immediately took to his heels and ran. No doubt, they said, if father had been frightened, and had started to run, he would have been killed; for there were several Indians seen in the bushes near him. This occurred on or near the banks of the Humboldt River, I think."*¹⁹

As the journey progressed, Ide continued his correspondence with the *Sangamo Journal*. A letter from their "Oregon Correspondent" was published in the September 4th, 1845 issue, which gave some details of the road, one of the finest descriptions of a "waggon" used for the great trek west found anywhere, and some sage advice to the prospective traveler. The letter was dated "Fort Laramie, June 25th, 1845."

"Mr. Editor: - We are all well. The road thus far, is far better than I have ever travelled before, the like distance, (since leaving Independence). We are 1060 miles from Springfield. Many of our cattle are getting lame, some from foot evil, and some from worn-out hoofs. The foot evil is cured by cutting out the inflected [sic] part and then applying buringrosin or tar. For worn-out hoofs we apply hot tar, or rosin and then sear it with a hot shovel and then apply the second coat of tar.

"It is exceedingly dry; we have but little grass. The companies of emigrants follow each other in quick succession. The great number of cattle cause us some trouble. Bulls over the age of one year will not go to Oregon. I have lost three - the best of four.

"I could give some directions in relation to fitting out for Oregon or California, which may be of some service to some who are less experienced. I would defer my remarks until after I reach Oregon, but I may not have the opportunity to write again in season for preparations to be made next spring.

"Best waggons: - Strong two horse waggons capable of bearing three thousand pounds on common roads, wide track, block tongue, coupled twenty inches back of the forward axle, body 15 to 18 feet long, straight; bed 14 to 16 inches high in the clear - 2 partitions across 18 inches each way from the middle (having a space for the ladies parlor) the two ends covered with half inch linn plank, the alternate plank hung out on butt hinges and all supported on a slight stringer from the hind gate to one of the partitions. Under these decks pack your provisions, either in bags or boxes, let the deck form the covers, resting on each side at the sides of the bed - at the top of the bed, let the sides project 6 inches above which, put side boards 18 inches wide, one half inch thick, riveted to ten standards on each side 4 1/2 feet high, leaving the middle space open for a door on each side; on the top of each pair of standards rivet an elliptic to bow, rising 8 inches higher than the standards (making the inside of the bed 5 feet two inches high) - at the same time rivet a strip of half inch plank 3 inches wide firmly to the top of the standards on each side - leaving an open

Photo by Littler for the Fort Laramie Historical Association

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FORT LARAMIE AS IT APPEARS TODAY

William Brown Ide From page 23

space of 15 or 18 inches wide between the side boards and said 3 inch strips, which may be stopped by a curtain, nailed to the outside of the strip above, and buttoned to the outside of the board below - on the center of the bows rivet a slender ridgepole, let the end boards of gates be firmly fixed and extend from the under side of the bottom plank of the bed to the top of the side boards, so tight as to exclude rain in a driving storm; let the top be covered with Osnaburg [coarse, cotton fabric] drawn on as tight as may be, and sized and painted with 3 coats of oil paint - the curtains and doors to be made of the same, and sized and painted one coat; the center support underneqth the bed may be 4 or 5 inches wide, and extend 6 or 8 inches from the sides of the bed, to form a step, another iron step between it and the ground, will make it convenient for ladies to ascend and descend to and from the parlor. The inside upon the deck, may be fitted with shelves and racks to suit the fancy or convenience of the 'lady of the house.' With slight strips of half inch plank fastened in front of the shelf there would be little danger of dishes falling, after one leaves Fort Leavenworth: such is the evenness of the road...

"Amount of Loading. - Twenty or thirty hundred pounds to one team of eight oxen, of four oxen and eight cows - one-half should be worked every other day.

"Out-Fit. - One waggon for four to six persons - team as above. Stout young cows are preferable to oxen; Horses are of little service, except to collect cattle of morning. They need to be exchanged once in seven or eight hundred miles for others if much used. One hundred pounds hard biscuit; 150 pounds of flour: 20 pounds of lard, 50 pounds corn-meal sifted, 75 pounds bacon: 5 pounds coffee, ten pounds sugar: one peck of beans: 50 pounds dried fruit: 5 pounds of salt: one half pound pepper: 7 pounds hard soap: 2 pounds salaratus: one half pound of spice: one half pound of cinamon: 2 pounds ginger - a little castor oil: a little rhubarb: peppermint and campor: - and some other things such as a dry body needs - but rarely thinks of beforehand - to each person full grown.

"Fifteen pounds of tar and two pounds of rosin to each waggon; 65 feet of 1 inch rope, one set of spare shoes and a hundred horseshoe nails to each horse: four ox shoes to each work ox or cow, and nails: one years clothing: tarpolin hats: one water proof cloak: one rifle 32 balls to the pound: four pounds of powder: ten pounds of lead: one thousand percussion caps: one belt, butcher knife, scabbard, shot pouch and powder horn: one canteen or tin cup, and two whips to each man: five pounds of salt to each head of cattle. One axe, three augers: one drawing knife, and two chissels to each family, and one tent made of stout Osnaburg.

"Best Fashion for a tent. - Set up one pole in the

centre, from the top of which, on the outside, extend three guys or stay cords, which make fast to three strong stakes, then pin down the bottom once in 18 inches, let the entrance be low and made to close tight by a piece of the same buttoned over on the inside.

"Best Method of Traveling - and Remarks on Traveling. - Twenty waggons with forty men are amply sufficient for the purpose of protection, or rendering assistance to each other. 'Large bodies move slow.' It is easier forming connections, than it is dissolving them. More servants than are needed, breed confusion in camp away from established governments, - where from humanity, one is compelled to retain a disagreeable servant. It is easier purchasing cattle than it is driving them to Oregon. Cattle and horses should be guarded day and night from Fort Leaven worth to the Platte River. Men who have large herds of cattle, and those who have but few, will seldom long agree to travel together.

"Mutual interests and mutual necessities, form the strongest bonds of union, with some few honorable exceptions. No company of forty waggons have ever traveled to Oregon without dividing.

"The less emigrants depend on each other the more quietly they proceed on their way. A selfish, narrow minded man, is not likely to enjoy a trip to Oregon. Emigrants are generally too impatient, and over-drive their teams and cattle. They often neglect the concerns of the present in consequence of the great anticipations of the future - they long to see what the next elevation hides from their view. Millions of acres on our route which usually produce a tolerable crop of hay, are now entirely destitute of grass. Emigrants should not depend on the last port, for their outfit. I think the trail from Springfield to Vancouver, in Oregon is twenty-six hundred miles, if the balance of the road is as crooked as the past.

"Trade. We purchase buffalo robes for from six to ten pounds of flour, or from three to six pints of sugar or coffee. We can get an ox, or horse shod, at Fort Laramie for one dollar per foot. We hire a smith's shop for \$6 per day. Three bars of lead will buy a buffalo robe; salt 50 cents a pint.

"Prospect Ahead. - We expect hard times, in consequence of the scarcity of grass for the next three hundred miles. Oregon brightens the nearer we approach. A Frenchwoman who has resided there five years, and now travels in our company, often makes comparison between the most beautiful praries we pass over - always giving the prairies of Oregon the preference - saying, 'suppose this prarie you now see, was always clad in green, as you now see it, - such is Oregon!' But I must close. Respectfully yours.

William B. Ide" ²⁰

One cannot help but wonder if the Ide's three "neat looking" wagons, which he had made to order and had personally

finished, with the help of his family, the previous winter had been built and fitted out in the manner of the "Best Waggon" that he described in his letter.

The accounts of the Ide family journey are sparse, but Sarah Elizabeth did recall their arrival at Fort Hall in the present day state of Idaho. It was around the ninth of August, and the Ides had completed approximately half of their journey to Oregon.

"We traveled in one of three companies having a camp-guard - a captain and sergeants on guard every night - until within a few days travel of Fort Hall. Then there was a general stampede, to see who would get to the Fort first. We found a good camping ground there, and also Indians to trade horses with. One offered a very pretty pony for two calico dresses. Here was a company of mountaineer trappers enroute for California, who told us of a good route and plenty of good grass." ²¹

Among the "mountaineers" at Fort Hall was a man by the name of Caleb Greenwood. "Old" Greenwood, as he was known, was associated with Johann Augustus Sutter of California, and he would change the destination of William B. Ide and, in doing so, would enrich the future state of California.

Footnotes:

1. Simeon Ide, "The Conquest of California: A Biography of William B. Ide, Biobooks, Oakland, CA 1944, p. 3.
2. Allen Fifield, "Why Ide Came to California," The Far Westerner, July 1968, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 2.
3. Ide, p. 10.
4. Ide, p. 11.
5. Ide, p. 16.
6. Ide, p. 14-15.
7. Ide, p. 16.
8. Hubert Howe Bancroft, "History of California, Vol. V., 1845-1848," The History Company, San Francisco, 1886, p. 158-9.
9. Fifield, p. 3.
10. Fred Blackburn Rogers, "William Brown Ide: Bear Flagger," John Howell - Books, San Francisco, 1961, p. 3.
11. Ide, p. 16-17.
12. Ide, p. 17.
13. Ide, p. 19.
14. Rogers, p. 5-6.
15. Rogers, p. 7.
16. Ide, p. 20.
17. Rogers, p. 8.
18. Rogers, p. 9-10.
19. Ide, p. 21.
20. Rogers, p. 17-18.
21. Ide, p. 22.

Part 2 of "William Brown Ide, Pioneer, Bear Flagger and Builder" will be continued in the spring issue #17 of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly.

From the Author:

During my research for the article on Ezekiel Merritt (Special Bear Flag Issue #13), I ran across many references to Ide, and after reading Joe Hood's article on William B. Ide, I became interested in learning more about the man who played such a pivotal and controversial role in the development of California and Colusi County. Being associated with William B. Ide State Historic Park, I thought that I had a tolerable knowledge of the man. Little did I know. This series of articles, then, is my search for William B. Ide.

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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin M. Hughes

Chapter 1 of William Brown Ide, Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder" can be found in the 1993 Winter Issue (#16) of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly. The first installment of this series chronicled the trek of William B. Ide and his family westward as far as Fort Hall in present day Idaho.

Chapter 2

When the Ides reached Fort Hall in the early part of August, 1845, they found a party of mountain men who had just succeeded in guiding the first party eastward over what was to become known as the "California Trail" from the vicinity of Sutter's Fort in California to Fort Hall. The leader of this party was "old" Caleb Greenwood, who, with his long, heavy white beard, buckskins, moccasins and fur cap made a striking figure of a mountain man.¹

There is some controversy regarding Greenwood's motives in this phase of the Ide's western journey. Some of the emigrants who left Fort Hall in August of 1845 with the Greenwoods, left recollections and accounts of their journey. Often, these were written years later and were collected by Hubert Howe Bancroft. Some recalled that Caleb Greenwood was employed by Sutter. Benjamin Franklin Bonney wrote that Caleb was, "an old mountain man and was said to be over 80 years old. He had been a scout and trapper and had married a squaw, his sons being half breeds. He was employed by Captain Sutter to come to Fort Hall to divert the Oregon-bound emigrants to California."² James Gregson, who was one of the settlers traveling with what became known as the Grigsby-Ide party,³ recalled, "...we met Greenwood, the mountaineer, who told us that we could get land of the grant holders, and agreed to fetch us in. He got \$2.50 apiece to pilot us in to California..."⁴

Caleb Greenwood's biographer, Charles Kelly, does not believe that Caleb was employed by Sutter. In analyzing Sutter's correspondence to John Marsh, Pierson B. Reading, and others, Kelly could find no reference to his hiring, or making any other financial arrangement with Greenwood.⁵

Gregson's comment that Greenwood "got \$2.50 apiece" could be taken to mean that he and the other members of the party paid Greenwood and his sons to be their guide. This possibility is supported in a statement written for Bancroft in 1872 by David Hudson, who stated that, "We employed a man

Echoes of the Past



THE TRAIL FROM FORT HALL TO SUTTER'S FORT

named Greenwood to pilot us to California."⁶

Whatever the case, as wagon trains arrived at Fort Hall in the late summer of 1845, they were greeted by Caleb as he rode from campsite to campsite welcoming them and telling them that were they to meet with him later in the evening, he would have an important announcement. Benjamin Bonney, who was originally in a train a few days in advance of the Ide's train, recalled:

"He called the Oregon emigrants together on the first evening we were at Fort Hall and made a talk. He said the road to Oregon was dangerous on account of the Indians. He told us that while no emigrants had as yet gone to California, there was an easy grade and crossing the mountains would not be difficult. He said that Capt. Sutter would have ten Californians meet the emigrants who would go and that Sutter would supply them with plenty of potatoes, coffee and dried beef. He also said that he would help the emigrants over the mountains with their wagons and that every head of a family who would settle near Sutter's Fort, Sutter would give six sections of his Spanish land grant. ... The next morning old Caleb Greenwood and his boys stepped out to one side and said: 'All you who want to go to California drive out from the main train and follow me. You will find there are no Indians to kill you, the roads are better,

*and you will be allowed to take up more land in California than in Oregon, the climate is better, there is plenty of hunting and fishing and the rivers are full of salmon.' My father, Jarvis Bonney was the first one of the Oregon party to pull out of the Oregon train and head south with Caleb Greenwood... There were eight wagons in all that rolled out from the main train to go to California with Caleb Greenwood. ... After driving southward for three days with Caleb Greenwood, he left us to go back to Fort Hall to the other emigrants to change their route to California. He left his three boys to guide us to Sutter's Fort."*⁷

It is possible that the old man exaggerated somewhat as he recounted the blessings of the route to California to his spell-bound audience. He did, after all, have a reputation for having a picturesque vocabulary, which he had honed to a fine edge through years of association with trappers and Indians who regarded oratory and story telling as a respected accomplishment. It is possible, as he extolled the virtues of the much easier, safer and shorter route to California, a route that he had just piloted a party over, that he may have understated the difficulties of the desert beyond the sink of the Humboldt, or the magnitude of the climb up to the pass, and he may have somewhat overrated the dangers and the roughness of the trail to Oregon. If this was the case, he was simply setting the pattern for an untold number of California real estate agents who would follow in his wake. Oregon had its boosters, but at Fort Hall in the summer of 1845, California had Old Greenwood.

When Greenwood arrived back at Fort Hall, he found the wagons of Ide's train. James Gregson and Sarah Elizabeth Ide Healy both recorded that Greenwood talked to them and convinced the members of the wagon train to divert to California. Sarah Elizabeth said, "While there father changed his plan - concluded to go to California: but first, before definitely settling the question, put it to vote of his company, and they voted for California instead of Oregon."⁸ Gregson recalled that:

*"at Fort Hall we determined to come to California. There we met Greenwood, the mountaineer, who told us that we could get land of the grant holders and agreed to fetch us in... There was in our train about thirty wagons and perhaps (??) persons including men, women and children. Near Fort Hall we fell in with Jacob R. Snyder and Judge Blackburn who were traveling with pack horses. They came on with us. With our party came George McDougal, a young man. He was brave and handsome. He joined us at Fort Hall, and also Knight from whom Knights valley is named. The Elliots were along, and John Grigsby, and the McChristians and family, and the Hudson family... Ide, who issued the proclamation at Sonoma, was also along. He was a prominent man; he was well provided."*⁹

Continued page 48

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William Brown Ide From page 47

From Gregson's commentary, it seems that Greenwood gave essentially the same spiel to each group of wagons that he found at or near Fort Hall in August of 1845. It is also evident that his presentation was successful. According to Joel Palmer, captain of one of the Oregon bound companies, Greenwood succeeded in diverting forty or forty-one wagons toward California. The total number of people heading for California under the guidance of Caleb Greenwood and his sons was approximately 150 persons. The Ide family alone numbered seven.¹⁰

Sarah Elizabeth continues her account of the journey.

"A few days travel, west from Fort Hall brought us to where we bade our Oregon friends goodbye. I was sorry to part with those with whom we had become acquainted. It reduced our company so much that we all felt lonely for some time. I believe I can remember the names of nearly all the men in our small party who had families. These were Messrs. E. Skinner, J. Elliot, Rolett, Keeny, M. Griffith, Meers, Davis, Tustin and Buffin. All these men took their families with them. There may have been one or two more who had no children with them.

"All the names of those without families I remember as follows: William Cooper, Wm. Todd, Scott, B. Grant,

Beal, Old Harry, Wm. Swasey and Wilmot. Our Pilot's name was "Old Greenwood," and his son John (whose mother was a Crow Indian). They were mountain men, and dressed the same as Indians." (In a later note to Simeon, she confided, "I was more afraid of these two men than of the wild Indians.")¹¹

An exact roster of the "Grigsby-Ide" party, in all likelihood, will never be known. Even the names given by Sarah Elizabeth may be suspect. H.H. Bancroft, generally regarded as having compiled a reasonably complete list of, at least, the men of the party, stated at the end of an extensive footnote concerning the membership of the party: "Eight names - Anderson, Buffin, Davis, Grant, Meeres, Potter, Thomas and Wilmot - rest only on the memory of Miss Ide (Mrs Healy); and some if not most are probably erroneous, or at least belong to men who went to Oregon instead of Cal."¹²

Like the membership of the party, its leadership is also somewhat in question. Nowhere is it recorded whether John Grigsby or William B. Ide commanded the party during the trip from Fort Hall to Sutter's Fort. Even Simeon, relying on interviews and letters from both Sarah Elizabeth and William B., makes no comment concerning the leadership of the party.

Sarah Elizabeth's account of the journey west from Fort Hall does not provide much detail until their arrival at Truckee (Donner) Lake. She wrote:

"After we started for California, the Pilot said there was no longer any danger from the Indians, and our company began to scatter. I remember one night in particular, my father, with one other family, camped alone, with no other guard than a faithful watchdog we were so fortunate to bring with us from our old home in Sangamon County, Ill. This dog would not allow an Indian to come near the camp. None of our company were killed by the Indians; but John Greenwood, son of the pilot, shot down an Indian by the roadside, and afterwards boasted of it.

"Thus far there were no steep mountains climbed. The course we traveled was through passes between high mountains or up gradual ascents on long spurs, until after passing the 40 miles descent [desert], and crossing the Truckee river thirty-two times, we came to Truckee Lake: then, after traveling along the Lake - some of the way being obliged to driving our wagon on the edge of the Lake; some of the time the water coming almost up to our feet - keeping the women in constant dread of being drowned. It was a fearful time for the timid female passengers, both young and old. At night

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The Greenwood's & the Gold Rush

Caleb Greenwood and his sons moved to Coloma in 1848, where they built a cabin from logs sawed at Sutter's Mill. John Greenwood led a raiding party, killing four natives near Coloma in revenge for the deaths of two Oregon men. Caleb Greenwood claimed to have killed ten natives in the Coloma Valley.

we camped at the foot of the rocky mountain - the Sierra Nevada; and were told by the Pilot that we would have to take our wagons to pieces, and haul them up with ropes. Father proposed to build a bridge, or a sort of incline railroad up the steep ascent, and over the rocks; but few of his companions would listen to any such scheme. So he went to work with the men and fixed the road."

Caleb Greenwood was a mountaineer, trapper and guide of some reputation, but he was not a wagoneer, and he knew little about handling them. Ide reported that he began to search for a way to get the wagons up the mountain without taking them apart. Late in 1849, he returned to the east and was there for several months. He spent at least some of that time in Claremont, New Hampshire, with his brother, Simeon, and they apparently spent time discussing the journey to California and the recent occurrences there. Simeon says of his conversations with William about the journey west:

"About the year 1849 we had an interview with Mr. Ide, in which he gave us an account of his "trip overland" to California, in 1845. He did not go minutely into detail, but dwelt more particularly on the manner in which he ascended the Nevada Mountain; as that performance was the most laborious and difficult of the many difficulties they had to encounter. And not the least of these difficulties was the task of convincing the men with him that his plan of operations to accomplish the hard task then in prospect was practicable. Their guide had told them the only way was to "take the wagons to pieces, and haul them up with ropes!" Our Yankee adventurer thought we would try and find a better way. He took a survey of the premises, on foot - climbing up the rugged "cliffs and rocks" till he reached the plane above, and finally concluded there was a "better way."

"Mr. Ide found on the line of the ascent several abrupt pitches, between which there were comparative level spaces, for several rods distance, where the team might stand to draw up at least an empty wagon. Accordingly, he went to work, with as many of the men as he could induce, by mild means to assist him - removing rocks, trees, etc., and grading a path 6 to 7 feet wide, up the several steep pitches and levels to the summit. The next thing for them to do, was to get a team of 5 or 6 yoke of cattle up onto the first inclined grade or semi-level. This was a tedious process. The first pitch was longer and more abrupt than any of the others. I think Mr. Ide told me they had to take one ox at a time, and by the help of the men, with ropes assist him up the first steep grade. After having, by this process, their ox-team of 5 or 6 yoke in order, on the first "level" (as we call it) they then, by the use of ropes and chains, attach a wagon to it, haul it up one "hitch," then block the wheels, "back" the team,

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*take another hitch and another start forward - and they thus continue the operation till the wagon is on the first "inclined grade." It was then by a similar, but less tedious process, drawn up over the remaining steppes or "pitches," to the level plain above - and the same operation was repeated with all their wagons. And at the close of the second day after their arrival at the foot of Sierra Nevada, these then well educated mountaineers found their entire retinue of wagons, "goods and chattels" safely landed at the summit-level. Mr. Ide told me these were the two hardest days' labor he experienced, for himself, men, women and children (and cattle, even), of the train, during the entire journey."*¹⁴

Sarah Elizabeth had vivid memories about this portion of the trip. She wrote about the experience of negotiating the steep slope from Donner Lake to the summit of the Sierra Nevada.

"It took us a long time to go about 2 miles over our rough new-made road up the mountains, over the rough rocks, in some places, and smooth in others, that the oxen would slip and fall on their knees; the blood from their feet and knees staining the rocks they passed over. Mother and I walked (we were so sorry for the poor,



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*faithfull oxen), all those two miles - all our clothing being packed on the horses' backs. It was a trying time - the men swearing at their teams, and beating them most cruelly, all along that rugged way."*¹⁵

William L. Todd, as Sarah Elizabeth noted, was traveling with the Grigsby-Ide party. He, also, had strong memories and feelings about the ascent to the summit of the Sierra Nevada. In a letter dated April 17, 1846, which was published in the *Springfield Sangamo Journal* on August 13, 1846, he wrote:

"We went on smoothly until we reached the California mountains, which were 300 miles from our destination. There we met with "tribulation" in the extreme. You can form no idea nor can I give you any just description of the evils which beset us.

"From the time we left the lake [now called Donner] on the north side of the mountains until we arrived at the lake on the top, it was one continued jumping from one rocky cliff to another. We would roll over this big rock, then over that; then there was bridging a branch; then we had to lift our waggons by main force up to the top of a ledge of rocks, that was impossible for us to reduce, bridge or roll our waggons over, and in several places, we had to run our waggons round with handspikes, and heave them up to the top, where our cattle had previously been taken. Three days were passed in this vexatious way, and at the end of that time, we found ourselves six miles from the lake on the north side of the mountain, and you never saw a set of fellows more happy than when we reached the summit.

*"When night came, we were very glad to take a blanket or buffalo robe, and lay down on the "softest side of a rock," and were sorry to be disturbed from our sweet repose, when we were called in the morning to our labor."*¹⁶

David Hudson, who joined the train before Fort Hall wrote an autobiography for Bancroft in 1872. He said of the trip and the ascent:

"We came down the Humboldt, then cauld Marys river. Here we first saw the Digger Indian. They appeared to be very much afraid of us. We could see their heads sticking up over the high grass. They would frequently shoot arrows into our cattle. From Humboldt we crossed onto the Truckee river which I then thought was the finest water I ever drank. In going up that river we had one man killed by the Indians. The only man we lost in crossing the plains. His name was Peirce. I think from Ill. When we reached Sierra Nevada Mountains they looked terrible. There was no sign of any road or trail. I went up the mountain with others to look out the best way, and we all pronounced it impassable for wagons. But before we got back some of the wagons had passed some of the places we had considered impass-

able. So we hitched up our team and made a start, and when we came to benches of rocks six or eight feet straight up and down we would unyoke our oxen, drive them round to some low place, get them above the bench yoke up the oxen. In the mean time some of us would cut some long poles strong enough to bear up the wagons and lay them up on the rocks. Then take enough chains to reach back to the wagons, hitch to the end of the tongue, and pull the wagon up, in this way we reached the top of the mountain." ¹⁷

Here are four accounts of the trip from Fort Hall to the Sierra Nevada. Each was written independently of the others, and each author indicated that the journey to the Sierra Nevada was mostly uneventful. Sarah Elizabeth mentions the shooting of an Indian by John Greenwood, an event mentioned by other diarists of the trip, and David Hudson comments about a man being killed by Indians and mentions that Indians shot the emigrant's cattle, however none of these events are given much detail by their writers, and they are not mentioned at all in the other accounts.

Each of the accounts is nearly devoid of detail of the trip until they take up the ascent from Donner Lake to the summit. Here all of the accounts agree that this was a task that took a monumental effort. It is of significance that the account written by Hudson, while not mentioning Ide by name, supports his description of the methods used to reach the summit, and thereby lends credence to Ide's claim of having devised the means to enable intact wagons to reach the summit.

Donner Party Rescue Site



THE SUMMIT OF THE SIERRA NEVADA

Once attained, the summit of the Sierra afforded little relief for the weary travelers. The crossing of the Rockies through the broad trough of South Pass had been a gentle walk compared to the granite notch between the towering crags of the saw-tooth ridge that marks the crest of the Sierra Nevada. The travelers knew that they were close to their goal and wanted to hurry on to Sutter's Fort.

Sarah Elizabeth described finding the remnants of a party that tried to bring wagons into California the year before.

"Somewhere near the summit we came to a place where a company of ten or twelve wagons had camped the year before, and emptied their feather beds. They left their wagons and "packed" their oxen into the valley. We could see the tracks of these wagons very plainly - there having been no rain since the melting or the snow last spring. These were the first wagons that ever crossed the "Plains," on their way to California, but were not brought into California till 1845. Our Emigrants, on coming, to this Plain, all made a rush for the long sought California; ambitious to be the first - not much waiting one for another; the best teams leaving the rest; every one looking out for himself, only. Some went to one part of the country, and some to another. I have since met but few of our first company, except those who passed our house on their way to Oregon." ¹⁸

The "Plain" where they found the wagons would seem to be the meadow discussed by William Todd, who recalled arriving at the summit and a party that they had there before the train broke up into small groups to begin their separate journeys down the canyon scarred western slopes to the valley below.

"On the top of the mountain we found a beautiful lake, but quite small, and a few miles farther we came to a fine prairie, about three miles long by three-fourths of a mile broad, full of springs and excellent water, and at the lower end a fine branch which forms the head of the Yuba river, and the way we danced "Yuba" there, was a caution for all future emigrants. The difficulty of getting down the mountains was not as great as ascending it, though it was a work of labor and looked at the first glance as impossible to be performed by horsemen, much more by teams of waggons.

"Soloman Sublette, of St. Louis, who passed us at the lake on the North side of the mountain told us afterward that he had no idea we could get through with our waggons. In some places we found it necessary to lock all four wheels coming down hill and then our waggons came very near turning over hind part before. At last on

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William B. Ide From page 51

*the 20th of October, our hardships were ended by our arrival at Fort Sutter..."*¹⁹

Todd claimed in his letter, which was written seven months after the fact, to have arrived at Sutter's on the 20th, however, Sutter's New Helvetia Diary entry for the 19th of October noted that, "...today two more waggons arrived belong to Mr Todd and Mr Roulette - 4 or 5 Waggons more are expected immediately."²⁰ With this terse entry, Sutter recorded the arrival of William Todd's wagon six days before William B. Ide's party.

William B. Ide did not provide Simeon much information about the trip from the summit to Sutter's Fort. Fortunately, Sarah Elizabeth described this portion of the trip in some detail. They had attained the summit and her narration continues:

"Not long after this we met a pack-train [the Sublettes?] on their way to some fort. They told us that the Spaniards would take us all prisoners as we should arrive in California, and that all Americans who then were there were ordered to leave, or they would be imprisoned."

"Some of our company wanted to stop and build a fort, and spend the winter there; but on further consideration it was thought better to risk the Spaniards, than to be shut up in the midst of those high mountains to starve. So we hastened on our way, losing no time to meet our fate, be it what it might."

"We camped one night on a level place near a lake of very cleare water; also very deep. During the night we were startled by a loud report that shook the ground under us like a heavy clap of thunder. We were terribly frightened. It proved to be an explosion of gun-powder - a keg or can of it in one of the wagons, which set it on fire. At the time it was supposed to have been accidentally set on fire; but afterwards circumstances led to the conclusion, that the man having charge of the wagon set it on fire, with the object in view of getting possession of a sum of money in a trunk, the owner of which having gone to California with the company that "packed" from Fort Hall."

"In driving down into "Steep Hollow," the men cut down small trees to tie to the hind end of each wagon, to keep it from turning over or slewing, and also to hold it back. In attempting to ride my pony down, the saddle came off over her head. She was so gentle as to stop for me to alight, and lead her the rest of the way down."

"We camped that night in "Steep Hollow." Our best milch-cow died the next morning. We did all we could to doctor her. We supposed she was poisoned by eating laurel leaves - grass being so scarce."

"Traveling through the Sierra Nevadas, up hill and down; fording streams in the small valleys, with muddy

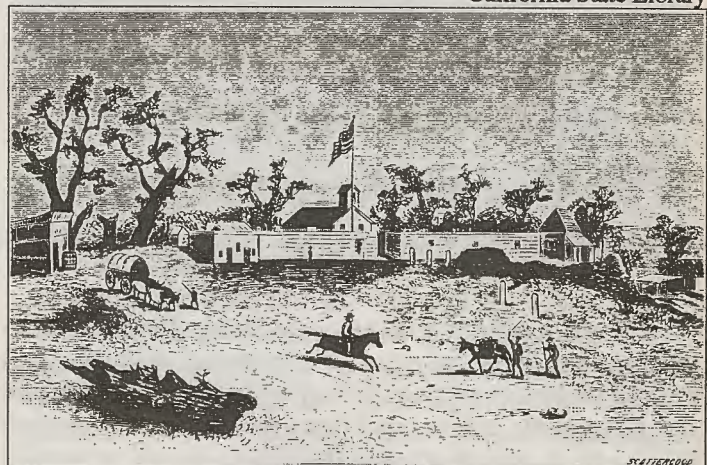
bottoms, and small rivers, with large boulder rocks at the bottom; so large as to almost upset the wagon; driving over rocky roads - all this though it might be considered healthy exercise was somewhat fatiguing; and our Pilot wanted to stop a day or two to rest; but father did not think it best to, and drove on."

"The next morning we continued our march without a Pilot; and, after traveling all day, we camped, as usual, for the night. Soon after getting quietly at rest our Pilot came up and swearing as he came, said he was not responsible for our "driving into a Canon that we could not get out of!" My father seemed perfectly cool - said scarcely a word, for he knew that he was right. While Greenwood was scolding, I saw the stump of a small tree that was cut down the year before, which showed that we were camped on a road made last year - so all that needless alarm was soon ended..."

"The rest of the way we traveled very slow; our cattle - the small remnant of the flock we started from Illinois with being poor, and nearly worn out - having lost so many oxen as to be obliged to work cows in their place. While on the way, near the Humboldt, the water was very bad. Some of our best oxen became poor and unfit for work, and were left on the sandy desert, some 40 miles this way of it, to shift for themselves; and they probably died, or were "cared for" by the Indians. An ox would lie down in his yoke, and could not be got up; so we would unyoke and leave him. Some of them were able to walk and after the yoke was taken off: these we drove on as long as they were able to go, hoping they would hold out till we came to good water. Our cattle, all told, numbered only 65, when we moved onto our Rancho in April, 1846."

"On the 25th day of October, 1845, my father drove down into the American River valley, and in a few days more we camped near Sutter's Fort, where Sacramento City is now."²¹

California State Library



SUTTER'S FORT

Sarah Elizabeth, like William Todd, remembered a different date for their arrival at Sutter's Fort than was recorded in the New Helvetia Diary. The arrival of the Ides was re-

corded in the entry in Sutter's Diary for Saturday the 25th of October "- 4 Waggons More came in today - Mr Ide's and Mr Skinner's." William B. Ide and his family had officially made it to California.²²

Footnotes:

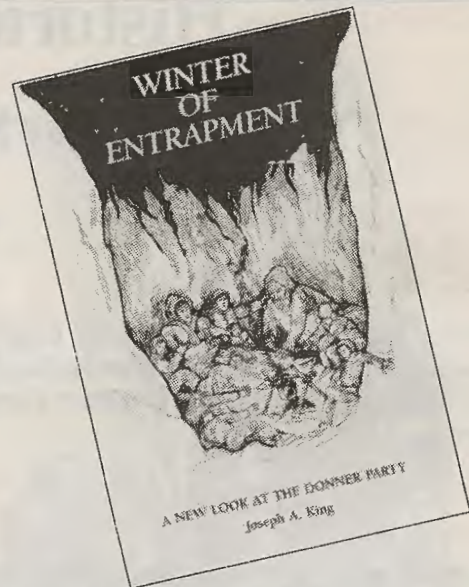
1. Charles Kelly and Dale L. Morgan, "Old Greenwood: The Story of Caleb Greenwood: Trapper, and Early Pioneer," The Talisman Press, Georgetown, California, 1965, p. 149.
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8. Simeon Ide, "The Conquest of California: A Biography of William B. Ide," Biobooks, Oakland, California, 1944, p. 22-23.
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10. Fred Blackburn Rogers, "William Brown Ide: Bear Flagger," John Howell Books, San Francisco, California, 1962, p. 19.
11. Ide, p. 22-23.
12. Bancroft, Vol. III, p. 578-579.
13. Ide, p. 23-24.
14. Ide, p. 26-27.
15. Ide, p. 27.
16. Kelly and Morgan, p. 176-177.
17. Kelly and Morgan, p. 153.
18. Ide, p. 29.
19. Rogers, p. 24-25.
20. John A. Sutter, "New Helvetia Diary: A Record of Events Kept by John A. Sutter And his Clerks at New Helvetia, California from September 9, 1845 to May 25, 1848," The Grabhorn Press, San Francisco, California, 1939, p. 8.
21. Ide, p. 28-30.
22. Sutter, p. 9.

Part 3 of "William Brown Ide, Pioneer, Bear Flagger and Builder," will be continued in the Summer issue #18 of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly.

From the Author:

During my research for the article on Ezekiel Merritt (Special Bear Flag Issue #13), I ran across many references to Ide, and after reading Joe Hood's article on William B. Ide, I became interested in learning more about the man who played such a pivotal and controversial role in the development of California and Colusi County. Being associated with William B. Ide State Historic Park, I thought that I had a tolerable knowledge of the man. Little did I know. This series of articles, then, is my search for William B. Ide.

GOLD IS TRIED BY FIRE
BRAVE MEN BY ADVERSITY



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Joseph A. King

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THE AUTHOR, Joseph A. King, has served as Consultant and Commentator for the films "The American Experience: The Donner Party" on Public TV, and "The Donner Party" segment of *The Real West* series on A&E cable TV.

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STEPHENS - TOWNSEND - MURPHY

First Wagons
over the
Sierra Nevada



Captain Elisha Stephens

1844

IN THIS ISSUE:

STEPHENS-TOWNSEND-MURPHY PARTY WILLIAM B. IDE
MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE CAMEL EXPERIMENT DOGTOWN
SISKIYOU TRAIN ROBBERY SIERRA COUNTY JUSTICE ORDS OF ORD BEND

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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin Hughes

We are fortunate to be able to present this continuing biography of William B. Ide, researched and written by Ben Hughes, of Red Bluff, California.

Chapter 3

According to Sutter's New Helvetia Diary, the Ide party arrived at the fort on Saturday, the 25th of October, 1845, however, they did not stay long. The Diary notes that it rained all day on the 26th, the first rain of the season, and that on Wednesday, the 29th, Peter Lassen, Ezekiel Merritt and William C. Moon arrived at the fort from up the Sacramento Valley with grindstones to sell.¹

The arrival of Lassen ended the Ide's brief stay at Sutter's. Apparently William B. Ide and Peter Lassen quickly arrived at a working relationship. Sarah Elizabeth Ide wrote that:

*"While encamped near Sutter's Fort, where Sacramento City is now, Father met a Mr. Peter Lassen, who owned a large tract of land 130 miles up the Sacramento Valley, on Deer Creek, who told him that he was the very man that he wanted to build him a sawmill. Lassen having the water-power, and father a circular saw and some mill-irons which he had brought across the Plains, he told father to go right up with his family to his Rancho, and to tell Mr. Sill to clean out one of his tenements, and that he (Lassen) would be home soon, and show him the mill-site and set him to work."*²

Their departure was noted at the end of the daily entry in Sutter's Diary for Thursday, October 30, 1845 with the terse statement, "- started Mr. Ides family up the river."³

J. Goldsborough Bruff

Unfortunately, the Ide-Lassen partnership was to be short lived - ending before it had more than just begun. Sarah Elizabeth wrote of the end of the relationship and her family's trials during the winter months of 1845-46:

"In just one week after we had moved into this small house of one room, Mr. Lassen came home, and brought another family with him (one of his own countrymen, a German); and the first thing he said to father was, that he wanted his house!

"This was about the middle of November, 1845. We packed everything into our wagons; and getting our cattle together, started up the river and forded it. After going about seven miles, we came to the camp of one family (a Mr. Tusting) who had bargained to take care of a Mr. Chard's cattle, and live on his Rancho - had camped near Sacramento River, on H.R. Thome's Rancho, in order to have the company of Mr. Thome's man who had charge of his (Mr. T's) cattle. We camped near them, they being very anxious to have us remain with them all winter. As the rainy season had already commenced, the weather was stormy. Father, with two other men, built a log-cabin. All of us lived in it until April, 1846. During the winter, which was a very wet one, we were surrounded with high water - floods - our cattle swimming from one bank to another - Indians yelling night and day, while the river was at its height - we lived on beef, butter and milk, with but little bread and no vegetables. Perhaps 100 lbs. of flour was all we had during the winter and spring, or until the wheat grew. A little boiled wheat was a treat to us. These privations (not to mention many others) made us somewhat homesick.

Continued page 24



-PETER LASSEN'S RANCHO BOSQUEJO ON DEER CREEK

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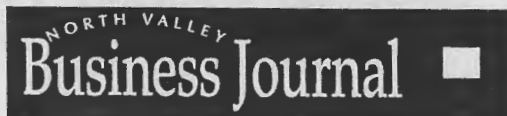


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William B. Ide From page 6

*"We could get but little wheat to sow, which was bought of Capt. Sutter. We could not buy flour at any price: It was not in the country. There were eight in our family, including a Mr. Tustin, his wife and child. Three young men - a Mr. Boker, having charge of Mr. Thome's cattle and horses - a Mr. Belden, an Eastern gentleman and a Mr. Pitts, who were weather-bound, and were of course some company for us, all lived in a log-cabin several months. They made themselves a canoe, and the two last named men put into it a supply of meat, their firearms, ammunition, etc., left us, and made their journey by water to some point down the river where they could embark on a larger craft. ***One of these men (Mr. Josiah Belden) owned the farm now known as the 'Ide Rancho.' Mr. Belden gave father one-half of it for living on and taking care of his (Mr. B's) cattle three years. After the discovery of gold, Mr. B. sold his half to my father, my husband and my brother James; each paying him \$2000 - Mr. B's cattle being included.****

"In April, 1846, we moved from the first cabin ever built in Tehama County into our partly finished cabin on Mr. B's farm." 4

There are a number of interesting points in Sarah Elizabeth's recollection. First, the fact that she refers to Tehama County clearly places the date of her writing the passage after May of 1856. At the time of the Ide's occupation of the Belden Rancho there were, of course, no counties, as this was Mexican California, and even when he was Judge Ide in Monroeville, the area was part of Colusa County. Simeon Ide, in an early reference to her account states, "She depends on her memory chiefly for the minute circumstances that she relates; and I believe that it is generally understood that at the age of fifty years and upwards we remember the prominent, exciting events of youth - say between our 6th and 18th year - more distinctly than we do those that occurred at a later period of our lives."⁵ This reference to her being fifty or older would place her writing her recollections for Simeon in 1877 at the earliest.

The log cabin she refers to as the "first cabin" constructed in the area begs for more information. E.J. Lewis, in his 1880 work on Tehama County, refers to it as an adobe,⁶ but it does not seem probable that Ide and his two companions would have attempted to build an adobe house in the middle of the floods of the rainy season. More likely, the cabin was constructed using the cottonwoods and sycamores which grow along the banks of the Sacramento and its tributaries. These would have been readily available and would have been within Ide's knowledge and skills. He was a skilled carpenter of some reputation, but he was from timbered New England and he would not have been familiar with the southwestern techniques of building with adobe.

Sarah Elizabeth refers to the cramped and crowded con-

ditions of the cabin, but she also hints the occupants were not confined to the cabin. Two of the men fashioned a canoe and headed down river, and her father, probably with the help of others, was able to travel north to the Belden Rancho and begin construction of a cabin to serve as a home for his family. According to an 1858 survey of the Barranca Colorado Rancho, this house was located about 4.2 miles north of the present day community of Gerber, and a map made in 1849 by Pierson B. Reading places it down river from the northern tip of Blackberry Island.⁷ This would place the partially completed cabin some eight to ten miles north of the cabin where they spent the winter. A round trip to the site would take most of a day and would require fording two major streams - Elder and Coyote - and numerous smaller waterways each way. In order to build a cabin, Ide apparently made several such trips during that winter.

Also of interest is the fact that while Sarah Elizabeth states that Josiah Belden gave half of his Barranca Colorado grant to Ide for managing it for three years and later sold the rest to members of the Ide family, there is no mention of the transactions in Belden's memoirs,⁸ which covers the period from 1841 until well after the "Bear Flag" incident. These transactions are verified in the transcript of the 1852-55 court proceedings regarding Ide's claim that he had legal title to the land.⁹

In April of 1846, at the age of fifty, William B. Ide moved his family, minus William Haskell Ide, who had gone to work for Sutter in the early part of December of 1845,¹⁰ and the surviving 65 cattle¹¹ (all that remained of the 165 that they had when they left Springfield, Illinois.) into a partially completed cabin on the Barranca Colorado Rancho. Simeon refers to this cabin as, "...a cabin for the temporary protection of his family, until he could provide more comfortable quarters for them."¹² Apparently he was able to finish the cabin and make it comfortable enough that in June, only two months later, he could, without hesitation, at a moments notice, ride off and leave his family for an extended period of time.

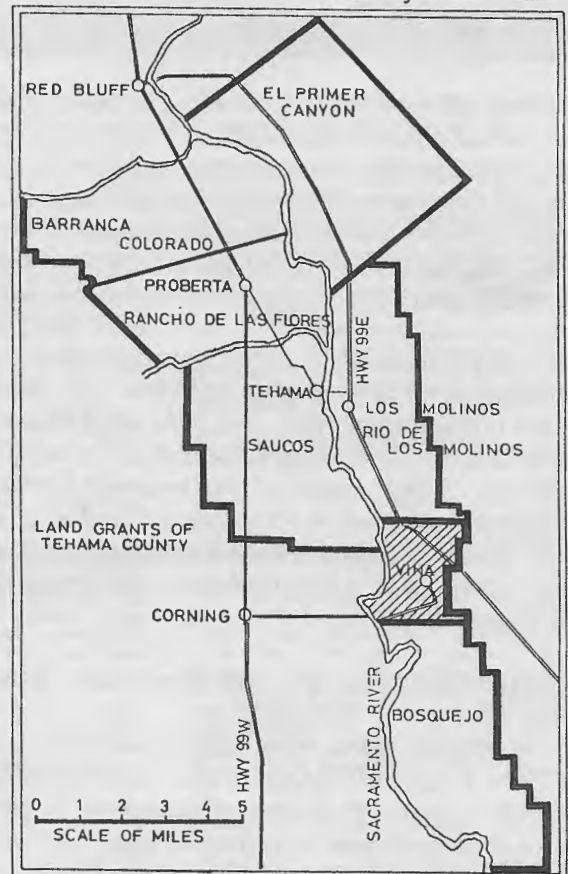
On the 8th of June, 1846, between the hours of 10 and 11, A.M. Ide received a message, which he said was delivered by an Indian "agent." The message stated;

*"Notice is hereby given, that a large body of armed Spaniards on horseback amounting to 250 men, have been seen on their way to the Sacramento Valley, destroying the crops, burning the houses, and driving off the cattle. Capt Fremont invites every freeman in the valley to come to his camp at the Buttes, immediately; and he hopes to stay the enemy, and put a stop to this"*¹³

At this point the paper was worn in two at the fold and whatever else was said is lost to history. Ide said that the document was not signed by Fremont, nor anyone in his company, but when he contemplated this message in light of the proclamation that had been issued by Gen. Jose Castro early in April, and posted in Sonoma and other places, including at Sutter's Fort,¹⁴ which read:

Continued page 26

Courtesy Clifford Penner



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William B. Ide From page 25

*"Being informed that a multitude of strangers abusing our local circumstances without having come with the requisites provided by law, are residing in this district, and that many of them that had not ought to be admitted into this country have made themselves owners of fixed property, being a right belonging to naturalized citizens, I have concluded to order all justices of towns under their charge, that they cannot under the most strong responsibility, permit nor authorize sale or cession whatever of land or of said class of property, without regulation by right, and in favor of Mexican citizens, advise that those foreigners that are not naturalized and legally introduced, that whatever purchase or acquisition they may make will be null and void, and will be subject (if they do not retire voluntarily from the country) to be expelled from it whenever the government finds it convenient."*¹⁵

Ide dropped everything to hurry to Fremont's camp. He stated:

*"You may be assured there was no hour of deliberation - not a moment; the horse bounded back to the cabin; the rifle, pistols and ammunition were, by every inmate of the house produced at the door; one brief sentence gave the parting advice to the fond wife and listening, excited and wondering children, while the blanket was being lashed to the saddle."*¹⁶

Sarah Elizabeth recalled that the message was delivered to her father by Henry L. Ford, and that she and her mother sadly watched, "father and Mr. Henry Ford ride off on such an expedition!"¹⁷ This is an interesting statement, but if other accounts, including Ford's own,¹⁸ of events of the next couple of days are correct, it is not plausible.

Ide received the message and left for Fremont's camp late in the morning of the 8th of June. About nine o'clock in the morning of June 9th, Mr. William Knight arrived at Fremont's camp with information about a Mexican Lieutenant, named Arce, and a herd of horses that were being taken to Castro to be used to drive Americans from California. Almost immediately, a group of settlers, under the leadership of Ezekiel Merritt, left Fremont's camp to prevent the horses from reaching Castro. H.L. Ford was a member of this expedition. [See "Ezekiel Merritt, The Leader of the Bear Flag Revolt" in *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, #13] Inasmuch as Ide, even though he "hastened," did not reach Fremont's camp until the morning of the 10th of June, it does not seem possible that he and Ford could have left the northern valley together and arrived a day apart. Ford makes no mention of such a breakneck ride in his statement. Additionally, Ford could not have had knowledge of Arce and the horses to make him ride all night, as he would have had to do to reach the camp by mid-morning on the 9th to be able to accompany Merritt and produce one of the most accurate accounts of that expedition. It seems,

therefore, more likely that Ide was, in fact, notified as he stated, by an Indian courier.

William B. Ide later wrote a letter at the request of, California State Senator Mahlon M. Wambaugh, which furnished "a detailed account of what is called the 'Bear Flag Enterprise.' Simeon, published this letter in 1880 in book form and titled it "Who Conquered California." He believed that this letter was written in the winter of 1846-47.¹⁹ However, due to the fact that Wambaugh was not elected to represent Yolo and Colusi counties until September of 1851, Ide could not have written it until after that date. He apparently used notes from a journal or diary which, according to Sarah Elizabeth, he kept. Mr. William M. Boggs stated, in a letter to Simeon, that he read portions of Ide's journal at Ide's rancho in May of 1849. (Sarah Elizabeth believed that this diary was stolen from her brother, James, while on a trip to Utah.)²⁰ In his letter, Ide wrote:

"Every house in the valley was visited; but not one was found willing to leave his goods, nor his wife (for there were only two within the valley) - and we hastened to the camp of Capt. Fremont, where we arrived at break of day on the 10th, and by dint of apparent acquiescence, learned 'the plan of conquest'; which was quite simple and easy of accomplishment - and here it is: First select a dozen men who have nothing to lose, but everything to gain. Second, encourage them to commit depredations against Gen. Castro, the usurper, and thus supply the camp with horses necessary for the trip to the States. Third, to make prisoners of some of the principal men, and thus provoke Castro to strike the first blow in a war with the United States. This done, finish the conquest by uniting the forces, and 'marching back to the states.'"

"Capt. Fremont, while we were alone in his marquee (a large tent), on the evening of the 10th, rehearsed the above plan, humanely providing that none who had anything to sacrifice should be implicated therein; and asked the opinion of his auditor, who said in reply, that 'it would be a long time ere he would consent to, or join with, any set or company of irresponsible persons, who first commit an outrage, and then dishonorably leave the country and others to settle the difficulty, or endure its consequences.' Capt. F. remonstrated against this reply; and especially against the reflection of dishonor cast on himself - went on to show that the emigrants had received indignities from Castro, and would be justified in any measure they might adopt for their safety - went on to say, that if the emigrants wait to receive the first blow, all hope in resistance would be in vain; and cited, in support of his argument the seizure of all Americans that had taken place as herein before mentioned.

"I then informed him that no personal reproach was intended; that he, (Fremont), as an accredited American officer was supposed to act in obedience to his instruc-

William B. Ide From Page 26

*tions from his superiors; but that we although beyond the protecting shield of the U. States' flag, still cherished the memory of the American name, the honor of which was yet dearer to us by far than any rewards of falsehood and treachery dishonorably won. Whereupon Capt. F became exasperated. Rising hastily he said: 'I will not suffer such language in my Camp; it is disorganizing!' and went immediately out."*²¹

According to Ide, he had no further personal contact with Captain Fremont until the 25th of June, but Fremont had no sooner left the markee when Mr. King came to invite Ide to another tent to discuss the situation with a group of settlers. Before long the conversation turned to the expedition to relieve Lieut. Arce of the horses. Ide relates that he was asked:

*"Suppose the men succeed in taking the horses, what will you in that case propose be done? The reply was 'When the breach is once made that involves us all in its consequences, it is useless to consider the propriety of the measure. We are too few for division. In for it, the whole man! Widen the breach, that none can stand outside thereof. Down on Sonoma! Never flee the country, nor give it up while there is an arm to fight, or a voice to cry aloud for Independence. But let truth and honor guide our course. The United States may have cause of war against Mexico; but that is nothing to us. We have cause of war and blood - such as it is impossible for the United States to have received.' 'Good!' cried Mr. King and ran out to repeat the sentiment. 'Good! Hurrah for independence!' cried the whole camp."*²²

Several of Fremont's men, requested that he release them from service in order that they could join the settlers, but he steadfastly refused. Further discussion was cut short by the arrival of Merritt's band and the horses. Merritt made a report to Fremont and turned the horses over to him for safe keeping. Just exactly when the decision was made to take Sonoma is unclear. Lieut. Arce, in his report concerning the loss of the horses told his superiors that Merritt had talked of taking Sonoma.²³ Ide says that he and the settlers had discussed it while Merritt was out of the camp. Regardless of when the decision had been made, Ide wrote that:

*"It was 12 at night, and all possible haste was made to be off, as it was known that the men who had been imprudently released (Lieut. Arce and his men) would, in all probability, separate and spread intelligence of the rising of the emigrants, and the taking of the horses, in every direction; and it was more than probable, that the garrison at Sonoma might be alarmed, rather than surprised."*²⁴

Leaving Fremont's camp, they rode through the night and thirteen men armed with rifles and pistols crossed the Sacramento River near the mouth of the Feather River about dawn on the eleventh of June. Ide makes several references to the "twelve," who would have been Merritt and the eleven men who had accompanied him on the raid to get Lieut. Arce's horses. This reference indicates that Ide was the only newcomer to the band as they started for Sonoma. Worried that the Sonoma garrison might have been warned, they took the less traveled northern route along Cache Creek, through Berreyesa Valley and Pope Valley and rode across the divide into the Napa Valley to a point near Bale's Mill by the 12th, where:

*"...hereabouts were a considerable number of newly arrived emigrants, and the day was spent in obtaining recruits. Much time was spent in procuring as many swelled our number to thirty-two; and on the 13th, at 11 P.M., sleep and drowsiness were on the point of delaying, if not defeating our enterprise. We were 36 miles from Sonoma. The sleepless energy of some aroused their companions by representing the danger of delay, and half an hour's debate turned the scale in favor of immediate action, and all put for Sonoma for dear life, as fast as our jaded horses could carry us, so if possible, arrive there by a rough path away from the traveled road before the day-light gave notice of our approach."*²⁵

In his letter to Senator Wambaugh, Ide expressed his feelings about the enterprise and the men who were involved in it. He, apparently, though time may have altered his perceptions of the events, felt that only he and Doctor Semple, of the men who descended upon Vallejo's home that June morning in 1846, had an independent American California republic in mind.

"It will be borne in mind that none of this party, save myself, were present when the sentiment of INDEPENDENCE was so heartily cheered in the camp under the Nevada mountains; nor was it reasonable to suppose that any of them were informed by any of Capt. Fremont's men, that his plan was to provoke an attack on Castro's camp, before he left for the states, to take along with him the offenders, to save them from certain destruction... The subject of Independence was only talked of as an event that might occur; and no one of them seemed to understand that the taking of Sonoma formed any part of our errand there."

"And, moreover, Capt. Fremont, who is allowed to be proverbially cautious and prudent, gave his directions - or rather his "advice," - in such a manner as to avoid legal testimony in any matter of interference in California politics, (which he invariably and solemnly disavowed) that it was impossible to prove, authoritatively from him responsibility for any line of conduct by

William B. Ide From Page 31

our party; but every one, (especially those of the "twelve"), seemed, as if by intuition, to understand that our only business was to capture and convey to Fremont's camp Gen. M.G. Vallejo, Don Salvadore Vallejo, Col. Prudhon and Capt. Jacob Leese, if practicable, and if not, to drive off another band of horses, or commit any other act of violence, in its nature calculated to provoke and attack in the proper quarter.

"Fully impressed with the importance of this mission of benevolence and good will towards the sleeping and unsuspecting gentlemen to whom we were about to pay our respects, we took timely protection to swear certain of our number against the commission of violence against either of those gentlemen. This step was considered proper, as we were aware there were certain breathings of vengeance against some of them, in the minds of a few of our party..."

"Thus circumstanced, we arrived at Sonoma; and, after reconnoitering the place, and notifying our friends of our object in seizing the aforesaid gentlemen, and having secured the captain of the guard whom we found a little way out of town, we surrounded the house of Gen. M.G. Vallejo just at daybreak, on the 14th. William Merritt, Doct. Semple and Mr. Knight, (who took wise care to have it understood on all hands that he was forced to the scrape as an interpreter, entered the house to secure their prisoners." ²⁶

[Editor's note: Several articles have appeared in this publication concerning the events surrounding the taking of Sonoma and the raising of the Bear Flag. Please refer to Dogtown Territorial Quarterly #13, #16, & #17. Mr. Hughes' article has been edited to highlight Ide's involvement!]

Following the negotiations and the signing of surrender documents, the party began to squabble over what to do with the prisoners and began to question under whose authority they had acted in the taking of Sonoma. When questioned by Grigsby, who had been elected captain during the negotiations, about orders from Fremont, Merritt and the others from Fremont's camp were unable to give him a satisfactory answer. Merritt declared that he was taking the prisoners to Fremont. Henry Ford says of the incident that, "...John Grigsby was first chosen (captain) but on his being acquainted with it he also concluded to go to New Helvetia. William B. Ide was then chosen to command for the time being after Capt. Merritt had left with his prisoners and escort. (Those left,) now reduced to twenty four began to take measures to hold the garrison that they had just taken."²⁷ Ide wrote:

"Disorder and confusion prevailed. One swore that he would not stay to guard prisoners - another swore we would all have our throats cut - another for fresh horses and all were on the move - every man for himself; when

the speaker [Mr. Ide] resumed his effort, raising his voice louder and more loud, as the men receded from the place, saying: 'We need no horses; we want no horses. Saddle no horse for me. I can go to the Spaniards, and make FREEMEN of them. I will give myself to them. I will lay my bones here, before I will take upon myself the ignominy of commencing an honorable work, and then flee like cowards, like thieves, when no enemy is in sight. In vain will you say you had honorable motives! Who will believe it? Flee this day, and the longest life cannot wear off your disgrace! Choose ye! choose ye this day, what you will be! We are robbers or we must be conquerors!' - and the speaker in despair turned his back upon his receding companions.

"With new hope they rallied around the desponding speaker and made him their Commander, their Chief; and his next words commanded the taking of the Fort. Joy lighted up every mind, and in a moment all was secured: 18 prisoners, 9 brass cannon, 250 stands of arms, and tons of copper, shot, and other public property, of the value of 10 or 1200 dollars, was seized and held in trust for the public benefit.

"Arrangements were immediately made for putting the garrison in a complete state of defence. Tools suitable for fortification, and for supplying a well of water within our walls; and a liberal stock of provisions were procured on contract - pledging the public property now in possession for future payment..."

"Thus and so was the "Independent Bear Flag Republic" inaugurated." ²⁸

William Baldrige wrote of Ide and the incident:

"Wm. B. Ide, a strong, active and energetic man of about Sixty years of age with a good deal of sense in most things and possessing some educational advantages... He was a mormon in religion, and in our judgement was possessed of many visionary if not utopian ideas, which did (not) seem quite agreeable to any one but himself. Consequently within a short time he was the most unpopular man among us. Finally he was seized with a fit of writing which continued almost incessantly for several days, all the time keeping his own counsel. After he finished one day we were all in the barracks, when he rose in his place and stated that he had written out a Proclamation which he wished to read to us." ²⁹

Baldrige, who is cited by later writers, such as Josiah Royce, to show that Ide was out of touch with the men at Sonoma and madly working on his own agenda, gives the impression that several days had passed from the time the Bears took Sonoma until Ide issued his proclamation. Ide, however, in his letter to Wambaugh, stated that after taking the fort, he put the affairs of the party in order and that he drafted his proclamation during the early hours of the morning of the

fifteenth. He wrote:

"After the return of the three leaders of the party of the primitive plan of neutral conquest, and seven others had 'left us alone in our glory,' and the 'Bear Flag' - made of plain cotton cloth, and ornamented with the red flannel of a shirt from the back of one of the men, and christened by the words 'California Republic,' in red-paint letters on both sides - was raised upon the standard where had floated on the breezes the Mexican flag aforetime. It won on the 14th of June, '46. Our number was twenty-four, all told. The mechanism of the flag was performed by Wm. Todd of Illinois. The grizzly bear was chosen as an emblem of strength and unyielding resistance. The men were divided into two companies of 10 men each. The 1st artillery was busily engaged in putting the cannon in order, which were charged doubly with grape and canister. The 1st rifle company was busied in cleaning, repairing and loading the small arms. The Commander, after setting a guard, and posting a sentinel on one of the highest buildings to watch the approach of any one who might have the curiosity to inspect operations, directed his leisure to the establishment of rules of discipline and order, and of a system of finance, whereby all the defenceless families might be brought within the lines of our garrison and supported...

"On the evening of the 14th, after every precaution for security for the night coming had been taken, the subject of issuing a proclamation was discussed; and notwithstanding arguments were used tending to show that we were bound by a proper respect for the rights and interests of all honest and good citizens of California, to represent ourselves as to our doings and purposes, yet a very large portion of our men were against making any public representation of our situation and intentions, until our numbers should have been increased to something like a force adequate to the undertaking...

"So here we were; by our flag proclaimed 'The California Republic'! Twenty four self consecrated victims of the god of Equal rights - unknown by any mortal being, except ten men who had dissented from our plan of operations, and fled to the protection of Fremont's camp, (except 30 or 40 Spaniards, who had, from brief acquaintance, sworn fidelity to our cause), exposed not only to the wrath of 600 armed men, whom we were compelled, in order to the just imputation of violence and crime, to defy in open fight, but to the unmingled scorn and contempt of all honorable men, whether Mexicans or Americans if we failed to represent the true character and the circumstances which compelled us to assume such an unusual position...

"Under these circumstances, and impressed with these views, it was believed that any representation was preferable to none; and our Commander [invested with

'all the powers of the four departments of the government,' it will be remembered], Jackson-like, 'assumed the responsibility' of performing his duty, 'as he understood' his obligations to all concerned, and drew up, on the morning of the 15th, between the hours of 1 and 4 o'clock, the following:

'PROCLAMATION'

TO ALL PERSONS, INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA AND COUNTRY AROUND. REQUESTING THEM TO REMAIN AT PEACE; TO PURSUE THEIR RIGHTFUL OCCUPATIONS, - WITHOUT FEAR OF MOLESTATION.

"The Commander-in-chief at Sonoma gives his inviolable pledge to all persons in California, not found bearing arms, or instigating others to take up arms against him, that they shall not be disturbed in their person, property, religion, or social relations to each other, by men under this command.

"He hereby solemnly declares the object of his movement to be, - first, to defend our women and children, and his brave companions in arms, who were first invited to this country by a promise of lands on which to settle themselves and families; who were promised a Republican government; who, when having arrived in California, were denied even the privilege of buying or renting lands of their friends; who, instead of being allowed a participation in, or of being protected by a Republican government, were oppressed by a military despotism; who were even threatened by proclamation of one of the principal officers of the aforesaid oppressive government, with extermination, if they would not depart out of the country, leaving all their property - their arms, and their beasts of burden; and who were thus to be despoiled of the means of defence or of flight - and were to have been driven through deserts inhabited by hostile savages to certain death.

"To overthrow a government which has robbed and destroyed the Missions, and appropriated the properties thereof to the individual aggrandizement of its favorites; which has violated good faith, by its treachery in the bestowment of public lands; which has shamefully oppressed and ruined the laboring and producing inhabitants of California, by their enormous exactions of tariff on goods imported into the country: - this is the purpose of the brave men who are associated under his command.

"He also declares his object, in the second place, to be, - and he hereby invites all good and patriotic citizens in California to assist him - to establish and perpetuate a liberal, a just and honorable Government, which shall secure to all civil, religious and personal liberty; which shall insure the security of life and property; which shall detect and punish crime and

William B. Ide From page 35

injustice; which shall encourage industry, virtue and literature; and which shall foster agriculture, manufactures and mechanism, by guaranteeing freedom to commerce.

"He further proclaims that he relies upon the justice of his cause - upon the favor of Heaven - upon the wisdom and good sense of the people of California, and upon the bravery of those who are bound and associated with him by the principle of self-preservation, by their love of Liberty and by their hatred of Tyranny - for his hope of success.

"And he further promises that a Government, to be prosperous and amelioration in its tendency, must originate among its people: its officers should be its servants, and its glory its COMMON REWARD!

(Signed)

William B. Ide
Commander

Head-Quarters at Sonoma,
June 15th, A.D. 1846" ³⁰

Ide's contention as to when he wrote and issued this document is supported by two independent sources. The first being the official report of Lieutenant John S. Missroon, U.S. Navy, who, on June 15th, was ordered, by Commander John B. Montgomery of the U.S.S. *Portsmouth*, to go to Sonoma and ascertain the situation there. Lieut. Missroon arrived at Sonoma on the evening of the 16th and met with Ide. The main goal of his mission was to attempt to insure the safety of the civilians in and around Sonoma indicated in his orders, which read in part:

"By a messenger from General Vallejo, I am informed that a party of insurgents occupied Sonoma yesterday. I deem it my duty to use my friendly endeavors to secure with the dominant party, to save (by the power of God) for the defenseless people of Sonoma protection to their lives and property.

"In pursuance of these views, sir, you are directed to proceed in one of the ship's boats to Sonoma, and, on your arrival there you will wait on the officer or person commanding the party having possession of the town, and as it is possible he is not fully aware of the extent and nature of the feelings produced in the minds of the population by this recent movement, you will inform him of the state of apprehension and terror into which it seems to have thrown them, and disclaiming all right or purpose on my part of interference between them and their actual opposers; and without touching upon the merits of their cause further than may not be avoided in course of conversation, be pleased (in such terms as your own sense of propriety will dictate) respectfully to request from me that he will extend his protection care over the other inoffensive persons of Sonoma, and exert

his influence with others in order to secure to them the uninterrupted enjoyment of their domestic and social privileges." ³¹

Lieut. Missroon conversed with Ide on more than one occasion on the 16th and 17th of June. He also conversed with the Alcalde of Sonoma and with Vallejo's family. He reported to Montgomery that he had been thanked by both parties for his efforts at mediation and that he, to the best of his ability to observe and judge, left, believing that the "utmost harmony and good order prevail in the camp."³² He took with him two documents from Ide that he attached to his report to Commander Montgomery. One was a copy of the "proclamation," dated June 15th, 1846, the other was a copy of a pledge from Ide to protect the citizens of California.

Ide claims that Lieut. Missroon read the proclamation to the assembled "Bears" on the morning of the 17th and that they approved it.³³ While this fact is not mentioned by Lieut. Missroon in his report, the report and the attached document corroborates Ide's contention that the "Proclamation" was written and issued early in the occupation and not days later, after the 23rd of June,³⁴ as Baldrige contends. Ide is also supported by Henry L. Ford's account of the events at Sonoma. Ford stated, simply, "on the seventeenth William B. Ide issued his proclamation and (we) were visited by Lieut. Missroon, of the Sloop of War, *Portsmouth*, who complimented the party for their orderly conduct. He was accompanied (by) a son of Capt. Montgomery."³⁵

The mention of Midshipman John E. Montgomery is worthy of notice. He was Commander Montgomery's son and the U.S.S. *Portsmouth's* Captain's clerk. He accompanied Lieut. Missroon to Sonoma and in a letter to his mother, dated July 25, 1846, he provided one of the few physical descriptions of William B. Ide. Young Montgomery told his mother:

"On arriving found a party of 14 men mostly dressed in Buckskins & we were met half way across the Square by a plain man about fifty years old in his shirt sleeves, with a pair of pantaloons which certainly had seen better days to my eyes his shoes looked as if they had not seen the outside of one of Day & Martin's blacking bottles for six months & his hat was somewhat more holy than righteous this man was Captain Ide he welcomed us to Sonoma & on Mr. M. intimation to him that he would like to see him he called his 1st Lt. Mr. Ford a nephew of old Deacon Ford of Charlestown, & then retired after the business was settled Mr. M. & myself called on Mrs. Vallejo & he assured her of her husbands safety & she offered us beds in her house which we accepted she is a very pleasant woman indeed..." ³⁶

By the 17th of June, 1846, the "Bear Flag" was proudly flying from the staff in the square, the "Osos" had elected a Captain, they had a simple but orderly military organization under Lt. Ford, they had received American emissaries, the "PROCLAMATION," justifying and legitimizing their actions to the world, had been issued, and at least the United

The Society of California Pioneers



THE CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC BEAR FLAG

States Navy, in the person of Commander Montgomery, knew of the founding of the California Republic. The California Republic was a reality, at least in the mind of its fifty year old leader, William B. Ide.

Footnotes:

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2. Simeon Ide, The Conquest of California: A Biography of William B. Ide, Biobooks, Oakland, CA, 1944, p. 31-2.
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4. Ide, p. 32-3.
5. Ide, P. 18.
6. E.J. Lewis, Tehama County, California, Elliot & Moore, Publishers, San Francisco, 1880, p. 13.
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8. Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., Ed., Josiah Belden: 1841 California Overland Pioneer: His Memoir and Early Letters, Talisman Press, Georgetown, CA, 1962.
9. U.S. District Court: Northern District of California, No. 371-71: the United States vs Wm B. Ide: Transcript of the Record from the Board of U.S. Land Commissioners in case no. 185, Dec. 10, 1855, p. 32-39. Unpublished ms in Tehama County Library, Red Bluff.
10. Sutter, p. 16. Note: There are several references in Sutter's New Helvetia Diary, according to the index, concerning "Ide, William B.", however, a close reading of the material indicates that the entries are, in fact, references to William Haskell Ide, not William B. Ide. The fact is confirmed by Sarah Elizabeth, who stated that "William was not with, and had not seen his father since November, 1845. Being just about that time of age, he went to work for Capt. Sutter awhile," (Ide, p. 59). It is unfortunate that this mix-up in identity has occurred, as several works have used these references to place William B. Ide in situations where he was not.
11. Ide, P. 30.
12. Ide, p. 36.
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20. Rogers, p. 76.

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22. Ide, Conquest, p. 33-4.

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30. Ide, Conquest, p. 47-55.

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36. Fred Blackburn Rogers, Montgomery and the Portsmouth, John Howell Books, San Francisco, 1958, p. 39.

About the Author:

A resident of Red Bluff for thirty years and associated with the William B. Ide State Historic Park for the past ten years, Mr. Hughes has long been interested in William B. Ide, the man and legend. Several years ago he conceived the Ide biography project as a possible booklet for the park. The Dogtown Territorial Quarterly has provided the incentive to bring the project to fruition. At least two more articles are anticipated in this series.

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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin M. Hughes

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of "William Brown Ide, Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder" can be found in issues #16, #17 and #18 of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly.

Chapter 4

Following the departure of Lieutenant Missroon and young Montgomery, William B. Ide immersed himself in the business of consolidating and governing the California Republic. Within a short time more people began to come to Sonoma seeking protection and the "Osos" found themselves short of supplies.

A critical need was powder for their rifles and cannon as little had been found when they occupied the fort, and it was this shortage that led to the first American casualties of the Bear Flag incident.

Ide wrote a letter to Commodore Stockton, of the U.S. Navy, on the night of the fourteenth-fifteenth of June, explaining the changes which had taken place at Sonoma on the fourteenth, the situation that they were in, and declaring their "desire to embrace the first opportunity to unite our adopted and rescued country, to the country of our early home."¹

On the morning of the fifteenth, William Todd volunteered to take his letter to Stockton, if he were present at San Francisco Bay, or, in his absence, to present it to the highest ranking naval officer he could find. This turned out to be Commander John B. Montgomery, of the U.S.S. *Portsmouth*, which was then moored at Sausalito. Ide wrote, in his letter to California State Senator Mahlon M. Wambaugh, that Todd was:

*...conducted on his way immediately by the Commander of the garrison, beyond the guard lines, where he received the said letter and full information in relation to the existence of the proclamation and treaty stipulations... He was then charged in relation to his journey; and, withal, to be sure not to ask for anything from the men or officers of the ship where he delivered the letter, as the letter contained all the business of his mission; but simply to take whatever (if anything) was put into his hand...*²

In his letter to Stockton, Ide stated, "...when we charged upon the Fortress of General Guadalupe Vallejo, and captured eighteen prisoners (among whom were three of the highest

officers in the Californian government and all the military officers who reside in Sonoma) eight field-pieces, two hundred stand of arms, a great quantity of cannon, and grape shot, and a little less than one hundred pounds of powder (quite too little to sustain us against an attack by the use of cannon."³ Apparently, after waiting for some time with no mention of the needed powder, Todd "thought it necessary, notwithstanding his orders not to ask for anything, to inquire if any powder was to be sent;..."⁴ Montgomery stated in his reply dated June 16, 1846, delivered to Ide by Lieut. Missroon:

*Permit me Sir, in response to your call for Powder for the use of your Party to say, that I am here as a representative of a Government at peace (as far as I know) with Mexico and the Province of California, having in charge the Interests, and security of Commerce, and Citizens of the United States lawfully engaged in their peaceful pursuits; and have no right or authority to furnish Munitions of War, or in any manner to take sides, with any Political Party, or even indirectly to identify myself, or official name, with any popular movement (whether of Foreign or native residents) of the Country, and that Sir, must decline giving the required aid.*⁵

Ide contended that he did not intend this letter to be an appeal for aid. He stated in his letter to Senator Wambaugh that it "...did not in the remotest manner, ask for or intimate that we desired assistance; but it was intended to notify, in due season the officers and Government of the U.S., that we had, agreeably to the universal and immutable right of all men, claimed the right of self-government for the good citizens of all California..."⁶

Ide believed that it was most unfortunate that Todd had ignored his directives and made the request, as Montgomery seemed to focus on it and construed the message and mission as a request for aid. He apparently dismissed the message and did not pass it on to Commodore Stockton until nearly six months later.⁷ Montgomery's letter to Ide ended with the statement, "Lieut. Missroon, the Executive Officer of the U. States Ship *Portsmouth* under my control who will hand you this, will explain more fully than the few moments allowed me to answer your Letter will permit me to do."⁸ That Lieut. Missroon presented Montgomery's letter to Ide is beyond question. That he provided additional information of a verbal nature can only be assumed, as his official report of his mis-

sion, dated June 17, 1846, makes no mention of such an action on his part. Ide, however, claimed that in private, Lieut. Missroon told him that, "in the event of war with Mexico, his Captain had instructed him to say that he would supply any amount of ammunition we might be in need of, and would also place half of his men under my command, and cooperate with his ship against a common enemy."⁹

The lack of powder was a serious concern to Ide and Lieut. Henry L. Ford, commander of the 1st Rifle Company and Capt. Sears, commander of the 1st Artillery. Accordingly, steps were undertaken to procure a supply. On the morning of the eighteenth of June, two men, Thomas Cowie and George Fowler volunteered to go from Sonoma to the Fitch ranch, (The Sotoyome rancho owned by H.D. Fitch, which was located on the Russian River), to get a keg of powder from Mose Carson.¹⁰ Lieut. Ford stated:

before starting he cautioned them to avoid all traveled roads as he suspected that the native Californians would be gathering to give them a fight but after traveling about ten miles came into the main traveled road to Santa Rosa when with about two miles of that place they were surprised by a party of Californians and put to death in a most horrid maner (sic). Two other men who were sent on special duty were also taken prisoners but were better treated: seeing their long delay Lieut. Ford suspected that they had been taken prisoners, and on the Twentieth he ordered Sergeant Gibson to take four men after night had set in to Fitches Rancho and see if he could learn any thing of their whereabouts. He accordingly proceeded to the Rancho where he found the powder that Cowie & Fowler had been sent for but could learn nothing concerning them taking the powder he set out on his return. Just at day light as he was passing Santa Rosa he was attacked by three or four Mexicans: he immediately fired his pistole and wounded one and took another prisoner which he brought with him to Sonoma from him he learned that Cowie & Fowler had been taken prisoners and butchered in a most horrible maner (sic).¹¹

William B. Ide wrote of these men that they "...died like martyrs! They were tied to trees and inhumanely cut in pieces, in a manner to horrible to relate. This was the first blood shed in the Conquest of California - an exemplary measure of the consequence awaiting all who might be weak enough to think of retaining life by the surrender of their arms, in a conflict with such an enemy. But this vile act of his gave strength to our nerve and sharpness to our flint."¹² On the 23rd of June, Lieut. Ford led an expedition to free William Todd, who was taken prisoner on or about the twentieth and punish the perpetrators of Cowie and Fowler's murder.*

In the afternoon of the 19th the size of the party at Sonoma

was increased by a group from the Napa Valley and Cash Creek area. Their arrival brought to the forefront Ide's concern for the safety of the families of the Sonoma men who had joined the "Bears" and were at the fort. It was known that General Jose Castro, having been informed through various sources of the capture of Sonoma by the "Bears," had issued a proclamation of his own on the 17th of June, which called for, in Ide's words, "...all good Californians to unite, and with one bold effort, 'fall on and kill the Bears at Sonoma, and then return and kill the whelps afterwards.'"¹³ In fact, Castro's proclamation read:

The citizen Jose Castro, Lieutenant-Colonel of Cavalry in the Mexican Army, and acting General Commandant of the Department of California.

Fellow Citizens - the contemptible policy of the agents of the United States of North America in this Department has induced a number of adventurers, who, regardless of the rights of men, have designedly commenced an invasion, possessing themselves of the town of Sonoma, taking by surprise all the place, the military commander of that border, Col. Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Lieutenant-Colonel Don Victor Prudon, Captain Don Salvador Vallejo and Mr. Jacob P. Leese.

Fellow countrymen, the defense of our liberty, the true religion which our fathers possessed, and our in-

Continued page 50



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*See *The Deaths of Cowie & Fowler* in DTQ #14, p. 43-4.

William B. Ide From page 49

dependence calls upon us to sacrifice ourselves rather than lose those inestimable blessings. Banish from your hearts all petty resentments. Turn you and behold yourselves, the families, these innocent little ones, which have unfortunately fallen into the hands of our enemies, dragged from the bosoms of their fathers, who are prisoners among foreigners and are calling upon us to succor them. There is still time for us to rise en masse, as irresistible as retribution. You need not doubt but that Divine Providence will direct us in the way to glory. You should not vacillate because of the smallness of the garrison of the general headquarters, for he who will first sacrifice himself will be your friend and fellow citizen,

Jose Castro

*Headquarters, Santa Clara, June 17, 1846*¹⁴

Not quite Ide's interpretation, but close enough to worry him and the "Bears," and Ide took positive steps to assure the safety of the settlers. According to his letter to Sen. Wambough, on the morning of the 20th, he left the fort in the charge of Lieut. Ford and Capt. Sears while he took about ten men as an escort and made a reconnaissance of the neighborhood to locate and bring families of the settlers into the protection of the fort. He stated that by the twenty-first the families were safe at Sonoma. His letter continued:

*Gen. Castro's proclamation, which breathed out death and slaughter against even the infant that had a drop of American blood in its veins, greatly assisted us in getting together our forces. Even those who a few days before were unwilling to leave the care of a few calves, were not only ready to leave their stock and ranchos, but their houses and household stuff and bring their families, instead of 'taking them to the mountains,' by by-paths, and in the night time, to the protection offered by our garrison.*¹⁵

Most sources agree that after the 19th, the size of the force

holding Sonoma increased rapidly to the point that it numbered about one hundred men within a few days (By early July, Ide claimed that 272 had signed the roll.), and that many of the men brought their families with them for their protection. Sometime about the 21st Grigsby returned from the Sacramento Valley and was given the command of the 1st Rifle Company.¹⁶ Also during this period Ide attempted to create a workable financial system and provide for those who were at Sonoma at that time and for their future. He wrote Wambough:

On the 21st our force was hourly increasing. All our prisoners in the callaboose had signed the 'treaty stipulations' and been discharged and it is not yet known that any of those Spaniards who made treaty with 'the Bear-Flag-Men' ever after violated their engagements.

As our numbers were now somewhat increased, and there were men who had families dependent upon their daily labor for support, an effort was made to establish some system of monthly pay for service: but as we had no other means than the securities of the public properties, and none of these were in any manner immediately available, it was foreseen that any system of monthly pay would serve but to increase our financial difficulties; it was resolved that there should not be made any distinction between one man's service and another's, and that no one should be allowed an individual prerequisite, except rations for himself and wife, and children under the age of twelve years.

It was further resolved to recommend and pledge ourselves, that there should be given to each man who had not already that amount of land, at least one square league of choice land, as a bounty for which he was to consider himself always bound to defend his rights, in common with his fellow countrymen; or, to acknowledge himself unworthy of citizenship.

*And again: it was resolved that the Mission property should be considered public property, except so much of it as had been properly vested in the several churches; and that all persons who were known to have received any portion of these properties be required to account for the same; and that every transfer of any of this property, wherein a valuable and complete consideration had not passed to some authorized agent of the Mexican Government, shall be considered void. It was considered that these means would be quite sufficient to defray expenses.*¹⁷

This hardly sounds like the work or actions of one who was totally disengaged from what was going on around him, as some later writers, most of whom were not on the scene, contend, but rather the actions of a man who was genuinely concerned about the welfare of the people that he believed were depending upon him for protection.

Henry L. Ford, and it must be assumed Ide, were con-



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cerned about the rumors of an expedition north of the Bay by Gen. Castro to retake Sonoma. On the 20th reports indicated that a body of about seventy Californians under Captain Jose Joaquin de la Torre, crossed the Bay and were joined by other local forces as they marched to the vicinity of San Raphael. Castro, these same reports claimed, had raised his forces to two hundred and fifty men through intense recruitment, and was preparing to march north against Sonoma.¹⁸ Faced with the prospect of attempting to deal with such a force, "...before Ford left on the expedition (to punish the murderers of Cowie and Fowler and rescue Todd) news was brought to Sonoma that Castro was crossing his troops at the Straits of Carquines with the intention of attacking Sonoma. Lieut. Ford therefore dispatched a letter to Captain Merritt informing of the fact and requesting him to raise men and come to the relief of the garrison..."¹⁹

This action seems reasonable and justified, however, Ford apparently sent the message without consulting or informing Ide, and when Ide learned of the message and its subsequent results, he came to a very different conclusion. Whether Ford intended it or not, the message was passed on to Fremont, who used it as reason to go to Sonoma. He left Sinclair's rancho on the 23rd of June. In his Memoirs, he wrote that, "In answer to the urgent appeals made by the settlers for assistance, I started for Sonoma where I arrived with my party on the afternoon of the 25th."²⁰

The exact contents of Lieut. Ford's message to Merritt are unknown, but Ide believed that the letter was sent to Fremont to inform him that the "men of the garrison had no confidence in the ability of Mr. Ide to manage matters at the Fort at Sonoma; that they were in great danger of being betrayed into the hands of the Spaniards... (At the time this letter was sent we had no knowledge thereof...)"²¹ Ide agrees with Fremont on the time of his arrival in the camp. He recalls that Fremont arrived at 2 p.m. with his force of about seventy-two men, who were described by James W. Marshall (later to gain fame as the discoverer of gold) as a cosmopolitan group which contained:

...Americans, French, English, Swiss, Poles, Russians, Prussians, Chileans, Austrians, Pawnees, and native Indians, etc., all riding side by side and talking a polyglot lingual hash never exceeded in diversibility since the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel.

Some wore the relics of their home-spun garments, some relied upon the antelope and the bear for their wardrobe, some lightly habited in buckskin leggings and a coat of war-paint, and their weapons were equally various.

There was the grim old hunter with his long heavy rifle, the farmer with his double-barreled shotgun, the Indian with his bow and arrows; and others with horse-pistols, revolvers, sabres, ships' cutlasses, bowie-knives and 'pepperboxes' (Allen's revolvers).²²

When Fremont arrived in Sonoma, he, according to Ide,

almost immediately accosted him in a most beligerent manner. He wrote to Sen. Wambough:

Capt. Fremont came up to me, and without any other salutation, in a sarcastic and commanding tone (looking me steadily in the face), said, 'Who wrote that Proclamation for you?' and continuing his 'stern gaze' a moment, and perceiving that not the least notice was taken of his insolence, he indignantly said, 'H-ah! - your name was to it!' and he left me as abruptly as he came. The inference to my mind was instantaneous, and to the effect that however I might refuse to expose an accomplice in that offensive act, if there had been one, he was determined that I should not escape his wrath. But in a few minutes he reappeared, changing his whole line of attack, and I have every reason to believe that ere this he had changed his whole plan for the 'Conquest of California!' ...We were about to say, that after a few moments Capt. Fremont came in again, and accosted us in a most civil and graceful manner, this time (as it became a gentleman)- said he was happy to see and understand that the Proclamation was all it could have been; that every word was as he would have it, so far as it went, and we had done ourselves immortal honor; that in style of diction it would compare favorably with the best writers of the States; and only regretted that we had not made the insult and abuse he had received a part of our grievances - and went on to say that he would receive it as a great favor, in case Gen. Castro should write or do any act or thing that might call forth another Manifesto, that we would not forget to do him (Fremont the justice to set forth the insults he had endured at Castro's hand. To this we agreed, and we separated in mutual friendship; at least as sincere as were his unbounded professions of friendship for the success of our labors for unalloyed Independence!'²³

Early on the 26th, Fremont left Sonoma for Mission San Rafael, where it was rumored that he would find de la Torre and his troops. Ide stated that Fremont left Sonoma with about

Continued page 52

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William B. Ide From page 51

134 men, having been joined by a number from the Sonoma garrison. Ford, who went with Fremont, recalled the "party consisted of 60 of Fremont's Company of topographical engineers and 65 from the garrison at Sonoma.²⁴ In fact, it appears that so many wanted to go with Fremont, that Ide wrote, "that it was with difficulty that we could persuade 75 men to remain to guard the Fort."²⁵

A moment of glory was yet to befall William B. Ide. While Fremont was away chasing de la Torre, a letter was intercepted on the 28th of June. This letter was addressed to certain citizens of Sonoma informing them that:

...on the morning of the 30th Gen. Castro would invade Sonoma, and put to death every soul found there, without distinction, except the 'Grand Oso,' whom they intended to chain and convey to the other side of the Bay, for the amusement of their women and children. All the Spanish people came and requested of me permission to leave the town, which was positively refused. After much unavailing persuasion they ceased to importune; but a short time after a request was presented, that all the women and children, both American and Spanish, might be allowed to congregate in one house, and that the Spanish men might be allowed to take shelter in the callaboose. To this we agreed. The women and children were hived in the back apartment of Gen. Vallejo's house; and as the night came on, all were ready for the expected attack. The two 18-pounders, double charged with cannister shot, guarded the main entrance, and 7 other pieces of artillery were in using order, and so arranged as to be available at short notice at any point whither an attack might be made. The 250 loaded muskets were divided among the men, and placed as to be within convenient reach. The rifles, all fresh capped, were ready - the guards were strictly charged, the matches were always burning at night.²⁶

The defenders of Sonoma were not the only persons "fortunate" enough to capture someone carrying a letter which discussed an attack on Sonoma. Lieut. Ford relates:

In the evening as a part of the command (Fremont's) was in the hills in search of de la Torre (whom they did not find at Mission San Rafael) they took prisoner an Indian who had a letter from de la Torre to General Castro they broak (sic) the seal and read the letter it stated that he de la Torre should concentrate his forces that night and proceed to Sonoma whose garrison he should attack next morning. Capt. Gillespie & Lieut. Ford contend that it was a ruse to draw the Americans from Sonoma in order that de la Torre might but they were overruled late as it was every man as ordered to the

saddle and at twelve that night they were at Sonoma.²⁷

Ide continues his narrative of the event:

About 4 A.M., or a little earlier, our guards came in and reported having heard the tramping of horses in the distance. Every man was called to the position intended. The signal for the fight, the onset, was agreed on. The 18-pounders were first to answer the report of my rifle - each officer had his orders at what particular distance the enemy would be allowed to approach, before he might engage in the fight. And as we well knew that if the enemy were to succeed at all, it would be by a sudden charge; therefore we placed a trusty guard, who's duty it was to reserve each a loaded musket, only to be used in such an emergency. Thus prepared, in less than one minute from the first alarm, all listened for the sound of the tramping horses - we heard them coming! - then, low down under the darkened canon, we saw them coming! In a moment the truth flashed across my mind: the Spaniards were deceiving us! In a moment orders were given to the captains of the 18-pounders to reserve fire until my rifle should give the word: and, to prevent a mistake, I hastened to a position a hundred yards in front of the cannon, and a little to the right oblique, so as to gain a nearer view. 'Come back; you will lose your life!' said a dozen voices. 'Silence! roared Capt. Grigsby; 'I have seen the old man in a bull pen before today!' The blankets of the advancing host flowed in the breeze. They had advanced to within 200 yards of the place where I stood. The impatience of the men at the guns became intense, lest the enemy came too near, so as to lose the effect of the spreading of the shot. I made a motion to lay down my rifle. The matches were swinging - 'My God! they swing the matches' cried the well known voice of Kit Carson. 'Hold on, hold on!' we shouted - 'tis Fremont, tis Fremont!' in a voice heard by every man of both parties, we cried - while Capt. Fremont dashed away to his left to take cover behind an adobe house; and in a moment after he made one of his most gallant charges on our Fort: it was a noble exploit; he came in a full gallop, right in the face and teeth of our two long 18's.²⁸

It is worthy of note that while Ide and Ford both recall this incident at Sonoma, Fremont's *Memoirs* are silent on the subject. It would appear that the Californians sent a spate of letters to lure the Americans into a position which allowed de la Torre to slip back across the bay and out of the reach of either Fremont or the Bears of Sonoma. When Fremont saw no evidence of an attack, he turned toward San Rafael and Sausalito to hunt for de la Torre. Even though he continued his search until the 4th of July, when he returned to Sonoma, he was never able to come to grips with the wily Californian.

On the 4th of July, 1846, Fremont returned to Sonoma. Ide says that, "The 4th came like other days"²⁹ and makes no mention of any significant occurrence. Fremont stated that "the day was celebrated by salutes and a ball in the evening."³⁰ Other sources recall that the 4th was celebrated "in old independent style" with the burning of much gun powder, the reading of the Declaration of Independence (provided either by William Todd or William Baldrige) by Lieut. Selim E. Woodworth; U.S. Navy, who had recently arrived from Oregon, and a Fandango in the evening, which drew the Spanish members of the group into the celebration.³¹

The next day, the 5th of July was to mark the end of William B. Ide's tenure as commander of the Bears. Ide wrote to Sen. Wambough:

*Early on the 5th of July, Capt Fremont requested the 'bear men' as the 'Independents' were designated, to assemble 'without arms,' within a large room at Don Salvadore's house, adjoining which was a smaller room capable of convening the Captain's Company - who assembled there under arms, to the number of 72 of his men and 8 or 10 gentlemen officers from the U.S. ships then in the Bay. The number off the Independents was about 280 men, without arms - a citizens' assembly, convened to deliberate on some proposition expected to be made by Capt. Fremont.*³²

Fremont would later write in his *Memoirs* that on the 5th of July:

It had now become necessary to concentrate on the elements of the movement, in order to give it the utmost efficiency of which it was capable. As was reasonably to be expected under the circumstances; the people desired me to take charge of it. Its existence was due to my presence in the valley, and at any time upon my withdrawal it would have collapsed with absolute ruin to the settlers.

*Accordingly the settlers having met together, I addressed them briefly, accepting the position.*³³

Ide felt he had been unjustly handled by Fremont and his "unwarranted interference" in the movement. In light of Fremont's heretofore refusal to become involved in the events, Ide had justification in believing Fremont was now grandstanding and taking over that which the Bears had won to boost his own image. Ide characterized the meeting of the 5th as:

...events and circumstances which changed the character of our enterprise, and presented California to the United States as a trophy of that species of conquest that wallows in the blood of murder, or of that ignoble traffic that makes the price of liberty the price of blood, instead of presenting the same fair land in terms of honorable compact and agreement, such as all the world

*can participate in without loss or dishonor, by the free, frank expression of voluntary consent and good-will of the parties.*³⁴

The report of the majority was first read, and their views as far as expressed in the sitting of the committee, were fairly represented.

It was proposed by the first article of the majority report to annul and wipe out all that had been done up to the 5th of July. The reasons urged in defense of this article were: 1st, the 5th of July immediately follows the 4th of July, the anniversary of American independence; and, 2ndly, as Capt. Fremont was to be our advisory leader, it would enable him to 'begin with the beginning,' and that his name and influence would add more advantage to the cause by being thus associated; and 3rdly, it was proper that, in changing the 'administration,' there should be a new organization throughout: or, more definitely, that we who are out of office may have a chance to get in.

*After followed the report of the minority, which - [Thus abruptly ends the chapter.]*³⁵

Ide was selected as one of three men to draft a appropriate pledge declaring that the men under Fremont's command would not violate women and would obey the orders of their officers. John Bidwell and Pierson B. Reading were the other

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William B. Ide From page 53

members of the committee. After some time, it became apparent that the three could not agree on a single pledge, so each made a separate report, and Lieut. Gillespie selected Bidwell's version, which read, "To be signed by all willing to prosecute the war already begun, to wit: the undersigned agree to organize and to remain in service as long as necessary for the purpose of gaining and maintaining the Independence of California."³⁶

Hubert Howe Bancroft states that Ide's version of the pledge no longer existed. However, R.A. Thompson, who rather caustically remarked that it was, "presented to me by the late General M.G. Vallejo, and is one of the few of his documents that Mr. Bancroft did not get." The Ide version read:

The citizens of the California Republic desire, in accordance with a pledge publicly entered into by themselves on the 5th day of July, D.D., 1846, at the earnest solicitations of the officers of the United States present, annex themselves to the United States of North America upon the following conditions, Viz: The California republic shall be received as one of the states of the North American union, possessing all the rights and amenities of the other states of the United States, and after having rewarded the patriots of the revolution, California to retain the right of disposing of all her lands for the benefit of her education, and to encourage rapid settlements by industrious citizens.

The United States to receive all the public arms and munitions of war and pay the expenses of the revolution.

*William B. Ide,
Commander*

Sonoma, July 5, 1846.

*P.S. The Friends of the United States Government only will be allowed full privileges of voting in the formation of the government.*³⁷

Four companies of the "California Battalion" were formed and officers were selected. One company consisted of mostly Fremont's men, and was probably under the command of Ri-

chard Owens. The other three were commanded by captains Henry L. Ford, John Grigsby, and Granville Swift. Ide was not included in the leadership of the Battalion, not unreasonably, as he himself admitted that he had had little military background.

Out of office and out of command, Ide disappeared into the ranks of the California Battalion. William Baldrige states that, "When we started the campaign Ide attached himself to Swift's Company (Company C) to which I belonged. As I always treated him in a courteous manner, he became greatly attached to me and gave me his confidence to a considerable extent."³⁸ This note by Baldrige is the only thing written about William B. Ide from July, 1846, until he is mustered out of the California Battalion in southern California. Simeon Ide states that when, in 1849, he inquired of William as to his activities during the campaign:

*He said that during their entire tramp of several months, down the westwardly coast of Lower California, he occupied the post, and was subjected to all the hardships of a common soldier - at times being on foot for miles, while nearly all his comrades were mounted, and while an officer rode a horse of his, which accompanied him from Illinois. His reasons for submitting to this indignity was, that he consented to the sacrifice of personal interest and comfort, in consenting to go with his men, to assist his commander in driving the enemy out of the country, by the best way and means he could; and if his superiors thought he would be most useful to them as a private, it was his duty to serve in that capacity: although he did expect when he enlisted, to occupy a different position in the service. This is the sum and substance of my brother's reply to my inquiry.*³⁹

Ide found himself a private citizen some four to five hundred miles away from home without money and without decent clothing. He approached the Captain of a ship bound for San Francisco and offered to work for his passage. The Captain agreed and sent him aboard to see the Steward. However, before the ship got underway, Commodore Stockton came aboard to pay his respects to its Captain. Simeon relates the following. Stockton, while walking on deck with the Captain saw Ide and said:

Captain, do you know who that old man there (pointing to Mr. Ide), sawing wood for you, is? No; I didn't ask his name, replied the Captain. Well, that is Governor Ide, of the Bear Flag Party. Can that be so? Do you know him? asked the Captain. Yes, I know him, was the reply. Whereupon the Captain called his Steward and said to him: 'Here, Steward, go tell that man sawing wood, yonder, that the Captain wants to see him in his office.'

The above incident and colloquy came to my knowledge through a different channel, as I have before remarked. It was told to a friend of mine by the said

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*Captain, to whom the Commodore introduced Mr. Ide: 'and on his said introduction, he (Mr. Ide) was made welcome, not only to his passage, but to as good fare and accomodations as the ship afforded.'*⁴⁰

So, after an absence of nearly six months, late in November of 1846, after stopping at Sutter's and collecting his son, William, William B. Ide, Commander of Sonoma, Governor (According to Stockton), President (according to Mariano Vallejo⁴¹), returned to his family and rancho in the northern Sacramento Valley, riding a horse which his son William had earned by working for Sutter.⁴²

Footnotes:

1. John Charles Fremont, *Memoirs Of My Life*, Belford, Clark & Company, Chicago, 1887, p. 522-4.
2. Simeon Ide, *The Conquest of California: A Biography of William B. Ide*, Biobooks, Oakland, California, 1944, p. 103.
3. Fremont, p. 522-4.
4. Ide, p. 112.
5. Fred Blackburn Rogers, *Montgomery and the Portsmouth*, John Howell Books, San Francisco, 1958, p. 40.
6. Ide, p. 110-111.
7. Ide, p. 113.
8. Rogers, p. 40.
9. Ide, p. 114.
10. R.A. Thompson, *Conquest of California*, Historical Address Delivered in Sonoma on June 14, 1896, Sonoma Democrat Publishing Company, Santa Rosa, 1896, p. 19.
11. Henry L. Ford, *Henry L. Ford on the Bear Flag Revolt*, Manuscript in Bancroft Library (CE75A), 1851, p. 7-8.
12. Ide, p. 123-4.
13. Ide, p. 122.
14. *History of Sonoma County*, Pacific Press, Oakland, 1879 (Reprinted by Charmaine Burdell Veronda, Petaluma, 1973), p. 110.
15. Ide, p. 122-3.
16. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. V, 1846-1848, The History Company Publishers, San Francisco, 1886, p. 164.
17. Ide, p. 124-5.
18. *History of Sonoma County*, p. 111.
19. Ford, p. 10-11.
19. Ford, p. 10-11.
20. Fremont, p. 525.
21. Ide, p. 133.
22. James L. Brown, *Dissension in Arcady*, Academy Press, Campbell, California, 1978, p. 95 and *History of Sonoma County*, p. 111.
23. Ide, p. 130-131.
24. Ford, p. 11.
25. Ide, p. 132.
26. Ide, p. 137-138.
27. Ford, p. 11.
28. Ide, p. 138-139.
29. Ide, p. 142.
30. Fremont, p. 526.
31. Fred Blackburn Rogers, *Bear Flag Lieutenant: The Life Story of Henry L. Ford (1822-1860)*, (Hereinafter referred to as Rogers, Ford) California Historical Society, San Francisco, 1951, p. 19; also

Fred Blackburn Rogers, *William Brown Ide: Bear Flagger*, John Howell Books, San Francisco, 1962, (hereinafter referred to as Rogers, *Flagger*), p. 55, Brown, p. 99; and Bancroft, p. 178.

32. Ide, p. 146.
33. Fremont, p. 526.
34. Bancroft, p. 180.
35. Ide, p. 151.
36. Rogers, *Flagger*, p. 55.
37. Thompson, p. 24.
38. William Baldridge, *The Days of 1846: Recollections of William Baldridge*, written from the Author's dictations by Miss Louisa Thompson for the Bancroft Library, 1877, MS C-D 36, Berkeley, p. 73.
39. Ide, p. 53.
40. Ide, p. 55.
41. *Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California*, The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1891, p. 40. The usage was in a speech made by General M.G. Vallejo on the occasion of Centennial exercises held at Santa Rosa on July 4, 1876.
42. Ide, p. 61.

About the Author:

Ben Hughes is a resident of Red Bluff and is associated with the William B. Ide State Historic Park where he portrays a pioneer woodworker in a period workshop that he and other volunteers and staff planned and built. One of his latest projects was to craft two beautiful period gambling boxes for use at the park during their Living History events. The last chapter of William B. Ide will appear in the winter issue #20.

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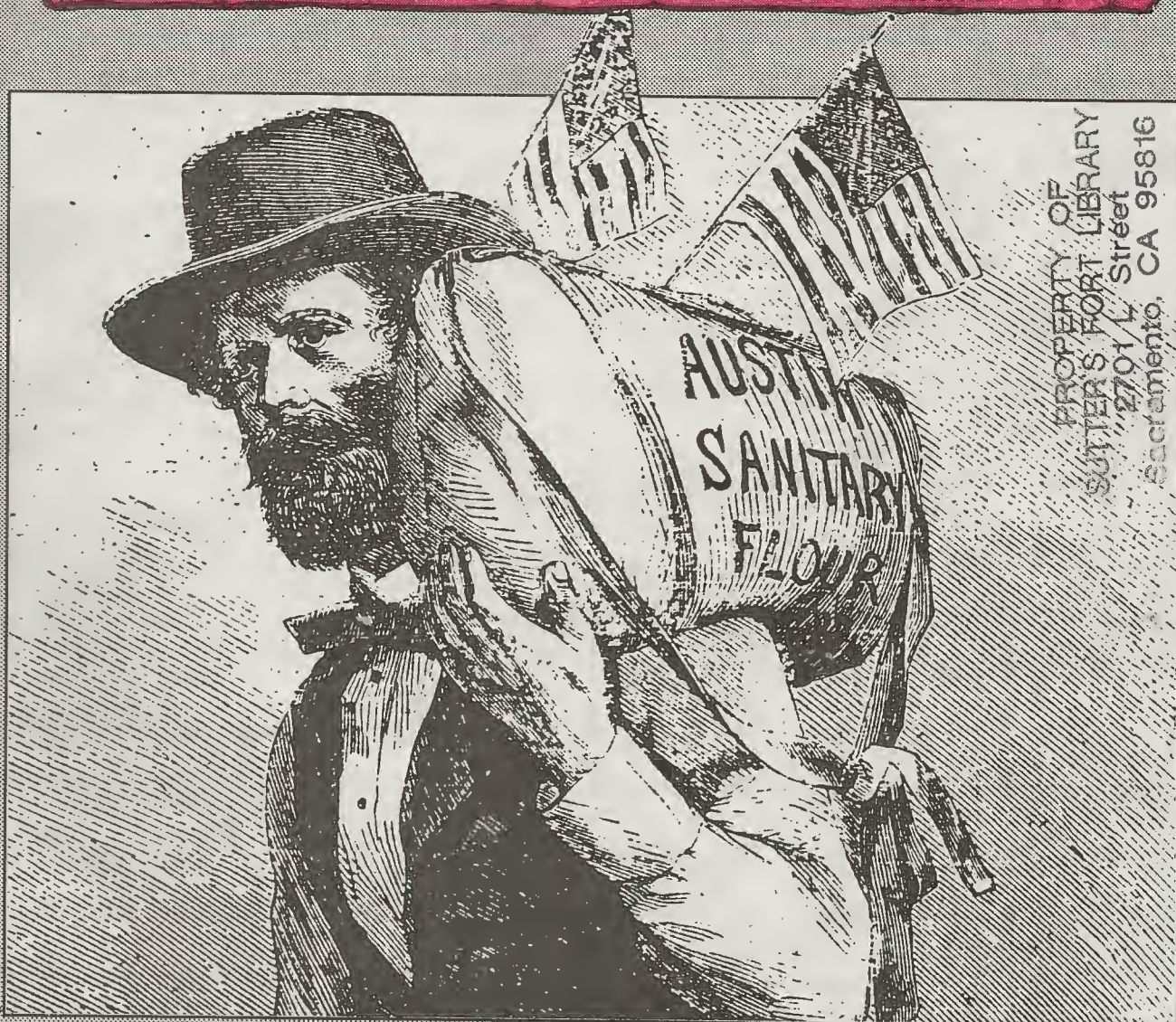
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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin M. Hughes

We are pleased to present chapter 5 of Ben Hughes' story "William Brown Ide." Chapters 1-4 can be found in issues #16-19 of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly.

a new civil and military district, and held an election for magistrate and Indian Agent. Since I left off riding, I am unable to work.¹

Chapter 5

William B. Ide returned to his family and home in the northern Sacramento Valley late in November of 1846, with his son William Haskell. After taking part in so many adventures since his arrival in California, one might think that he would be content to settle down and tend to his rancho. He did, after all, have an agreement to take care of the Belden land grant for three years to earn title to the northern half of the rancho. However, his foray into public service seemed to reawaken that questing fever that had brought him and his family to California, and he had the urge to get further involved.

As noted, Ide returned home in November. This is somewhat curious, because most of the volunteer members of the California Battalion were not mustered out until April of 1847 and at the time were still in southern California. A letter dated December 7, 1846, from Vernon, Sacramento Valley, to one of his brothers in the states, provides some clues as to his early return to northern California and of his activities once there. He told his brother:

Since my return from the South they (the Spanish) had risen up and taken all the lower country. Comodore (sic) Stockton has gon to see to it. I gathered up a few 'bears' and sent him just to frighten or catch them. (He stated that the 'Spaniards' were more afraid of the Bears than they were of either the marines or the sailors.) I told the Commodore that I would go myself, but he said I was an old man and had done enough; besides he wanted I should go up the Sacramento Valley, and see to matters there, and come back to Yerba Buena, against his return, when he would find something else for me to do, not exactly of a military character, etc.

I found there had been some disturbances among the Indians up the Sacramento; some few had been shot, one or two at my house. I, by request of the people, organized

There are several items of interest contained in this passage. The reference to sending "a few 'bears'" along with Stockton seems to refer to his help in recruiting a company which was formed for field service in late October or early November, 1846, under the command of John Grigsby. Edwin Bryant, a Kentucky newspaperman who came to California in 1846 for reasons of health, and who also raised men and served as captain of Company H of the California Battalion, said, "I took passage for Sonoma in a cutter belonging to the sloop-of-war *Portsmouth*... Among the passengers in the boat was Mr. Ide, who acted so conspicuously a part in what is called the 'Bear Revolution' and Messers. Nash and Grigsby, who were likewise prominent in the movement."² Shortly after Ide and Grigsby arrived back at Sonoma, a company was raised which joined the California Battalion at Monterey in mid-November. In view of his statement that he "sent a few bears along to help," it seems probable that Ide played a part in recruiting the men for this company before he returned home via Sutter's late in November.

The reference to being unable to work since he left off riding and the comments by Stockton about Ide's being an "old man" and "having done enough," may provide a reason for Ide's leaving the service before most of the other volunteers. Earlier references by Sarah Elizabeth to her father's fragile health, coupled with Ide's own comments to his brother about his service as a common infantryman, and his age may point to a health reason for his returning to the north.

The promise made by Commodore Stockton that a post would be found for Ide came to pass. William B. Ide was appointed to the position of Alcalde by Col. Richard B. Mason shortly after Mason succeeded Gen. Stephen W. Kearney as military governor of California on May 17, 1847. Mason believed that the American occupation had seriously interfered with the administration of Mexican officials. At the time of his appointment as governor

there were no viable laws in California except the existing Mexican laws and he recommended that they be observed. He appointed men such as James L. Ord and William B. Ide to the post of alcalde. Since they were not Mexican citizens they were not Mexican officials, but they did help to fill the authority gap during the transition from Mexican to American rule.³ By the end of 1848 he had placed conscientious and capable Americans in most of the alcalde positions. Only a few were still held by native Californios.

Mason explained his position in a letter addressed to L.W. Boggs, whom he had appointed to the post of alcalde of Sonoma:

In the present condition of affairs in California, the alcaldes are not 'authorities of California,' nor are they Mexican authorities. They are civil magistrates of California, and are therefore the 'authorities of California' within their respective jurisdictions, subject to removal from office by the authority of the Governor, and from the circumstances which the country is at present placed, and that must necessarily be so.⁴

There are few records concerning Ide's service as an alcalde, however, in *The Californian*, dated July 3rd, 1847, the following notice appeared:

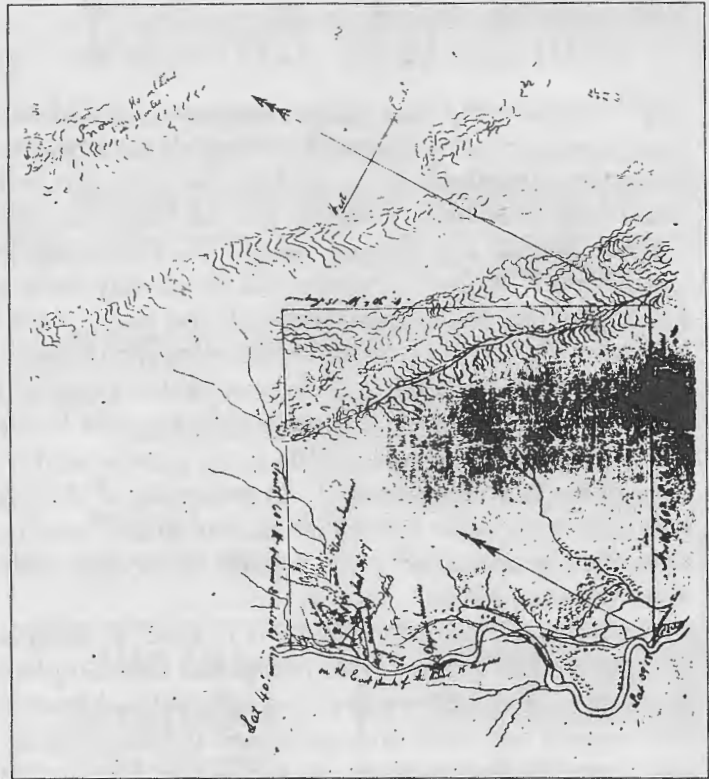
MARRIED

*On the 17th ult. at Cash Creek by W.B. Ide, Esq.
Mr. John S. Williams of Sacramento Valley, to
Miss Mariah L. Gordon late of Independence, Mo.⁵*

The principles in these June proceedings were the daughter of William Gordon, and the man Thomas O. Larkin had sent to manage the grant of ten square leagues that he had acquired for his children. Williams, who lived on the Larkin grant for nearly two years, built the first house, an adobe, in what is now Colusa County. His young bride was the first white woman to take up residence in the county at a time when white women in northern California were few and far between.⁶

He sat as a referee in a civil case in Sonoma in June. The case involved a charge of slander involving George B. Yount and Joseph B. Chiles. Ide, M.B. Carson and John Wolfskill made up the panel to hear the case. In the end, the jury disagreed, and on June 23, each party was directed to pay half the costs.⁷

At some time in his life, William B. Ide acquired the requisite skills to hang out his shingle as a land surveyor. There is no record as to when he acquired these skills. However, according to testimony given by his son James



IDE'S DRAWING OF LASSEN'S RANCHO BOSQUEJO

in the land hearing involving Lassen's "Bosquejo" holdings in 1852, "one of my father's occupations is that of a surveyor."⁸

Ide had been hired by Lassen to survey the Lassen rancho in the spring of 1846. His survey, unfortunately, was not accepted during the 1852 hearings to establish the validity of Lassen's claim, because Lassen had apparently given him erroneous information regarding the latitude (the latitude figures had been given to Lassen by Captain John C. Fremont), and shape of the land grant. Ide's map shows that he ran the boundaries of a grant five leagues square rather than one of five square leagues. The only instruments that he used were a "plain azimuth compass and chains." The map that he drew, even though it is inaccurate concerning the boundaries of Lassen's holdings, is still important as it shows the locations of several Indian rancherias, a sweat house, canals, a watered field, a sawmill, and the Whitfield house, in addition to the Lassen holdings, all in the vicinity of Deer Creek.⁹

In March of 1847 Ide began a survey of Larkin's rancho which was located between the Jacinto and the Colusa ranchos. This was a ten square league rancho known as the "Rancho de Los Ninos de Larkin" or the Rancho of Larkin's Children. For reasons not entirely clear, Ide did not complete the survey until October of

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William B. Ide From page 57

1847.¹⁰ The lengthy time taken to survey the Children's Rancho was probably due to all of the other activities that he became involved with. In May he took part in a committee consisting of himself, John H. Nash and John Grigsby to draft a lengthy report on "the Revolution in California." Robert Semple had originally been a member of this committee, but he left and was replaced by Nash. This report was signed at Sonoma on May 13, 1847, and was subsequently published in the *Springfield Illinois Journal* and in the *Baltimore Niles Register*. While interesting, the report adds little to the general knowledge of the Bear Flag Revolt.¹¹ In the spring of 1847 he was also engaged to survey the Jacinto grant;¹² and he was officially appointed to the position of surveyor early in the summer of 1847.

In May of 1847, L.W. Boggs, H.L. Ford, R. Semple and thirty-four other people petitioned Gen. Stephen Kearney to appoint Ide to a surveyor's post, as he was a "competent surveyor and possessed the requisite instruments."¹³ Their petition was successful. The July 3rd edition of *The Californian* carried the following notice:

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that I Richard B. Mason, Colonel 1st Regiment Dragoons, United States Army, and Governor of California, by virtue of authority in me vested, do hereby appoint William B. Ide, Land Surveyor, for and in, the Northern department of Upper California.

Done at Monterey, Upper California this 7th day of June A.D. 1847 and the 71st of the Independence of the United States.

(Signed) R.B. Mason

7-6m Col. 1st Drag's, and Gov. of California.¹⁴

Ide subsequently placed two advertisements in the July 31st issue of *The Californian*. They read:

The undersigned will attend to such surveys as may be entrusted to his care; for \$4 per mile for horizontal line; establishing corners \$1; for recording, copies of field notes, executing maps, & etc., the accustomed prices. Twenty-five per cent discount for cash down. Letters addressed to W.B. Ide, Sonoma, U.C. will meet attention. William B. Ide, Land Surveyor, in and for the Northern Department, U.S.

Sonoma, July 1847

10tf

compas(sic), will find good employment by applying to W.B. Ide.

Sonoma, July 1847.

10tf¹⁵

Ide's first survey as an official land surveyor was the survey of the Job E. Dye's "El Primer Canon" grant which was the northernmost grant on the east side of the Sacramento River. His original field notes survive, as does his testimony in the land claims court concerning the validity of Mr. Dye's title to the land.¹⁶

Ide wrote a letter to one of his brothers from Sonoma in June of 1847, the address given in the advertisements, as of July, 1847, was Sonoma, and there is a reference to his residing for a while in 1847 "below Princeton on the east side of the river."¹⁷ With all of these other residences, it would appear that he spent very little time at his home in northern California.

The June 25th letter to his brother does, however, shed some light on his activities and his thoughts. Ide wrote:

I have a hundred Indians to employ and to clothe; and one-half of them are now unemployed. Their labor is to cultivate the soil, to ditch, fence, build and improve the same lands over which their fathers have spent their lives in idleness and nakedness for thousands of years....

These Indians are required by a law of California to clothe themselves, and their services belong to the man who furnishes them with the means for clothing, till all arrears are paid. We generally employ the boys, and when they prove faithful we clothe their fathers, who only work in the wheat harvest. The word of the landholder is the Indian's law; but the owner is not to do him any injustice. He is the Indian's governor, and may punish him according to certain rules: but he cannot sell him, or take away his children without his consent. I have now two farms, which I have purchased and paid for. The first is situated at the head of steamboat navigation on the Sacramento River, which I selected as the most favored site for a 'city of the Sacramento valley,' on account of its beauty, and the sandy nature of its soil, which renders it dry and free from mud in the winter, and green and fertile in the summer - on account, also (and more especially), of that vast amount of pine timber in the valleys above, on the River, which can be most conveniently sawed there, and of the fertile Upper Valley, which must be supplied from some point near this by land-carriage. But it is not yet time to talk of building cities, where families are from five to ten miles apart.¹⁸

WANTED. A young man acquainted with the use of the

This indicates that even though he was not at all

times "on site" he was still involved with the management of the affairs at home. His comments regarding the site of his rancho, and the future "city of the Sacramento valley" and the relationship of the site to the "Upper Valley" are prophetic and show his sense of vision, as the city of Red Bluff, built nearly on the site he selected, was, for a time, to become a major shipping point in the northern valley of the Sacramento.

Simeon wrote of him, "Mr. Ide was a man of temperate, industrious and frugal habits, and of an enterprising business propensity."¹⁹ In the summer and fall of 1847 Ide was certainly not resting on his laurels at his ranch in California. He was looking to the future of what he believed was going to be a rich and prosperous region, and he was taking measures to position himself to be a part of that future.

He mentioned a second farm. In all probability this was property which was situated some twenty miles south of Monroeville, about which he was later to state that he had no valid title to in a letter to another of his brothers, John S.M. Ide, of Claremont, N.H.²⁰ The existence of additional holdings is indicative of Ide's activities. Ide was never idle. He was constantly striving to improve his position and condition. He would acquire, or attempt to acquire, several parcels of land and he was not one to let an opportunity slip away.

In January, 1848, the news of the discovery of gold at Coloma swept through California and beyond. Ide, not immune to the prospect of riches, "went to see the elephant," his brother, Simeon, wrote, "During the early stage of the 'gold excitement,' he and his oldest son and a son-in-law spent a few months 'in the mines,' and they retired 'for good' from that branch of industry - satisfied with an amount of about \$25,000, as a result of their labors therein."²¹ Ide wrote to one of his brothers:

You will have been informed of the great change in the affairs of California, occasioned by the discovery of Gold, in such abundance - how abundant you can calculate as well as myself, when I inform you that it is found from the waters of Rouge's River, to the headwaters of San Joakin (sic) River, including the whole length and breadth of the Sacramento River. The gold of the Upper Sacramento is 23 1/2 carats fine - second only to the gold of Africa. The gold on the San Joakin and American Fork is said not to be of so fine a quality, but more abundant - but how abundant no one can yet tell you. The most I can do is to give an account of the success which has attended my own efforts for one hundred days, on the waters of the Upper Sacramento, being assisted by my three sons, each

Continued Page 60

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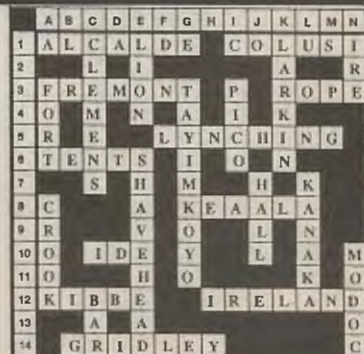
Funeral Consultant

Michael P. Gaukel

Funeral Director

Solution to Trivia/Doodler

1. No one.
2. Huge watery potato.
3. At least 134.
4. Reuel Gridley
5. None.
6. April 1965
7. John C. Fremont
8. May 29, 1864
9. Mark Twain
10. William B. Ide
11. Tehama, Glenn, Colusa
12. \$275,000



William B. Ide From page 59

*about thirty three days. The average product was a trifle over eight ounces for each day's work - the sum total 16,000 ounces.*²²

The figure for the total number of ounces seems high. If Ide and his sons - William Haskell, James M. and Wm. C Cooper²³ - returned from the mines with \$25,000, they would have had to have mined approximately 1,600 ounces at the rate of \$16 per ounce, which would be in the range that Thomas O. Larkin quoted in a letter to Secretary of State, James Buchanan, on June 1, 1848. Larkin stated, "I have seen several pounds of this gold, and consider it very pure, worth, in New York, seventeen to eighteen dollars per ounce; fourteen to sixteen dollars, in merchandise, is paid for it here."²⁴

There is no exact record of where Ide and his sons did their mining. However, there are two clues to the general location. The first is his use of the term "Upper Sacramento" river when he wrote to his brother. This would certainly not lead one to the Mother Lode region of the Sierra Nevada. The second is found in a letter written at Lassen's rancho on September 13, 1849, by John B. Weber and published in the *Illinois Journal* on the 24th of January, 1850. A party had stopped at Ide's rancho to ask for information concerning Reading's Shasta diggings and the methods of mining. Weber wrote:

*Mr. I. has under his control some forty or fifty of the natives. Messers. Cooper and Ide have fourteen Indians at work in the mines, and they are, I understand doing well. Both of these gentlemen design to return to the states with their families in a year or two. Their ladies told us that there were but two white women within twenty miles of them, and that they were twenty miles off."*²⁵

From these remarks it may be safe to assume that Ide's mining adventures were north of his rancho in the Shasta mining region rather than in the gold bearing regions of the Sierra Nevada.

By September of 1849, William B. Ide, at the age of fifty-three, was a successful man. He had status and sizeable land holdings. On the 12th of April, 1849, he had purchased outright the 8,856 acre northern half of Belden's "Las Bulinas Rancho" for \$3000 and on May 24, 1849, he purchased one-third of the southern half of Belden's grant.²⁶ A letter written by B.R. Biddle on September 1, 1849, which was published in the *Illinois Journal* on December 26, 1849 said of Ide, "He is well known as a successful miner and is said to be worth \$100,000."²⁷ However, he was apparently not happy with his situation. Weber's comment about Ide's desire to return to the States and the comments that Ide, himself, made in the letter to his brother about gold mining, point to a growing dissatisfaction. He wrote:

*Thousands and hundreds of thousands of foreigners are crowding to our shores, rendered desperate by the accounts that have gone abroad. Every vessel that touches our shores is deserted of its crew - all wild with distraction, bend their course to the Gold Diggins. All law and civil process is suspended - thefts, robbery, manslaughter and murder are perpetuated without inquest. Our cattle and hogs are killed to feed a foreign banditti and ourselves are threatened with assassination if we resist. While the government that is to protect us is still 4000 miles distant from us, deliberating, as I suppose, on the question of Negro Slavery, in connection with the interests of California! By spreading the U.S. flag over us, they have deprived us of the privilege of governing ourselves, and do they not know that California, more than any other country on earth, requires a persevering and efficient government? - that every honest individual possessing the rights of citizenship in California should forthwith be authorized and required to co-operate with the authorities of the United States in expelling all persons, not citizens of the United States, who will not submit to her laws, and in maintaining good order and a proper regard to the individual and personal interests of those who may remain among us? ... Let it not be understood that I distrust the integrity and good faith of our government. 'Great bodies move slow.' All will soon be right, I hope.... I am pleased with the climate, soil, and natural advantages of California, and do not intend to abandon my present home, if the government affords us that protection from vice and crime, which alone can make our stay tolerable.*²⁸

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Sometime during the fall of 1849, William B. Ide left California for New England. Little is known of his trip. The exact date of his leaving, the method of travel, and the date of his return to California are all unrecorded. Neither Sarah Elizabeth nor Simeon recorded any details, and Ide himself left no existing notes. Simeon left only tantalizing hints of Ide's visit, as, "In 1849, during Mr. Ide's residence several months with one of his brothers, he gave said brother a verbal account of his six or seven months services in the Bear Flag enterprise..."²⁹ He does not even identify the brother, though, due to the frequent practice of referring to oneself in the third person, it may well have been himself. Even Fred B. Rodgers, an earlier biographer of Ide, could only speculate about the journey.

We know, however, that Ide was in California in the early part of September, 1849, as indicated by comments in the Weber letter. That he had arrived in the East by sometime in December is indicated by an advertisement published in the December 31st, 1849, issue of the *Illinois Journal*:

*Ho! For California. Wanted - Thirty young, married, permanent neighbors in California. None need apply except intelligent, truth-practicing, school supporting industrious, temperate and peace-practicing persons. Such, if they desire, will be assisted to emigrate, and will find a neighbor, by directing letters, Post Paid, to Claremont, N. Hampshire to W.B. Ide. Dec. 31, 1849.*³⁰

It is most likely that Ide made most of the trip by sea. If the advertisement were posted from Claremont, there would not have been nearly enough time for him to have left California in September, take an overland route and arrive in New Hampshire in December. There were, however, several recorded steamer departures from San Francisco to Panama in the fall of 1849. The *Oregon* left on October 1st; the *California* on November 2nd; and the *Panama* on November 15th. The most likely candidates because of the time element would be either the *Oregon* or the *California*.³¹

While in the East, Ide wrote and had printed an address to the "Citizens of California." It was dated at the City of New York, May 28, 1850, and Simeon states that "he (Ide) had it printed in circular form and distributed among his acquaintances and friends in California, then engaged in inaugurating a State Constitution and Government." In the document, according to Simeon, "Mr. Ide makes an earnest appeal to their patriotism and self-respect."³² He includes some excerpts from the "Address," but does not, because of length, include all of it,

which is regrettable, as those excerpts seem to be the only extant portion of the document. In his "Address," Ide cautions that the California Constitutional delegates not allow California to be submerged by the party and sectional strife embroiling the states of the East.

Ide advocates a firm stand in favor of what's best for the sons and daughters of those who fought for and won California. He is highly suspicious of the actions of those who advocate selling off the lands in California, and late comers who would challenge the old Mexican land grants. His position and fears are quite clear.

Will any Californian sacrifice his interest in the American name - his exhilarating hope in the proper extension of equal liberty, which can only be based on a proper regard for the just rights of individuals, of individuals associated in communities; of individuals composing the densely inhabited district, of the sparsely peopled desert; of individuals composing a sectional state, delegate or 'Confederate' government? Individual rights! for the want of a clear and comprehensive knowledge of which, the American Union, even now, hangs trembling, like the scathed leaf to the fruitless bough, amid the frosts of winter!

Mexico received no money (sic) on account of your dependence. Let not your country now pay tribute (referring to the \$15 million that the U.S. paid Mexico) to a distant and dissimilar land, whose people neither know nor regard your interests. What interest have you in the quarrels of Mexico? Or, what interest had Mexico in the matter of disposing of your sovereignty? Are you to be bought and sold 'like sheep in the shambles?'

*Rather encourage the settlement of your own country, and reward your own patriots, who pledged their lives for the support of your common liberties; and give those Ranchos, and the 100 varas of mining lands to such as ask for them, as all your sons have the right to claim and receive, according to long and well established law and usage; - and thus encourage your sons to protect, defend, enrich, beautify and populate your own country - your children's home!"*³³

The date of this "Address" indicates that it must have been written shortly before Ide embarked to return to California. The date of his return is not known with any exactitude, but it was apparently sometime during the summer of 1850. It is also not recorded if his arrival was before or after the death of his wife, who died at their Red Bluff rancho sometime that year. One of the few comments made by Ide about the trip was a comment writ-

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William B. Ide From page 59

*about thirty three days. The average product was a trifle over eight ounces for each day's work - the sum total 16,000 ounces.*²²

The figure for the total number of ounces seems high. If Ide and his sons - William Haskell, James M. and Wm. C Cooper²³ - returned from the mines with \$25,000, they would have had to have mined approximately 1,600 ounces at the rate of \$16 per ounce, which would be in the range that Thomas O. Larkin quoted in a letter to Secretary of State, James Buchanan, on June 1, 1848. Larkin stated, "I have seen several pounds of this gold, and consider it very pure, worth, in New York, seventeen to eighteen dollars per ounce; fourteen to sixteen dollars, in merchandise, is paid for it here."²⁴

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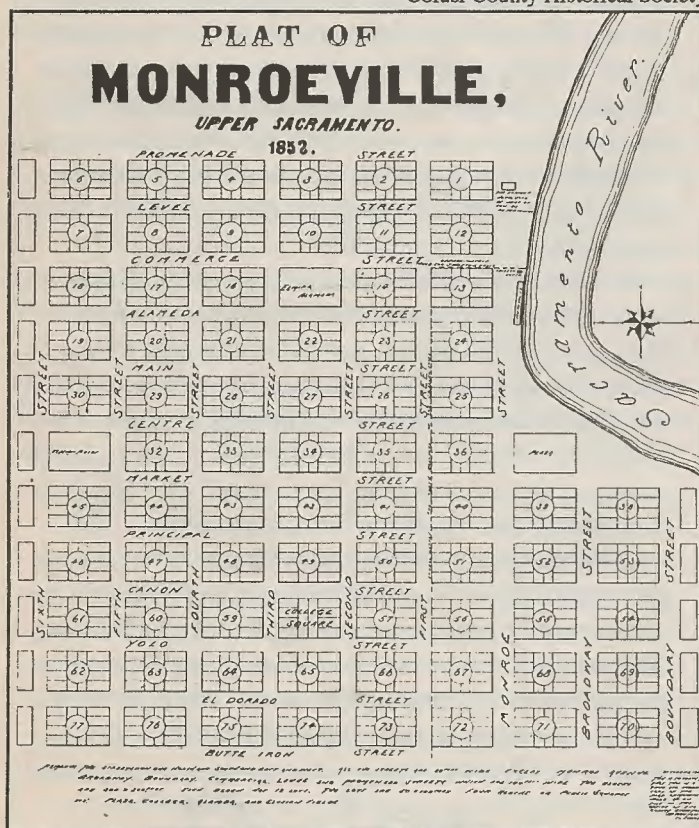
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William B. Ide From page 61

ten sometime later to the effect that, "I have Tools, some I brought by steamer on my last trip from the East."³⁴ It may be that he returned to his rancho on one of the small steamers, like the *Jack Hays* which began making occasional trips up the Sacramento River as far as Red Bluffs in May of 1850.

In 1850, Uriah P. Monroe, another who had faith in and a vision of growth, set out the plan for a city on the Sacramento River about one and one-half miles below the mouth of Stony Creek. He called the project *Monroeville*, and he built a large hotel using the lumber and timbers from the steamer *California*, which had run aground a mile above Stony Creek.³⁵

Colusi County Historical Society



Ide wrote a letter to John Bidwell of Chico Creek which was addressed from *Monroeville* on September 9, 1850.³⁶ This letter clearly places him back in California by that date. It also confirms that *Monroeville*, at least the *Monroehouse*, was up and running by that date.

The first legislature of the State of California met in 1850. During the first session an act was passed that gave a name and boundary to the county of Colusi, but attached it to Butte County for judicial purposes. From the statutes of 1850:

Section 22 - County of Colusi - beginning at a point on the summit of the Coast Range due west from Red Bluffs, and running thence due east to said Bluffs on the Sacramento river; thence down the middle of said river to the north-west corner of Sutter county; thence due west along the northern boundary of Yolo county to the summit of the Coast Range; thence in a north-westerly direction, following the summit of said range to the point of beginning. This county shall be attached, for judicial purposes, to Butte county, until a county government shall be organized for the same in the manner to be prescribed by law.³⁷

A second act of the 1850 Legislature provided that "unorganized counties of the State might be organized upon petition of the inhabitants to the District Judge of the Judicial District in which the county was situated." The people in *Monroeville*, wishing their community to be prominent, saw in this second act a way to get ahead of the people of Colusa, a town about the same size as *Monroeville* - one building and approximately one-half dozen inhabitants - who had already positioned themselves in a leading role when they got the Legislature to create and name the new county. *Monroeville* presented a petition to Judge Moses Bean, County Judge of Butte County. Even though he had no authority to act - he was not a District Judge - he proceeded to order an election to organize Colusi County. He issued the following proclamation:

PROCLAMATION FOR FIRST ELECTION

Notice is hereby given that there will be opened at *Monroe's ranch*, on Friday, the 10th day of January, S.D. 1851, for an election for the organization of Colusa (sic) county, at which there will be elected the following county officers, viz: One County Judge, Clerk, Sheriff, Assessor, Recorder, Treasurer, Surveyor, Coroner and County Attorney.

Inspector of Election - U.P. Monroe

On the morning of the election the first inspector will appoint two judges and two clerks.

It is the duty of the first Inspector to carry the returns to *Sterling's ranch* by Wednesday, the 15th of January, and with the inspectors of the other polls held within the county, to canvass the returns of all the votes, and prepare certificates of election for the candidates having the highest number of votes within the county. Moses Bean, Judge of Butte County.³⁸

Map by Gus Hoeber, Jr., Courtesy Colusi County Historical Society



ORIGINAL BOUNDARY OF COLUSI COUNTY

U.P. Monroe was elected County Clerk and President in the January 10th election. Due to irregularities the other officers elected did not qualify, so a second election was held on the 25th of February to fill the still vacant offices. The Court of Sessions was organized on the 8th of March by the election of William B. Ide and Newall Hall to the office of Associate Justices.³⁹

Footnotes:

1. William B. Ide, *National Eagle*, Claremont, New Hampshire, June 28, 1849.
2. Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw In California*, The Fine Arts Press, Santa Anna, California, 1936, p. 332.
3. Frank S. Reager, *The Alcalde, Before and After American Rule*, Wagon Wheels, Vol. III, No. 2, Colusi County Historical Society, 1953, p. 5.
4. Theodore Grivas, *Military Governments in California: 1846-1850*, The Arthur Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1963, p. 177.
5. *The Californian*, San Francisco, July 3, 1847.
6. Justice H. Rogers, *Colusa County*, Orland, California, 1891, p. 53-4, and Reager, p. 6.
7. Fred Blackburn Rogers, *William B. Ide: Bear Flagger* [hereinafter referred to as Rogers, *Ide*], John Howell Books, San Francisco, 1961, p. 64.
8. Transcript of the Proceedings on case No. 182, Peter Lassen, Claimant vs. The United States, Defendant, for the place

named "Bosquejo," U.S. Court, Northern District, California Land Grant records, [hereinafter referred to as ND, No. 182], April 14, 1852, Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley. Also in the Tehama County Library California Collection, Red Bluff, California.

9. ND, No. 182.

10. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 63.

11. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 64.

12. Rogers, p. 79.

13. Rogers, p. 64.

14. *The Californian*, San Francisco, July 3, 1847.

15. *The Californian*, San Francisco, July 31, 1847.

16. Transcript of the Proceedings on case No. 122, "El Primer Canon" or Rio de Los Berrendos," J.F. Dye, Claimant vs. The United States, Defendant, U.S. Court, Northern District, California Land Grant records [hereinafter referred to as ND, No. 122], March 23, 1852, Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley. Also in the Tehama County Library California Collection, Red Bluff, California.

17. Reager, p. 5.

18. Simeon Ide, *The Conquest of California: A Biography of William B. Ide* [hereinafter referred to as Ide, *Conquest*], Biobooks, Oakland, California, 1944, p. 166.

19. Ide, *Conquest*, p. 157.

20. Herman Milton Cheever, *William Brown Ide Family History, 1796-1949*, Special Collections, California Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

21. Ide, *Conquest*, p. 158.

22. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 65.

23. Cheever.

24. Elisabeth L. Egenhoff, ed., *The Elephant As They Saw It*, California Journal of Mines and Geology, 1971, p. 42.

25. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 67.

26. Transcript of the Proceedings on case No. 185, Wm. B. Ide, Claimant vs. The United States, Defendant, for the place named "Barranca Colorado," U.S. Court, Northern District, California Land Grant records [hereinafter referred to as ND, No. 185], April 14, 1852, Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley. Also in Tehama County Library. Also see Transcribed records of Butte and Colusa Counties, Book "A," pp. 208-211.

27. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 67.

28. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 66-67.

29. Ide, *Conquest*, p. 53.

30. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 67.

31. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 67.

32. Ide, *Conquest*, p. 160.

33. Ide, *Conquest*, pp. 163-164.

34. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 68.

35. "Era Of Speculation Towns - Monroeville," *Wagon Wheels*, September, 1972, Colusi County Historical Society, p. 20.

36. Rogers, *Ide*, p. 69.

37. Will S. Green, *The History of Colusa County, California*, Sacramento Lithograph Co., Sacramento, California, 1950, p. 41.

38. Green, p. 41.

39. Rogers, *Colusa*, pp. 60-61.

About the Author:

Ben Hughes is associated with the Ide Adobe State Historic Park in Red Bluff, California. He plans to publish a book on William B. Ide based upon this series of articles. Part 6 will appear in the spring issue #21.



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IN THIS ISSUE:

JOHN MUIR & THE BIDWELLS TRAPPERS AT THE BUTTES
WILLIAM B. IDE, PART 6 LOOKOUT LYNCHING, PART 2
INDIAN LORE COINING MONEY BUREAUCRACY WILL KILL YOU

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William Brown Ide

Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder

By Benjamin M. Hughes

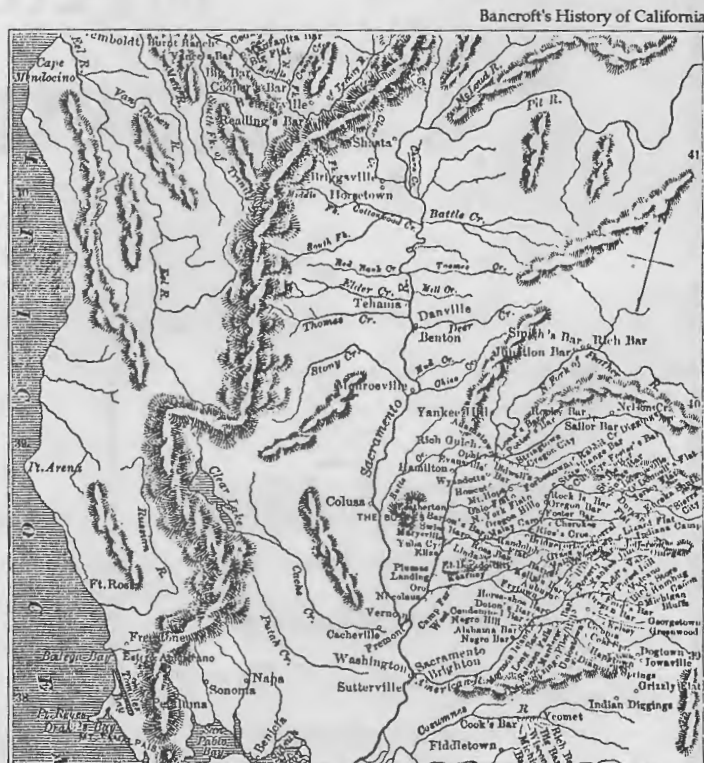
This is the last chapter of Ben Hughes' continuing saga of William B. Ide, the hardy Pioneer, dedicated Bear Flagger, and Builder of early California.

Chapter 6

On the eighth of March, 1851, William B. Ide, who had been serving as a Justice of the Peace, was elected to the post of Associate Justice in the newly formed Court of Sessions for Colusi County. This court, which no longer exists, was composed of the County Judge and two Justices of the Peace, chosen by all of the Justices of the County. Judge J.S. Holland was the County Judge, and Ide and Newell Hall were elected to the Associate positions, because they were the only justices of the peace qualified to vote at the election.¹ At the time of its creation, the Court of Sessions was charged with managing the business of the county in much the same manner as the county supervisors of today.² When he supervised the formation of the Court of Sessions, Judge Holland was quite ill, and very shortly thereafter, he left the two newly elected Associates, who constituted a lawful quorum, to proceed with the business of setting up and running Colusi County.³

In the early 1850s, California's population was one of rapid turnover and high mobility. In a letter dated November 9, 1851, Ide wrote to his brother,

...nine-tenths of our population are here today, and, tomorrow are somewhere else. Our county is about 75 miles wide in extent on the Sacramento River, and about 80 miles wide. Our population are like birds of passage, except their migrations are not exactly periodical. All the circumstances which make it difficult to obtain responsible and permanent county officers combine to make these offices necessary. At present ten individuals pay more than three-fourths of the taxes paid within the county, and comprise nearly all its permanent residents. These men as a general thing, reside on their Ranchos, to



**MONROEVILLE, COLUSI COUNTY SEAT,
WAS IN TODAY'S GLENN COUNTY,
WEST OF THE SACRAMENTO RIVER**

*attend to their private affairs, and are the only residents of the county who are able to give the requisite bonds. At the polls the non-residents (when they unite), have the elections as they please; and the usual result is, that transient, irresponsible persons are elected and bonds of the like character are filed. Last year the 'sovereign people' selected for County Judge (who is by law the acceptor or rejector of all official bonds), a dissipated lawyer who, of course accepted such bonds as come to hand...*⁴

Because of the temporary and questionable nature of the population, and the bonds and legal requirements that had to be met by the office holders, qualified people were not exactly lining up to run for public offices. And of those who did, many were not, for one reason or an-

other, qualified to hold an office even if elected to it. One result of this condition was a closely spaced series of elections to fill offices and or vacancies in the newly created county.

In 1851, the county held no less than five elections: January 10, to organize the county; February 25, to fill vacancies; May 3, for County Judge; July 11, to choose a county seat; and September 3, the general election for that year. The exact number of voters in the elections of January and February was not recorded for posterity, but the number voting in the September 3rd election, the first election results duly filed in the Clerk's office, was approximately eighty-five persons.⁵

In a letter to John S.M. Ide, a nephew, dated April 20, 1851, Ide lamented the impermanence of the population, "...as it is impossible in such a floating population as we have here, that any local officers should exist."⁶

Even though there was an official court system in existence in Colusi County as of March, 1851, in part, because of the problems with finding qualified people, there is no record of official judicial action until November 3, 1851, when the first entry was made in the county court records. The reason for this lengthy period of judicial inactivity was explained by Ide in a report to the State Treasurer, dated December 10, 1851:

Judge Holland lingered in an inconvalescent state and died on the 12th of April. An election was called on the 3rd of May, when John T. Hughes received a majority of the votes cast for County Judge. Newell Hall, Esq., removed from the township in which he was elected, and the office of Junior Associate Justice became vacant, and there was no other qualified Justice within the county except the Senior Associate. An election was called, and Justices called to supply vacancies - one Justice, viz, J.C. Huls, qualified and gave bonds, and then became in due time a member of the Court of Sessions. Judge Hughes held one term of the Court of Sessions in Colusi only, and the only business brought before that session was the appointment of a road-reviewing committee. On the second Monday of August the Associate Justices met in accordance with the old law (Judge Hughes being absent from the county), when for the first time was presented William G. Chard's Assessor's list - so indefinitely expressed, that it was utterly impossible to equalize said list, and the said Chard and his assistants were all absent from the county; moreover, at this time we received the scattered fragments of the new Acts of legislation, by which we learned that since May 1st our acts were not in accordance with the supreme law of the land.

Continued page 36



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William B. Ide From page 9

*We had no longer any evidence, by the letter of the law, that we, the Associate Justices, constituted a legal quorum to do business; that we are not lawfully, by any provision of said new law, convened, not being called by order of the Judge for special term, not yet convened in general term-time, and further, we are of the opinion that there existed on the 1st day of May, 1851, a vacancy in the office of County Judge of Colusi County. And having the Acts of the Legislature of California for our guide, we concluded that if a vacancy did exist on the said first day of May, it could only be filled by an appointment of the Governor. An opinion prevailed in the minds of said Court that if an officer be illegal, all his acts, official, are illegal also; and if so, the Court has become disorganized by lack of a legal quorum. In conformity with this opinion, the Junior Justice refused to act, and the Court dissolved without adjournment. In this state the business of the county was suspended until the first Monday in October last, when in accordance with the law, I having been elected at the general election to the office of County Judge, and being duly sworn, convened three Justices of the Peace, being all the qualified Justices resident in said county, and organized again the Court of Sessions.*⁷

At this time, Ide was apparently ready to call it quits and return to the States. His wife was gone, his children scattered and he was alone. He even called into question his own qualifications for office. Several of his letters written during 1851 and early 1852 give insights into his mental condition. In an undated fragment of a letter,

To our knowledge no photograph exists of William B. Ide. Photos of his brother and daughter (next page) may give us a clue to his appearance.



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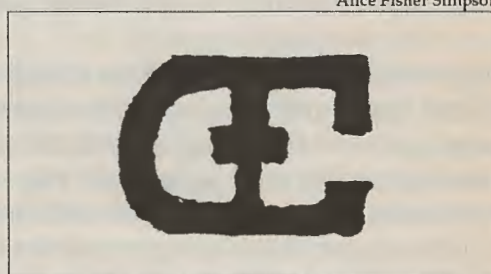
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which was written to one of his brothers after he returned to northern California from his trip to the East, he wrote:

*I do not seek any more wealth; but simply wish to exchange what I have for cash that I may leave California once for all. I sell slowly - not half as fast as my stock increases. I have collected about \$6,000 since I came home. I have tried to sell out all, at once, but few persons have the means to buy 1000 head of cattle, 150 horses, and 30,000 acres of land. My cattle are appraised at \$30, oxen \$75, each, horses at \$70, and land at 25 cents per acre - making some \$50,000.*⁸

Alice Fisher Simpson



IDE'S BRAND USED ON HIS LIVESTOCK

In the April 20th letter to his nephew, he wrote:

*But I must close: this is Court-day, and as I am one of the Associate Justices, it is somewhat necessary that I should attend. I suppose that some of the nabobs of your country will be 'horrified' to hear, that such a person as myself should be 'dubbed' with the title of 'Judge'; but strange things happen in California. It is undoubtedly very improper; but so it is, and we must put up with it the best way we can.*⁹

In another letter, he hinted at his qualifications:

*I hope to improve my mind somewhat by the study of Law. I haven't had a very high regard for lawyers, generally. Nevertheless I can study their books by way of amusement, and, perhaps, qualify myself a little better for my present employment.*¹⁰

On the 23rd of July, his opening statement in a letter about a continuing problem with the Indians was, "I am very lonely."¹¹

Many of his letters were written from Monroeville. In and of itself, when compared to the civilization of the East, where he had just visited, this must have been part of the problem. Jubal Weston, a long time resident of the community, described the primitive conditions of the Monroehouse and Monroeville, where Ide lived and held court:

The east end of the wide, lower room, performed the duty of bar room, doing double duty once a week as courtroom, presided over by Bear Flag President William B. Ide.

Here, in the barroom the road weary and dusty vaqueros, trappers, hunters, freighters, steamer and stage passengers, slaked their thirst and participated in the endless card games of the times....

The west end of the room performed a much more innocent function. Here were displayed groceries and a wide range of mercantile items, ranging from feather bolsters, hair and straw mattresses, looking glasses, wash stands and chairs, to lanterns, scales, grindstones, lead, iron squares, live chickens, quinine, playing cards, overalls, socks and boots....

From the large lower room, one door opened in the middle of the room and one on the east, leading outside.

The door frames were covered with hides stretched as far as possible to save lumber.

The big shed attached to the main building, served as the kitchen and as storage for provisions. A cellar also provided storage.

The upper half of the hotel was one large room, reached by an outside stairway on the east.

The room was furnished with homemade bedsteads along both walls and down the middle. It was lighted with square-sided glass, candle lanterns, also dips, using rancid grease for fuel, since good grease was far too precious for such use.

A person could furnish his own blankets for four-bits or blankets were furnished at one dollar.

The hotel had a reputation for furnishing good meals and plenty of it. Breakfast might consist of corn meal or whole wheat mush, with brown sugar or sorghum mo-

lasses, grizzly bear at times, and deer or antelope chops, whole wheat bread or cakes with coffee made of wheat and burnt bread.

Other meals might consist of grizzly bear, antelope, beef stew or hash, always home-made, sauerkraut, 'spuds,' beans from Chile, and whole wheat bread. Juice of dried elderberry and wild blackberry was very plentiful.

Meals cost one dollar and drinks two-bits....

Besides Monroehouse, which served as hotel, saloon, store and post office, Monroeville consisted of a blacksmith shop, a small open air jail made of bar-iron and used by Ide, and a large barn used as a livery stable.

A quarter of a mile from the hotel was a three-room box type house and barn, property of one named Sargent, a very early pioneer.

The only other houses consisted of one and two-room cabins, with dirt floor, and cowhide doors along the riverbank.

Fireplaces were made of green, 6 and 12 inch oak and sycamore logs.

One cabin, just east of the hotel, was occupied by Ide, but he held court in the store and bar room..¹²

Continued page 38

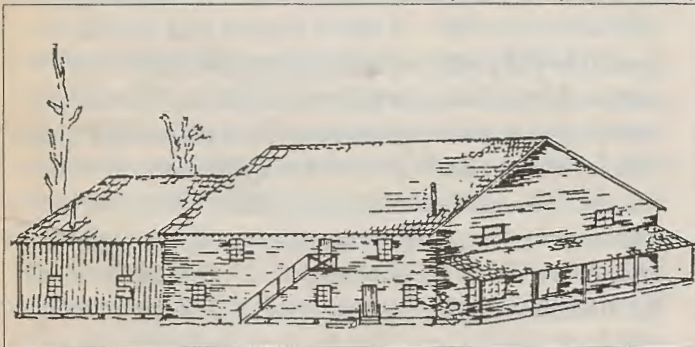
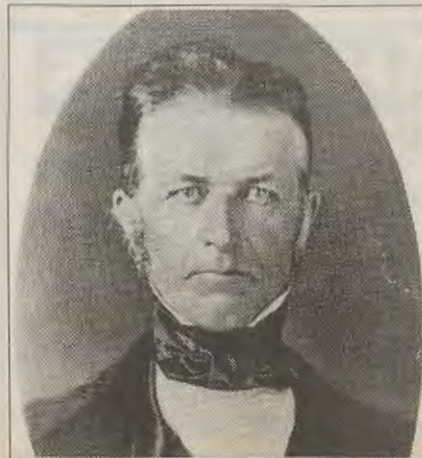
**Sarah Elizabeth
Ide, Daughter of
William B. Ide**

Courtesy Ide Adobe
State Historic Park



**Simeon Ide,
Brother of
William B. Ide**

Courtesy Ide Adobe
State Historic Park



The Monroehouse Hotel, Colusi County Courthouse, Store and Bar room, was built from lumber salvaged from the steamer *California*, shipwrecked in the Sacramento River a mile above the mouth of Stony Creek. This illustration was drawn from memory by Jubal Weston in his eighty-third year. It was torn down in 1874 or 1875.

William B. Ide From page 37

In the November 9th letter, Ide exhibited his continuing despair concerning his prospects in California as he commented to his brother about the conditions in the new state and in Monroeville. He wrote:

But now for the 'dark side of the picture.' No Churchbell calls together its solemn assemblies! In fine, nothing but rude haunts of dissipation supply the place of schools academies and colleagues. Oxtams and mules make up the locomotive power, in the main. But improvements are being made. We have already passed some of the evils attendant, more or less, upon all newly organized governments: still there is nothing very flattering in the civil and political prospects before us, and less in the moral aspect ahead. Nearly all the enterprise of the county serves to corrupt and demoralize our transient population. 'Transient!' in that one word much is lost: but as it respects morals, much is gained - as, when noting but vice is learned and promoted in a community, the oftener that community is changed the better.

Last night, while the rain was pattering against - not the window, but against - the rawhide hung up to keep the storm out of my sleeping-room. ...But I will content myself as well as I can until April, 1853, when I shall (if I live), be free again.¹³

From the foregoing descriptions and comments, it would appear that he was not particularly happy with his situation. However, his political position was about to undergo a rapid evolution. Because of the temporary and far flung nature of the population of the county, he was, within a matter of months to become virtually the entire government of Colusi County.

His letter mentioned that there were some areas of improvement. One of those areas was the transportation

situation in northern California. Steamboats began to ply the upper Sacramento Valley, bringing more goods and supplies to the settlers. Another improvement was in stage and freight access. Before the gold rush brought a huge influx of immigrants, there had not been a great deal of development west of the Sacramento River. Most of the Ranchos had been devoted to stock raising and very little land had been put into grain production. The advent of the miners brought about rapid change. They needed food for themselves and fodder for their animals and the ranchos began to produce hay and barley to supply these needs. The transport required to move relatively bulky agricultural products necessitated the construction of better roads. On the 25th of March, 1851, Ide deeded the county a right of way for a road through his Barranca Colorado rancho for the sum of \$5.00. This was, in all probability, for a part of the Tehama-Shasta stage road which appears on many early surveys.¹⁴

In the general election, which had been held on September 3rd, Ide had beaten his opponent, L.H. Sanborn, by five votes to become the County Judge of Colusi County. He received forty votes to Sanborn's thirty-five and, "...at once entered on the discharge of the duties of the office, without waiting for the term to expire."¹⁵

Upon taking office, he found the legal situation of the county to be deplorable. On the first of October, 1851, he called the Court of Sessions into session to transact criminal business. In his report to the State Treasurer, he detailed the conditions that he found and the events which ensued:

...the Court of Sessions, which was engaged four days in the transaction of criminal business, when the Junior Associate was absent, and the other after one day's further attendance, left also. A called session was ordered expressly for the purpose of hearing complaints and for the purpose of equalizing the assessment roll, and five notices were posted in several precincts. On or about the first of October the Assessor returned to the county, and was ordered to go over his assessment again, or to appear and give such information as would enable the Court to equalize the list or assessment roll. On the 17th, one of the Associate Justices only appeared, and the vacancy could not be filled, and the Assessor being sick did not attend, nor did he procure and return to the Court any description of the personal property of the tax-payers, whereby the Court could be informed, in anywise, of the impartiality of the assessment, the amount of personal property, being in the sum total, expressed by figures; and it does not appear that any oath was required, or of what the amount of personal property consisted. The Court not



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being able to come to any decision on the subject of equalization of the assessment role, the Court was adjourned to the 4th of November following. On the 3rd of November, I repaired to the county seat for the purpose of holding the first County Court since the first organization, and having discovered on the 27th of October that the Probate Court had previously no record of its existence, I now discovered that the County Court and the Court of Sessions were in the same condition, as also was the District Court, except such minutes as I myself, as a member of the Court of Sessions had taken, and excepting the minutes signed by Judge Sherwood, of the District Court, Ninth District.

Thinking that those interests might suffer from such scattered condition of the only legal evidence of the existence of these Courts, I issued a special order to U.P. Monroe, County Clerk, ordering him to perform these several duties of the County Clerk himself, or to cause them to be duly performed by someone duly appointed and sworn as his deputy. And, there being no person willing to devote his whole time in keeping the office open, according as the law requires, at the county seat, and who was able to procure the requisite bonds, as I was bound in compliance with my official duties to be at the county seat to attend twenty-four distinct sessions of various courts, per annum, and considering I should save 2,000 miles travel, I rented out my rancho and accepted service as Deputy County Clerk, and am become my own clerk in accordance with the old maxim, if you would have a good servant and one you like, serve yourself.¹⁶

In his November 9th letter to his brother, Ide detailed the list of offices he held by virtue of election, appointment or simply because he was on the scene. He wrote:

I am seated in the office of the County Clerk of Colusa (sic) County, where I am at present by virtue of the elective franchise been made Judge of the county Court, civil and criminal, President of the Commissioner's Court or court of Sessions for said county, and Judge of Probate, and by appointment duly recorded, I am made the County Clerk - Clerk of the District Court (9th District), Clerk of the County Court and of the court of Sessions, Clerk of the Probate Court, county Recorder and county Auditor. These several offices at present limit my official duties: but I suppose I shall, just to accomodate our floating population, be compelled to serve as 'Treasurer, Deputy Sheriff, Deputy County Surveyor' - and very probably as Coroner and Justice of the Peace - and, possibly, as Deputy Notary Public.¹⁷

His comment about being "compelled to become a Justice of the Peace" is curious, as he had previously served in that capacity. However, his concern about assuming other offices soon proved to be justified. In November, 1851, Ide swore before Joseph C. Huls, Justice of the Peace, that "I solemnly affirm that I will support the constitution of the United states and of California and that I will during my continuance in the Office of Deputy County Surveyor faithfully discharge the duties thereof and this I swear under the pains and penalties of perjury this 19th of Nov. 1851. Wm B. Ide"¹⁸

And early in December, he became the Treasurer of Colusi County, when he was appointed to the post by his court. He explained the circumstances in his report to the State Treasurer:

On the 1st day of December, instant, the present Treasurer of Colusi county was appointed to the office, by the Court of Sessions of said county, to supply and fill the vacancy of G.P. Swift, Treasurer, resigned October 21st; bond filed 6th of December, instant, which was justified instead of being accepted by the County Judge, by reason that said Judge was personally interested, and the said Treasurer this day enters upon the discharge of the duties of said office, by complying as far as practicable with the requirements of Section 49, in the latter clause; and to guard against the penalty imposed by the fifty-second section of the Revenue Act.¹⁹

By the middle of December, 1851, Ide was simultaneously serving as County Judge, Deputy County Clerk, County Treasurer and Deputy County Surveyor, and he was, once again, to become a Justice of the Peace. According to the records of Colusa County, it is apparent that Justices of the Peace were elected whenever they were needed. In December, Judge Ide ordered that an election be held to fill vacancies in the Justice of the Peace

Continued page 40



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William B. Ide From page 39

ranks within the county. He ran for and was elected to one of the positions. U.P. Monroe certified:

Monroeville Dec 22 A.D. 1851 I, U.P. Monroe Clerk of and for Colusi Co State of (Cal) do hereby certify that an election held by order of the County Judge for the election of two Justices of the Peace and one Constable William B. Ide was duly elected Justice of the Peace within and for— Township as affirmed to me by returns duly made and on file in my Office.

At Office Dec.22 - A.D. 1851

*U. P. Monroe
County Clerk
Colusi County²⁰*

The unreadable township name was clarified in Ide's oath of office which was attached. He swore that he would "...perform the duties of the office of Justice of the Peace in and for the Township of Monroe, Colusi Co Cal..." This document was duly filed by Wm B. Ide, Deputy Clerk.

Ide's involvement in the government of Colusi County is illustrated by another excerpt from his report to the State Treasurer. Returning to the issue of the inadequate assessment roll - the Assessor had recovered from his illness and had appeared at Judge Ide's office where he had given some explanations about the assessments, had made some corrections to the roll and had, in Ide's presence, officially, as he had not done so previously, signed his roll.

Uncharacteristically, Ide, usually ready and willing to take charge of matters, had been reluctant to act personally in straightening out what he considered to be a mess, because he and other members of his family were included in the assessment. While no values are avail-

able for 1851, the 1852 assessment roll for Colusi County, which undoubtedly would be quite similar, indicated that William B. Ide was assessed at \$43,869 and that James M. Ide was assessed at \$22,140.²¹ This amount compares favorably with Ide's own assessment that his holdings were worth approximately \$50,000.

He had, apparently, sent some correspondence to the State Comptroller, and late in November, he received information that led him to take charge of the assessment matter. He reported:

November 24th I received an answer from the Comptroller of State to a statement I had made in relation to abstract of taxable property in Colusi. I came to the conclusion that I had better proceed at once to make the Auditor's tax lists, and have them ready to be accepted or rejected by the Court of Sessions at its December term. I did so, and made up the books (duplicates) on a basis of equalization proposed and signed by the only Associate Justice hitherto in attendance. On the first day of the December term, Dr. H.P. Bemis being appointed clerk for the term, I called up the deferred business of equalization, and it was passed by the vote of both Associate Justices and was so entered by the Clerk on the minutes. The aforementioned tax duplicates were examined and an order issued for their delivery to the Sheriff and Treasurer, with the order and execution on the backs thereof, for collection, duly executed and signed by the Clerk and the presiding Judge.²²

In this instance he was simultaneously the preparer of the audit lists, the presiding Judge, although he apparently abstained from voting to pass on the list, and the Treasurer.

The voting population of Colusi County, apparently had no problems or concerns regarding Ide's holding multiple offices. In his letter of November 9th, he offered an explanation as to why the citizenry of the country, and he himself, could accept the situation which found him holding so many offices simultaneously.

Another provision of the law is that all public offices except that of justice of the peace, shall be kept open at the county seat, from 10 o'clock until 12, and from 1 to 4, each day, except Sundays, New Year's, Christmas and election days; and none of the county offices, separately, will pay a person who can furnish the requisite bonds for keeping these office hours. But ten or twelve county offices, combined, will serve to amuse for awhile the present incumbant - and will also interest him not a little to keep down expenses, or at least to prevent profligacy in the

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The combined salary for all of the offices held by Ide was approximately \$2,000 per year.²⁴ Considering the salary and legal requirements of holding an office, it is not surprising that the county had problems obtaining and keeping qualified people. Unless the office holder just happened to live in Monroeville, and most of those qualified to hold office did not, the compensation for a single position certainly would not have adequately paid a person for the travel and living expenses entailed in keeping the office open in Monroeville the required number of days. Ide's sense of civic responsibility, and the fact that he was, by the standards of the time, fairly well off, allowed him to rent out his rancho and spend the time in Monroeville that the duties of the offices required. Even the combined payment for his service in the multitude of offices he held would not have made him healthy, wealthy and wise. In fact it is later in this letter that he confided to his brother that he was biding his time until April of 1853, when he would, "(if I live), be free again."

In December of 1851 and in January of 1852, he wrote two letters to his mother. In the first letter, dated Monroeville, Dec. 3, 1851, he described the public and political situation in California and Colusi County and steps that he had taken to solve some of the problems.

Last year the whole interior of Colusa (sic) County fell a prey to lawless marauders and thieves, to suppress which "lynch law" was resorted to, to supply the defects of such systems of law as were, in the exigencies of the case, imported from, and alone applicable to, other communities - differing as widely from ours as light from darkness.

And again "the attempt to remedy this second evil of hanging through the impulse of passion, instead of the former tardy imported system, by organizing government among ourselves, has given rise to another serious evil. The salaries of officers, it was thought, should be such as would pay our best men for their services - especially, as ordinary men frequently obtain in the mines a great remuneration for their labor. So, the offices became more lucrative than the mines. And as all American citizens were allowed to vote in our Democratic State, on the first day of their arrival here, the whole business of legislation, and the execution of our laws, became a matter of speculation, and was forthwith, in most counties, seized by the hords of Eastern fortune-hunters, who failed not to apply the power thus obtained to their own advantage. There are thousands of worthless men seeking office for its emolument, who have not the slightest interest in the

*welfare of the country: and the consequence is, that the resident citizens are ruined by taxes, besides being saddled with debts. All our adjoining counties are in debt some twenty to fifty thousand dollars. But we are better off. Since I have been elected County Judge, I have abated, in a great measure, these evils in our county. I have declared the proceedings of former officers illegal, and have withheld payment of salaries; and, so far as I know, or have reason to believe I am sustained by legal men in the courts above. By these means, and a rigid economy in county expense, our county is out of debt.*²⁵

In the second letter, dated Monroeville, January 17, 1852, he discussed, in addition to his many positions and the state of the county finances, his personal loneliness.

I am engaged at the county seat, and have not been home for three months. I have the whole management of our county affairs. I hold two Courts per month, besides Justice Courts. I have consented to serve my county as their Probate and County Judge, and Presiding Judge of the Court of Sessions, that I may have it in my power to counteract that sytem of speculation in public affairs that has nearly ruined some of the counties. Ours is the only

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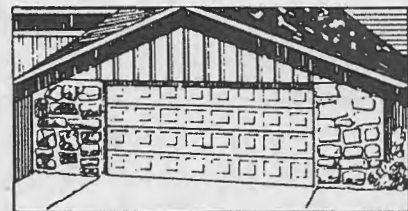
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William B. Ide From page 41

county in the State that is not in debt more than threefold its yearly revenue. The scale of taxation is the same throughout the State, and I hope to save over one thousand dollars of our yearly public revenue for some public utility. I am regarded with all that respect I can desire - all classes pay due deference to their Judge; but I have few confidential friends, and no advisor in whom I can confide. ²⁶

He may have had respect, but he was a lonely man who had few friends. In a land of fleeting population, those who might have been friends and confidants were far flung, or were here today and gone tomorrow. In his letter of November 9th to his brother, he sadly lamented the leaving of a potential friend and colleague:

...A good old man whom I had known for two or three months past, came to my door and awoke me from a quiet sleep - saying, 'Judge, I must leave you; I am going home: here are the books you gave me. I have recorded but one case therein: I must resign the Justiceship: where shall I lay the books and papers? The stage is waiting.' On the table, I replied. 'Good-by, Judge,' said he - Good-by dear Sir, and may peace and prosperity go with you, said I. Sad were the reflections of the hours that followed! My peace was indeed gone! ²⁷

Other than his letters, which record his view of life and the political and social scene in northern California, there are very few incidents involving Ide that can be precisely chronicled during the months that Ide served as Judge of Colusi County. One incident, however, is repeated in many sources and gives some insight into the way justice was sometimes practiced on the rough frontier, where qualified officers of the court were hard to find. Early in October, 1851, just after he had been

elected to the post of County Judge, a case came before the Court of Sessions, which had originated when he was serving as Associate Judge and Justice of the Peace at Tehama. Judge J.C. Huls relates that Ide:

...had examined and committed a man for horse stealing. After he was Judge the party came before the Court of Sessions for trial... Ide was the presiding Judge and Deputy Clerk, and Huls was Associate Justice and Deputy Sheriff. The prisoner was brought into Court by Huls, and the indictment read to him by Ide as Clerk. Then the Judge mounted the bench and informed the prisoner of his rights, including that of having counsel assigned to him for his defence. This the prisoner asked. Here was a dilemma. There was no licensed attorney, nearer than Butte county, to be had. The court held a consultation on the situation. Ide, however, was always equal to any emergency, and he suggested that he himself had been over at Hamilton a few days before attending Judge Sherwood's Court and had been admitted as a practicing attorney, and he did not see why he should not defend the prisoner. It was suggested to the defendant at the bar, who was delighted with the arrangement of being defended by the presiding Judge. There being no District Attorney present, it was expected that the presiding Judge would also look out for the interest of the people. With the Court thus organized the trial began. Ide would question the witnesses, raise his points of law on either side, and then get on the bench to help decide them, take exceptions to his own ruling, and then as Clerk make entries. When the testimony was all in Ide addressed the jury presenting first the side of the prosecution, and then of the defense, winding up with a plea for mercy. Then he got on the bench again and instructed the jury calmly and impartially as to the law of the case. The jury retired and in a few moments brought in a verdict of 'guilty.' When the time for sentencing came, the Judge ordered the prisoner to stand up and addressed him as follows: 'You have had a fair and impartial trial by a jury of your peers. You have been ably defended by counsel appointed by this Court. The jury have found you guilty of grand larceny, the penalty of which, under the benign laws of this State, is death. It is therefore, the judgement of this Court that you be taken by the Sheriff to some convenient place, on the - day of --, and then and there hanged by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul.'

Turning to his Associate Huls he ordered the Sheriff to take charge of the prisoner. The man was taken to Hamilton, then the county seat of Butte county for safe

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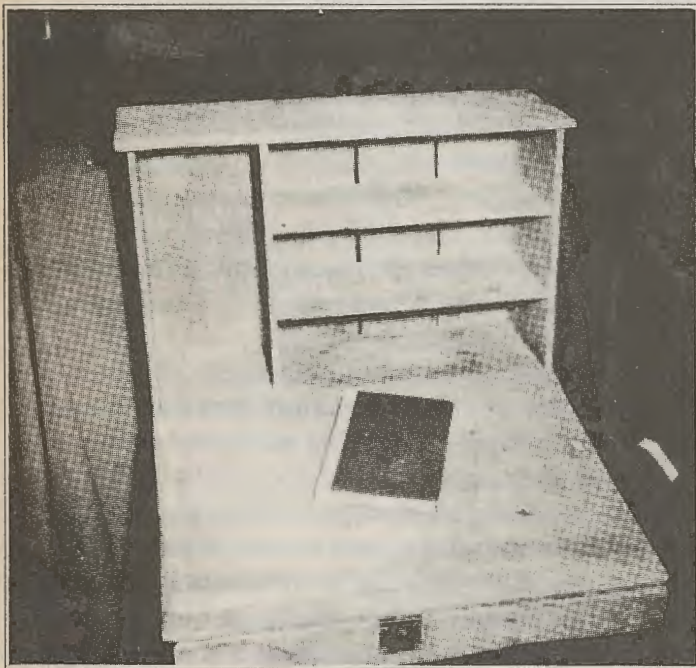
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keeping. A day or so before that set for execution Huls went over after his prisoner, but found that he had been pardoned out by the governor, without the officers of Colusa (sic) knowing anything about it.²⁸

Ide commented about the incident to his brother in his letter of November 9th. He wrote:

About thirty days ago sentence of death was passed upon a horse thief tried before the Criminal Court of Colusa (sic) County. This morning was laid upon my table an Order of Commutation from the Governor, to

Courtesy Colusi County Historical Society



DESK MADE BY IDE AND USED AT THE MONROEHOUSE WHEN HE WAS JUDGE

*fifteen years service in the State's Prison. The same man is charged with highway robbery, and will in all probability be brought up by writ of habeus corpus for trial again at Colusa.*²⁹

The man had been sent to Hamilton because Monroeville did not have a jail. At Ide's urging, a jail was constructed sometime during 1952. The exact date is unknown, but in May of 1852, the Court of Sessions authorized:

...the County Judge to contract for a Prison cell, eight feet in length, eight feet in width, and six feet four inches in height, to be made of Iron Bars one and a half inches in thickness and to be six inches apart from center to center and at right angles with other and to be riveted together

*with rivets three eights of an inch in diameter PROVIDED such cell can be procured for the sum of six hundred dollars at San Francisco or Sacramento.*³⁰

Time passed, and sometime late in the summer or early in the fall, iron was procured and the proposed cage was constructed. Ide's brother, Simeon, related that Ide told a friend who had called on him, "I have tools which I brought with me over the plains, and some I brought by steamer, on my last trip from the East. I will get some good bar iron from San Francisco, and some bolts, and will build a cage with my own hands."³¹ On November 15, 1852, he was paid the sum of \$671 for the cell and freight from San Francisco. The cell, was placed under a large oak tree near the Monroehouse, where it stood until 1854, when it was taken to Colusa and made part of the jail in the new courthouse.³²

Ide was, apparently, not totally occupied with court business in Monroeville, and although he had talked of selling his holdings, and moving back to the states, there is some indication that he may have given up on the idea. On December 27, 1851, he purchased, at a Sheriff's sale to satisfy a court judgement, the ranchos of Hyacinth and Capay, which totalled eighteen square leagues of land, for the sum of \$500. He was never able to gain satisfactory title to these properties but his heirs continued their claim to the land and, eventually, sold their rights to it in 1859 for the sum of \$600.³³

Early in 1852, he became involved in a dispute over what constituted the northern boundary of Colusi County. Those who supported Colusa as the county seat of Colusi County, wanted the boundary as far to the south as possible, while the supporters of Monroeville, who, obviously, included U.P. Monroe, wanted the boundary to be as far as possible to pick up votes for Monroeville in the forthcoming election to, once and for all, decide the location of the county seat. In January of

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William B. Ide From page 43

1852, according to Frank S. Reager, Ide:

...took advantage of the holiday relief from his strenuous duties of his many county offices and journey (sic) up to his son-in-law Cooper's claim, and located a 'claim' adjoining Cooper's claim, covering the land now in southeastern Red Bluff, and upon his return to his official duties he procured a record book and opened a 'Book of Claims' recording his son-in-law's claim on page one and his own on page three, and since he seemed unable to forget that though he was a claimant as well as deputy recorder, he was also a Judge who was apt to be called to render a decision as to the legality of that boundary so repugnant to his Monroeville friends.

He was of course, aware that some residents argued with his friend and neighbor Assessor W.G. Chard, that his jurisdiction ended at the first bluff south of Cooper's Creek, and suspected that some, possibly the same, had convinced the Shasta County assessor that Colusi County extended to the bluff north of that creek; also they had been informed that the Semple law fixed the line as Red Bluff Creek, which they took to mean the creek at Red Bluff,

which was Cooper's, or Reed's Creek.

Now the land he wanted was bisected by that Creek, and it was up to him to describe it without disqualifying himself to sit in cases that possibly might arise because of the uncertainty. How well he succeeded you may judge from the following excerpts from the document recorded on page three of the Colusi County Book of Claims.

It is headed 'Land Claim on Cooper's Creek, by Wm.B. Ide of Colusi County...has this first day of January, 1852, taken up a claim commencing about one mile south of the Red Bluffs at a point on the Sacramento River...the same being a short distance south of the mouth of Cooper's Creek and after further locating and bounding the land, proceeds and persons are hereby legally notified by this indenture duly recorded in Colusi County aforesaid and in Shasta County, in which Counties the said land lies, a portion if not all being mostly north of Cooper's Creek and south of the Red Bluff, whether the county line be north or south, or passing through this my said claim, January 3, 1852.' (Signed) Wm. B. Ide.

'Received of Wm. B. Ide, January 21, 1852, and fully recorded. U.P. Monroe, Recorder. By Wm. B. Ide, Deputy.'³⁴

This claim, if upheld, would potentially move the boundary northward, as the county boundary would not be drawn to divide a holding between two counties. However, Ide, apparently, did not plan to hold this land himself, because, shortly after he filed his claim, he evidently transferred the land over to Monroe and his partner, Napoleon B. Stone, as there is a record of Stone deeding the land in May of 1853.

There are not many indications of Ide's activities during the summer and early fall of 1852. In addition to procuring the materials and building the jail, he must have been fairly busy with the business of the court, as is indicated by the number of cases in a report that he filed in August:

Monroeville, August 12th 1852

Civil Cases Entered on the Docket of Wm B Ide J P of Monroe Township, Colusi County from the 2 day of January A.D. 1852 to the date hereof-----43

Civil Cases withdrawn or discontinued-----2

" " determined-----38

" " Undetermined-----3

Criminal Examinations held on arrest-----5

" " held to answer-----2

" " discharged-----1

" " undetermined-----1

Coroner's Inquests "exofficio" cases-----2

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a correct account of the business transacted in the 2 Justice Courts on

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Wm B Ide J. Peace ³⁵

It is also highly probable that he took time during this period to pen his lengthy letter to Senator Mahlon M. Wambaugh in 1852 (See *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* No. 18, Summer 1994) recounting and justifying his actions during the Bear Flag Revolt. This letter, which was apparently never finished, as it ends abruptly, in mid sentence, was discovered among the effects of Ide's son, James, who died in Utah in April of 1878, and was sent to Simeon who published it in 1880.

In November, 1852, William B. Ide, lonely and alone, fell ill. To quote his brother and biographer:

He started in the race of business life at the age of twenty-one, with no other 'capital' than a pair of stalwart arms and hands, and by the use of them, and a judicious investment of the fruit of their labors, at the age of about 56 he was in possession of what he considered a 'competency of this world's goods,' for himself and family - as he then stated in a letter to one of his brothers in the East.

But it was 'otherwise ordered' that he should remain here long to enjoy his 'competency.' He died at Monroeville, Cal., on the 19th of Dec., 1852, aged 56 years, 7 months and 12 days, after an illness disabling him for the duties of his office of only about one week. ³⁶

William B. Ide's life was stalked by controversy and even his death is surrounded by mystery. There are rumors and tales of his death being hastened to provide the opportunity to rob the county treasury, the key to which he kept. Simeon evidently sent an inquiry to a "California correspondent," (William Boggs?) who he does not otherwise identify, who replied concerning the circumstances surrounding Ide's death:

Some thought Judge Ide's death was hastened to give opportunity for robbery. I do not think so. It is true there were suspicious circumstances in relation to his last sickness, which gave credence to such a belief in the minds of some of his friends. He was living away from his family, his wife having died about two years previously, and his children residing at a great distance on his Rancho, were none of them with him during his short confinement with the small pox. He had the key of the county save under his head at the time of his death, I have been told. The man who attended him during his sickness took said key and robbed the safe. It was known at the time how much money there was in the safe belonging to the County. The thief was pursued - finally caught, and all the County's

Continued page 46



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William B. Ide From page 45

*money recovered - but no more. Mr. Ide was known to have money of his own in the safe, but how much no one knew. None of his money was recovered; and the thief, by the connivance of some one who was, perhaps, his confederate in the plunder, escaped the second time, and was never re-taken.*³⁷

William B. Ide was buried in the cemetery at Monroeville. Alas, Monroeville is gone today, and the cemetery is in ruins. The exact site of Ide's grave was located during the summer of 1991 by archaeologists from Butte College (See *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, No. 7, p. 20). The best description as to its location had been given by Frank Weston, who was born at Monroeville in 1868. He said, "Ide was buried at a small cemetery, in a small grove of oak trees at about one-half mile west of the old Monroeville town site... I am quite certain that the grave was nearly in the center of the cemetery."³⁸ The actual gravesite was located in the north center of the cemetery and identified as gravesite #24 during the 1991 reconstruction of the Monroeville cemetery.³⁹

A monument to Ide was erected on the Weston Ranch in Glenn County, near the site of old Monroeville in 1947, and in 1949, Herbert Cheever, a distant relative, placed a wooden marker near an oak tree approximately where

Courtesy Colusi County Historical Society



THE IDE GRAVESITE WOODEN MARKER

Sarah M. Ide claimed that her grandfather was buried.

This series of articles began with the question "Who was William Brown Ide, this man who played a role in the Bear Flag Revolt and the birth of American California?" It has chronicled the life and deeds of the man claimed by some to be the Governor of California; by others to be the President of the California Republic; and by still others to have been a madman with delusions of grandeur. Thomas O. Larkin wrote that Ide was, "of good family, active, energetic and of sound sense."⁴⁰ Lilliburn W. Boggs, former governor of Missouri who came to California in 1846 and was appointed by General Stephen W. Kearny as alcalde of Sonoma,⁴¹ often spoke of Ide, "as being a man of superior intelligence; a very competent and useful citizen - a patriotic co-worker in establishing law and order where none before existed."⁴²

Who was William B. Ide? You and history decide!

From the Editor:

Ben Hughes is to be congratulated for his excellent research skills in bringing together the numerous primary and secondary source materials dealing with William B. Ide. His six-part series of articles represents a major contribution to California historical research by creating one of the most complete and accurate accounts of Ide's life and times in California.

Mr. Hughes is closely associated with William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park in Red Bluff, California and plans to publish these articles in expanded book form in the near future. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Hughes for giving *Territorial* readers the first chance to enjoy this series of original articles: *William B. Ide, Pioneer, Bear Flagger & Builder*.

Fortunately, this is not the last of Mr. Hughes' articles for the *Territorial*. He is currently working on another interesting project - Ezekiel Merritt, the illiterate, hard-drinking mountain man who led the Bear Flaggers to Sonoma. Mr. Hughes has already authored a story about Merritt in issue No. 13; the Special Bear Flag Revolt Issue of the *Territorial* entitled *Ezekiel Merritt, The Leader of the Bear Flag Revolt*.

Mr. Hughes' new article will deal with Merritt's activities after the Bear Flag Revolt, including some newly discovered information about descendants and how and where Merritt met his end. Look for it in the Summer Issue No. 22 which will be available July 1st, 1995.

I KNOW OF NO WAY OF JUDGING THE
FUTURE BUT BY THE PAST. (PATRICK HENRY)