

TAPE #38

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Subject; John Sutter

I will talk about John Sutter first; then a little bit about the pictures.

In 1966 my wife and I went to Europe for a whole year. And I had scheduled a trip to Sutter's birthplace. And also a trip to where Sutter's family came from. And also the place where he met Mrs. Sutter. He was born in a little town with scenery just like the Mother Lode. This was in Switzerland. They have an old-fashioned train that goes from Basil to his birth-place. We stayed in an hotel there. But we didn't like that, because the lift didn't work, my wife didn't like it, and I didn't care for it. It was the first time in 38 years that I had gone back, and it was not the same. Then we got a private meeting with his family. They were wonderful people. Then we went over to the mill. Sutter's birthplace is a complex place. It was a paper mill and built in 1752. In 79 it was sold, and the new owner hired Sutter's father to manage the lumber part. The father ~~and mother~~ married a German girl of high class. ~~got married in Germany to marry them~~ This was very fortunate, because in those days they had little school system. But the rich and the people in high society had special schools. Sutter went to one of these schools, and as a result had a good education.

The mill finally closed operation two years ago!

I made sketches of the mill while I was there. The family gave me a spike that came from the mill. It was from the attic, and the attics in the Black Forest are from two to three stories high. It's because of the huge amounts of snow they get there.

During the Napoleonic Wars the French took over his country. Young Sutter saw many of these soldiers in beautiful uniforms, and that is probably why he had a love of uniforms and dressing up ever since.

Walking through the main street was like walking through a park. Every window-sill has flowers.

I made about 70 sketches there. It was a beautiful place.

Before we left my wife wanted to buy a camera. I said OK, but if you buy one, you have to take the pictures. Well, we didn't buy one, and I sketched everything instead of photographing it. I finally made a total of 250 sketches!

Then we wanted to see the place where Sutter's family came from. Actually, to change the subject for a moment, I wanted to write a book on Sutter. I wrote for two years, and then what happened? Two books on Sutter came out at the same time, and so I had to shelve mine---at least for the time being. Perhaps I can finish it now.

Sutter was born and accepted as a German, but he was a Swiss. In Switzerland, during those years, you were only a citizen in the community where you were born. So, when Sutter finished his apprenticeship, he went to this town in Switzerland where his future wife came from. And they didn't accept him! Still today the people resent Sutter.

Because he came in the town, he married the number one girl. And they never forgave him for that; she was the one with the money and the class, and they never forgave Sutter.

The hotel in town would not give me information. They were very impolite when I tried to track down stuff on Sutter.

And we found the same trouble when I tried to research Sutter in the library. I had to argue for the books and papers that I wanted to look at.

I found one book I needed, and it took me ten months to get it from them. They didn't think I could read it, because of the dialect it was written in. But, you know, when I got it, I discovered that it was written close to the dialect of the district in which I grew up! And that was about 500 miles away.

Sutter had several businesses in Switzerland. But they resented him.

When he wanted to get married, he had to go to his father's home town to get permission from the city council to get married.

They refused, and they made him wait quite a while. He did get his things out of there finally, and moved them to Germany where he was born. Then he came to the United States.

30% of all the gold from the Mother Load wound up in Germany.

35% of that amount first went to South America, was made into jewelry and then shipped to Germany.

In 1808 the first exploration of the Sacramento Valley was undertaken. This was by the ~~Spaniards~~ Spaniards. There were few Indians living in the Valley; they were up in the foothills.

So the ~~soldiers~~ soldiers left from Mission San Jose, and they went all the way to what is Lake Commanche today.

They they followed the Mokulumne River, walked on the east side, and a few miles south of Ione, Moraga ~~spotted~~ spotted a grassy hill. They got on top and for the first time they saw the hills. The Sutter buttes. So they then headed toward the western tip of the Sutter buttes. This headed them toward what is now Sacramento, and they camped below Sloughouse. And they were looking for Indians, you see. And when they got to a point where there were lots of digger pines and the greenstone rock, that, to the ~~Spanish~~ Spanish, was the high Sierras! And so they stopped. Moraga, himself, explored the American River.