

Golden Nuggets

SACRAMENTO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

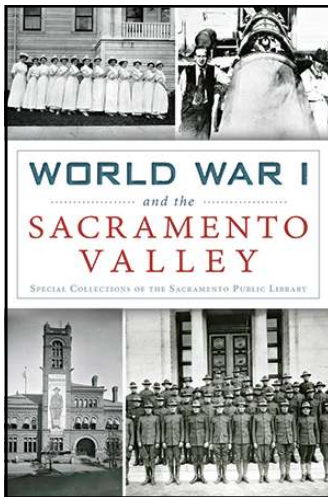
JAN.-FEB. 2017, VOL. 5-6

SCHS Presents

James Scott: WWI and the Sacramento Valley

Tuesday, January 24, 2017 (Social Time, 6:30)

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building, 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento



When the First World War thrust the United States into a dire global conflict, the Sacramento Valley was quick to mobilize. A huge European demand for food forced the Valley's best agricultural minds to do more with less. Nearly overnight, a lonely piece of cattle land east of Sacramento became a training site for young aviators. Home-front demands put thousands of Valley women into work environments that were once the sole province of men. A brand of xenophobia not seen since the Gold Rush pushed frenzied citizens to spy on friends and neighbors and local police forced displays of patriotism from suspected German sympathizers.

World War I and the Sacramento Valley, a book produced by the Special Collections staff of the Sacramento Public Library, is an effort to afford the reader a window into the Sacramento Valley's World War I experience, one that forever changed the region and proved a dress rehearsal for even greater sacrifices to be made during the next war. Co-author and Sacramento Room archivist Amanda DeWilde is on maternity leave so her co-author **James Scott** will reveal the struggles and triumphs of the Sacramento Region during the First World War at SCHS's first talk of 2017 on Tuesday, January 24 at 7 PM at the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Museum Building.

James Scott has been a reference librarian with the Sacramento Public Library since 2000. For most of that period, he has worked in the Sacramento Room, where he has coauthored four other books on Sacramento history. He holds a bachelor's degree in history and political science from Marquette University and Master's degrees in European history and library and information science. Content for the book was entirely drawn from the Sacramento Room Special Collections. SCHS members free, guests \$5 donation.

SCHS Presents

Ellen Osborn: Sacramento, Highway 50 and Early El Dorado County

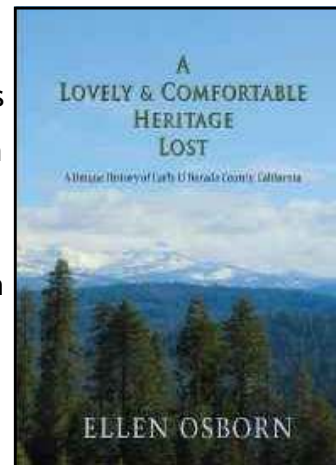
Tues., Feb 28, 7 PM (Social Time, 6:30)

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building, 5380 Elvas Ave., Sacramento

Author Ellen Osborn, who has published numerous nonfiction articles including some for historical publications, will present an illustrated talk for our February meeting. Her book gives us a unique history of El Dorado County, California, beginning with the early days of the gold rush and the first conflicts with the Native American tribes of the region. Based on primary source documents, including the unpublished diary of one of the soldiers, this is the first account of the El Dorado Indian Wars told from the perspective of the men and women who lived it, natives and newcomers alike.

The book also traces the evolution of California's Highway 50 from its beginning as the Native American trade trail that became a popular Gold Rush route and explains why it has come to be called one of the most storied and romantic roads in American history. The author will take us on a trip through time where we will meet some of the famous and infamous who walked or rode into California following the emigrant's foot steps, and learn why this route was so popular and important.

Osborn shares the important story of the her great grandfather, John Calhoun Johnson, and the world he lived in as emigrants poured into California, seeking promises of riches and following their own dreams of a new life.



Join us on Tuesday February 28, at the time and location above for a unique illustrated presentation on interesting and not often explored subject matter. Guests are welcome, but a \$5 donation is requested. SCHS members are admitted free. Space is limited, so come early, and enjoy some visiting time.

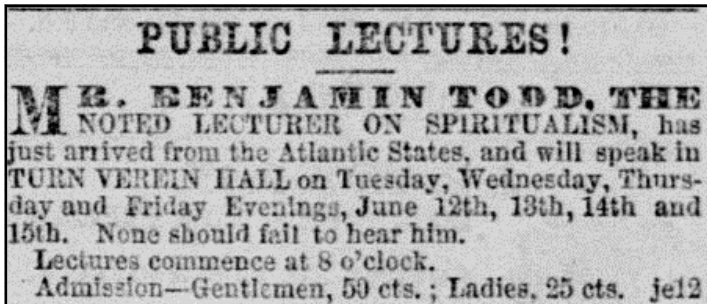
Benjamin Todd and the Spiritualist Movement

By Eric Bradner

SCHS Treasurer Eric Bradner has done research and given tours for years volunteering at the Old City Cemetery.

Reverend Benjamin Todd was a Massachusetts lecturer on Spiritualism, a member of the "Friends of Progress," who arrived in Sacramento in the mid-1860s. Todd also spent time in San Francisco, editing a newspaper there for a time, and lectured along the west coast. Later he was nominated by the Greenback party as a congressional candidate.

The first reports of him on the west coast are when he spoke at the first California Spiritualist Convention in May, 1866, in San Jose, whose committee on resolutions advocated "complete education, for



all classes of children and youth, independent of country or color," civil rights for freedmen, and women's rights.

Beginning in 1866, Todd lectured up and down the coast. Reporting about an 1867 trip to Oregon, the *Sacramento Union* observed,

Todd has been lecturing through the valley towns and spreading forth his doctrines, with munificent offers of cash to any authorized clergyman who would debate with him. Somehow or other the \$100 per day always faded from his memory when the time for applying [for] it arrived.

He debated a Christian clergyman, and the *Union* had this to say:

Todd went into a wholesale denunciation of the facts of Bible history and of the patriarchs and prophets;- attempted to blackguard the Scriptures, to pander to vitiated tastes rather than deal in argument, and so disgusted many who expected better things. In addition to a general denial of the inspiration and truth of the old Scriptures, he denied that Christ existed, as laid down in the new. He had at command all the arguments of infidel philosophy, and often made forcible use of them, though not always with good taste.

Todd claimed that his guardian angel stood beside him, visible to his eye, "in the form of a lady

friend of long ago, and that she encouragingly and spiritually placed her shadowy hand upon him while he was speaking."

In January 1867, he used the profit from his exhausting lecture tour to publish the Spiritualist weekly paper, *Banner of Progress*, in San Francisco. It lasted a year or so. It was primarily a religious paper, but Todd summed up this view of his readers: "Nearly all Spiritualists are radical reformers in the direction of womanhood suffrage, justice to the red man, and the rights of all men and women."

As Todd's Friends of Progress Spiritualist group collapsed, Mrs. Todd and others (presumably including Mr. Todd if he wasn't tromping about the foothills spreading the word), started the San Francisco Spiritualists Association. It was the first group to dare to use the word Spiritualist in its name instead of the code words "liberal" or "progress."

An 1871 Sacramento lecture was sparsely attended, as the *Sacramento Union* was delighted to point out. "It consisted of a fair proportion of women, who seemed to attach a great deal of importance to the speaker's remarks, as if they did not quite come up to his standard of sublimity."

The *Union* cited Todd on God:

Every person has his or her god; they have him in their body; he is blended with their flesh; and he is of their own creation. How splendid that doctrine — a god for each person. The speaker would not share his god with any one; between him and his god there is peace; if he divided, a row would certainly ensue. He did not believe in that God said to be in Heaven; Heaven is too far off; he wanted his god with him all the time without intermission, to consult him. This doctrine once firmly established, churches will disappear; every man will be his own church; no more priests and ministers to dole out so much doctrine for so much a year.

In 1880 Todd was nominated as Greenback Party candidate for congress. He traveled all over the state, to each tiny hamlet, lecturing to crowds of widely varying size and interest. Speaking of the variously titled Greenback/Greenback Labor/National Party movement, one contemporary observer noted, "More than half of them believed that the spirit world inspired their movement - that the National Party was aided by 'the superior spheres.' Mediums and 'trance-speakers' were influential Greenback orators, as were women, who had their own National clubs."

The Greenback platform, as one might expect from a party of refugees from other parties and interest groups, was quite radical. Besides their issue with paper money, the platform supported treating the railroads as public utilities, land reform, equal rights, and other political long shots.

The good reverend returned from a canvas of the district on October 21st, and was taken sick the same day. Todd had no money to speak of, and had been staying with friends and depending on money earned from speaking. He died on the 29th at the house of Ernest Gunn at 1115 G Street. The city cemetery index listed fatigue as cause of death. Since Todd's death was just a few days the before the election, the replacement Greenback candidate had little time to prepare. Todd came in 3rd of 4 candidates with 182 votes.

Reverend Todd had what was possibly Sacramento's first Spiritualist funeral in 1880. From the November 3, 1880 *Sacramento Union*: "The society of Spiritualists of this city have purchased a lot in the Pioneers' plot at the City Cemetery, and yesterday removed to it the remains of Benjamin Todd, which was buried on Sunday, and a monument to his memory is contemplated by the Spiritualists and Greenbackers."

It does not appear that any monument was erected. Todd has no existing headstone; perhaps it sunk into the ground or was stolen or vandalized years ago. It could be that the "contemplation" never materialized into an actual monument and was eventually forgotten. But Todd's ascendance into the realm of Spirits was the impetus for the Sacramento Spiritualist group to purchase a Spiritualist plot in the Old City Cemetery. The deed was signed over to the Sacramento Spiritualists' Union by Walton C. Felch, President of the Sacramento Society of Pioneers, who was himself an avid Spiritualist, as were several other Pioneer Society members of the era.

Volunteer Opportunities Abound at SCHS!

Our new volunteer program is gearing up to really get going in 2017. In this issue, we wanted to highlight a few specific volunteer opportunities that are greatly needed at the current time.

Program Event Assistants

For those of you familiar with our monthly speaker programs, we are always looking for volunteers to help. You could volunteer to help with just a few specific programs, or on a more regular basis, as fits your schedule and availability. Oversight of these volunteers is provided by board member Joan Gherini. For our monthly programs we are looking for:

- **External Door Monitors:** One or two people are needed at each event to open the external door and allow access to the event, and then to ensure the door is closed as attendees leave. This is a job that is well-suited for someone who likes to greet people and make them feel welcome.
- **AV Equipment Manager:** One person is needed at each event to set up needed audio-visual equipment (generally a projector and laptop), monitor it during the program and address any problems, and take down equipment after the program and put it away. Some familiarity with such equipment is useful, but is not necessary as training will be provided.
- **Entry Table Hosts:** One or two people are needed to be at the entrance of the program room to check membership of attendees, accept payment from non-members (or take payment for membership), and help with any questions attendees may have. This is a great way to meet and get to know your fellow members, and also helps the Society bring in revenue to help in funding our important programs.
- **Newsletter Production Volunteers:** Working with Board member Pat Turse, help with mailing label creation, sealing newsletters and affixing labels. Label creator needs Excel skills; others need nimble fingers.

SCHS Library/Archives Assistants

Did you know that SCHS has a library/archives? Well, we do, and it is full of interesting and historically significant documents and information. But it is also badly in need of organizational help. Volunteers can devote a little or a lot of time as they are available. The goal is to get the library/archives organized in a professional, presentable manner so it is accessible to researchers, members, and anyone else interested in delving into SCHS history. Position assignments will be filed based on qualified applicants' skills and experience. Oversight of these volunteers is provided by board member Clare Ellis.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, contact us at *volun-*

Reminder: Membership Renewals are Due

People with internet access are asked to please fill out an online membership form at our website, *sachistoricalsociety.org*. Use JOIN US link, then send a check by mail to the PO Box address provided. Please print "Membership" on envelope. This will save SCHS mailing time and costs. We hope to add a secure method to pay online in the future.





P.O. Box 160065
 Sacramento, CA 95816-0065
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GOLDEN NUGGETS



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 September to June

OUT & ABOUT

DATE	TIME	EVENT	PLACE & CONTACT
Weekends	10 AM & 2 PM	Historic Folsom Walking Tours 90 minutes long; \$15, adults/seniors; \$10, kids<12	Folsom Historical Society folsomhistoricalsociety.org/tours 916-985-2707
Weekdays	Price & Times by Arrangement	VIP Tour Museum of Wonder & Delight w/Dolph Gotelli One Hour	New joint museums website has forms to fill out to arrange tours. Offsite (from downtown Folsom) tours available as well.
Weekdays		Folsom History Museum & Pioneer Village Tour, 90 min	
Feb 3 - 26	To Be Announced	The West End Club at ArtStreet Huge interpretive display of Sacramento history, event and performance space, and functioning bar. The SCHS-built "Club" will feature history talks, instructive lectures, poetry, jazz, burlesque performances, walking tours and other surprises. More details in January.	SCHS West End Club at ArtStreet Project Setzer Forest Products Warehouse First Ave. @ Third St., Sacramento www.m5arts.com
Saturday Feb. 18	9 AM -12 PM	Preservation Sacramento Roundtable Quarterly Preservation Sacramento membership meeting open to the public to encourage interest in city planning issues and the P.S. organization. Speaker info coming.	Preservation Sacramento ArtStreet SE corner, 1st Ave.@ Third St., Sacto preservationsacramento.org
Saturday Feb 18	10 AM	African American History Tour Celebrate the contributions of Sacramento's African-American community as they struggled to gain a foothold in an often hostile environment. Meet barbers, soldiers, caterers, singers, pastors, and just plain folks who settled the frontier.	Old City Cemetery 1000 Broadway, Sacramento 916-448-0811 oldcitycemetery.com Free, but donations welcome Park in lot opposite 10th St, entry