

Davisville 1868

Twelve
Months in
Davis'
Gestation

Celebrating Davis' 140th Anniversary: 1868-2008

PART TWO MAY & JUNE

The at-the-time news story is the central feature of this exhibit. The effort is to provide an almost week-to-week portrayal of how Davis "gestated."

The news stories making up the chronology are photocopied from three newspapers:

- The Solano Press (SP, below) published in Suisun City.
- The Woodland Mail (Mail, below) published in Woodland.
- The Yolo County Democrat (YCD, below) also published in Woodland.

John Lofland

16.05.2008

May 6

As reported in Part One of Davisville 1868—on the months of January through April—the Cal-P started to lay track in Vallejo on April 18. This Solano Press report tells us that the work is proceeding apace on several fronts.

Encourage only modest changes in grade, even places as flat as the Sacramento Valley require the land-leveling devices of barometers and bridges. Here we see equipment imported to build these.

In addition, we see that although the railroad is underway, Solano County financing has faltered and Yolo County financing is still undecided.

May 13

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May 20

Although the Solano Press, published in Suisun, has been covering the "railroad story" for months, still in May the editor does not assume that the folks in Davisville are following the story. So far, the editor has not mentioned Davisville.

June 3, Item 1

Silverville was a going village about three miles north of where the new town of Dixon will be built on the railroad. Although the tracks are approaching, Silverville people are not yet prepared to move. It is estimated that there are about 100 families in the place. It is expected that the place will be just a few years old.

June 3, Item 2

The Solano Press reports enthusiastically on the track's progress.

It mentions labor unrest and a strike

The Sacramento Valley Railroad Company has been notified by the Federal Government that it is in violation of the laws of the United States in its failure to comply with the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1875, in relation to the construction of the California Pacific Railroad. The company is required to file a plan of construction with the Department of the Interior, and to comply with the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1875, in relation to the construction of the California Pacific Railroad.

only in passing at the end of the story!

June 17, Item 1

Part One of this exhibit contained Solano Press reports that in late 1867 Solano County Treasurer William Dredach moved his post office across Putah Creek into Yolo County in violation of federal law regulating the placement of post offices. Postal delivery disorganization ensued and Fremont residents called for his removal and replacement. Here we see, some six months later, that he has been replaced.

June 17, Item 2

Although moving in fits and starts, the railroad did reach Suisun on June 24th and sped onward from there, as will be described in Part Three (July-September) of this exhibit here at the Hattie Weber in those same months of this year.

June 28, Item 1

The "thinking" of you California people is not clear in your minds. You are not going to be happy unless you see the Pacific Railroad through to the coast.

June 28, Item 2

The same issue of the Yolo County Democrat also reported a successful launch of the campaign to raise the money for the California Pacific was asking.

Part One of "Davisville 1868: Twelve Months in Davis' Gestation: January-April" can be viewed and downloaded at: www.davishistoricalsociety.org

Here it is in overview:

DAVIS HISTORY

1201. Davisville 1868. Twelve Months in Davis' Gestation

Month by month and sometimes week by week account of the twelve months of 1868 regarding the gestation of Davis. Originally a weekly historical paper, it was published under the name of Davis and was owned by the Davis family. It is now published by the Davis Historical Society.

1202. Davisville 1868. Twelve Months in Davis' Gestation

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The California Pacific Railroad began laying tracks at Vallejo on April 18 and reached Suisun on June 24.

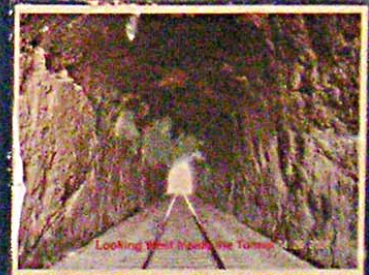
Map published by Wagon Wheel Press, Inc. as a historical reference work and by David Johnson Historical Map Collection at www.davidjohnson.com

Recent Photographs of the 1868 Vallejo-Sacramento Railroad Tunnel Between Cordelia and Suisun

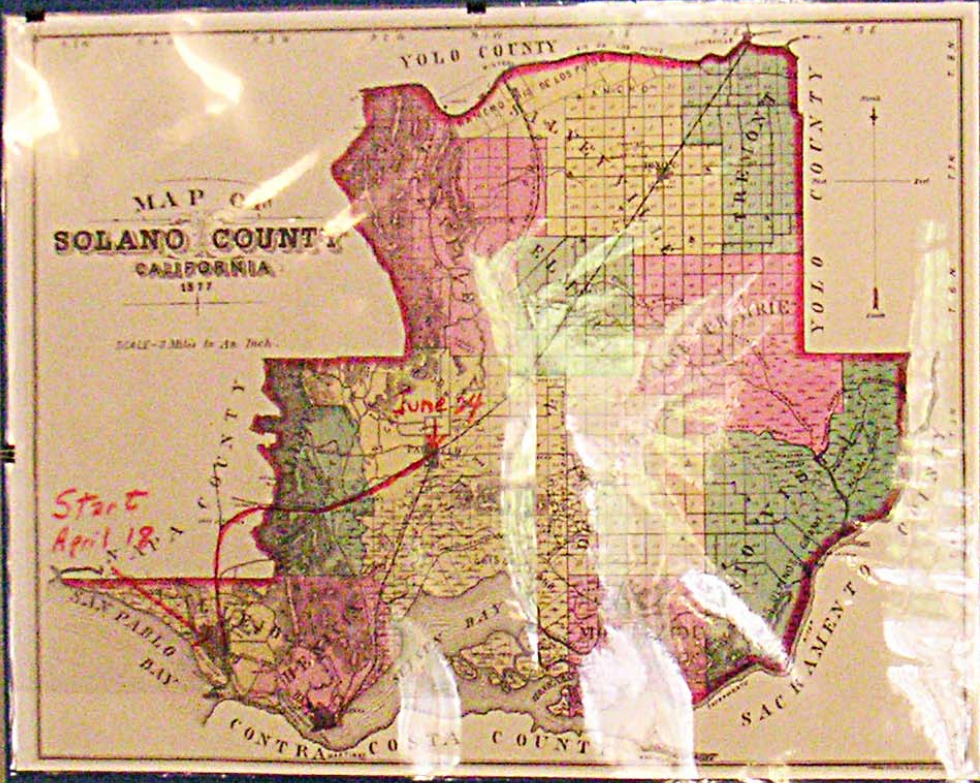
The earth boring technology of the time was used to drill north and around the hills between Vallejo and Suisun. The same three roads were done.

It is reported that the rock and earth have since soft and dry this tunnel with pits and obstructions without repair.

16.05.2008



Looking West Inside the Tunnel



Looking East

Google

16.05.2008

The Robertston-Whiteside Track-laying Machine

This railroad featured one of the first, if not the first, machine for laying railroad tracks.

A photograph of the Robert-Whiteside machine has yet to be found, but one of its many later competitors, the Harley Track Layer of 1911 shown to the right, was similar to it.



"The Track-Layer on Its Travels"

In July and August of 1888, The Suisun Press published four background articles on the construction of the railroad. One of them described the introduction and operation of the track-laying machine. Part of it is reproduced below.

Four aspects of this report might be highlighted:

1. At first people thought the machine was useless.
2. When it did work, crowds formed to watch it.
3. It was exhausting to operate.
4. Extravagant claims for its importance were made.

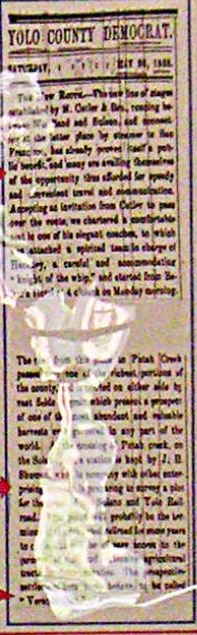
The New York Times Reports on the "Track-Layer"

This June 21 Times report taken in part from a May 13 San Francisco story suggests the importance of the machine. Grading rather than track-laying now becomes the slower part of "railroading" America.

Meanwhile back at the ranch . . .

As of late June, affairs are percolating at Dresbach's Davis farm house renamed Yolo House (e.g. news account dated June 28, item 2, to the left), but the town still does not appear to be laid out. The landscape remains pretty much as it was depicted in 1858, shown below.

At the pre-dawn hour of 4 A. M. on Monday, May 25, the editor of the *Yolo County Democrat* set out to test the newest and claimed-to-be fastest way to travel from Woodland to San Francisco: horse-drawn coach from Woodland to Suisun with connecting steamer to San Francisco.



A horse trail south from Woodland (there was as yet no county road), came to a small bridge across Putah Creek at the Davis farmstead.

Even though the railroad was approaching Suisun, the editor remains tentative about what is happening at the Davis farm. This includes the reports that the location of the railroad depot is still being surveyed and the name of the new place might be "Veranda City."

