

1845-01 Staples Ferry

Summary:

In the eastern part of Elliott Township was Staples Ferry, the first settlement on the Mokelumne River. It became famous because Captain Fremont had crossed the Mokelumne River at that point in 1845. The ferry was popular since it was on the direct trail from Sutter's Fort to San Jose.

In the news:

The Sacramento Bee Thu, Aug 12, 1858 ·Page 4

The Pioneer U.S. Mail Line of Stages goes through Staples Ferry by day-light.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624051836/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Thu, Jun 14, 1866 ·Page 3

Mr. Foster harvested three crops of potatoes in one year.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/623347852/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Daily Evening Herald Thu, Feb 14, 1867 ·Page 3

License granted to D.J. Locke to renew license on Mokelumne river at a place known as Stapels' Ferry, upon giving bond.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/488559872/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The San Francisco Call Bulletin Fri, Jul 16, 1880 ·Page 1

Prospects are good for the new bridge to be located at the Staples Ferry crossing instead of at Lockeford.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1232772780/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Valley Review Sat, Aug 13, 1881 ·Page 3

Last week in speaking of the sale of the ferry at Staples' old crossing, we said that it was the first ferry and was built many years ago, but in the type the word "many" was made to read "seven," and was printed accordingly. The facts are that the ferryboat was built in 1849 and in '51 or 52 the ferry was put in at Woodbridge. There was a bridge built by J.N. Stretch of this place, and Staples, at a point above the ferry, but it was carried off by the big flood of 1862.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140752146/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

The Valley Review Tue, May 02, 1882 ·Page 5

Mrs. Staples, whose child died a few weeks ago at the Sargent House, is teaching school at the eight mile house East of Stockton

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140752492/?match=3&terms=staples%20ferry>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, May 06, 1882 ·Page 3

Nellie Staples was among the young people who had a picnic at Harmony Grove

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036197646/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

The Valley Review Wed, Jul 26, 1882 ·Page 5

The old Staples Ferry is now Miller's Ferry (Mr. W. Miller)

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140752761/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Sep 16, 1882 ·Page 3

Last week Mrs. Alice Staples, principal of the Harmony Grove School, was attempting to get into her buggy when the seat gave way, and the horse starting suddenly, she was thrown to the ground and badly bruised. (She taught all the week as if nothing had happened.)

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036198554/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

The Valley Review Wed, Oct 25, 1882 ·Page 5

Mr. W. Miller, formerly of Staples Ferry, has built a substantial barn on his lot opposite Sperry's mill

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140753243/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Dec 30, 1882 ·Page 1

Death of Johnnie Burt Staples, aged 20 months

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036199166/?match=2&terms=staples%20ferry>

The Valley Review Wed, Aug 01, 1883 ·Page 5

John De Force was turning the corner on the old Staples Ferry road, a half mile south of Harmony Grove, was thrown to the ground and has a frightful gash over his right eye

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140754407/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

San Francisco Chronicle Mon, Jul 13, 1885 ·Page 3

Description of Staples Ferry and Harmony Grove Church (without steeple, belfry, or porch) and Cemetery, the tree that Colonel John C. Fremont rested under in 1844. On the banks of the river still stands the first frame house in Staples Ferry – it was framed in Boston and sent “round the Horn in '50.” Here also is the first bridge that spanned the Mokelumne, built in 1850 for \$3500.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/27443798/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Weekly Galt Gazette Sat, May 04, 1895 ·Page 3

Obituary of Mrs. D.J. Staples

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/931735452/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Valley Review Thu, Nov 07, 1889 ·Page 3

Well-educated man falls for snipe-hunting prank near the old Staples Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1141005008/?match=1&terms=staples%20ferry>

The Record Sun, Apr 12, 1896 ·Page 4

Local tribes remember the flood of around 1805 that filled the Mokelumne from bluff to bluff and spilled from below Staples Ferry and took many lives.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609675679/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Mon, May 15, 1899 ·Page 6

A.M. Young reports that the Staples Ferry road is being fenced by parties along said road.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609369189/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Sat, Sep 21, 1901 ·Page 9

There's a fine old oak tree of historic interest at Staples Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/623719665/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Wed, Feb 08, 1905 ·Page 5

Petition for bridge at Staples Ferry; no action taken

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609271188/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Thu, Mar 26, 1908 ·Page 8

Reclamation project underway from the old Staples Ferry eastward near Clements. Every owner of property whose land abuts the river will become a member of the district organization and will list his bottom land acreage for assessment.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/616487009/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Aug 10, 1907 ·Page 1

To see the Mokelumne now a person would never believe that it could have been navigated by a steamer, but such was the case. The steamer Pert, in those days, made trips as far up as Lockeford. The boat was finally stranded at a place called Staples Ferry, about opposite where Harmony Grove Church now stands. It was abandoned, the machinery and other valuable portions being first removed.

The Sacramento Bee Sat, Jul 15, 1911 ·Page 19

The rotting hull of the Pert still lies imbedded in the river bottom near the Staples ferry. The Pert was operated by the late Captain M. J. Bell of Stockton.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/616712465/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Morning Tribune Sun, Aug 09, 1914 ·Page 34

Shifting of river channel uncovers old-time bridge buried for many years under water and sand. The oldest inhabitant of that section have no recollection of the bridge and it is thought to have been built in 1852, when General Kearney's army passed through the section. (Supervisor Newton stated that the find was the remains of a boat that was sunk near the old Staples ferry early in the '60s.) The timbers are well preserved and there is enough of the wreck in sight to indicate that the stream was formerly a little farther north than at present and this it was several feet lower than now. The level change is accounted for by the hydraulic dredging that has been done near the headwaters and the deposit of sand and soil caused by the washing out of great hills to secure the gold.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1173025084/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Oct 21, 1916 ·Page 1

Need for road – history: During the ox team period 50 years ago, three ferries were in operation over this part of the reiver – one at Woodbridge, another at Cherokee Lane, and one known as Staples ferry, four miles east of Cherokee lane. The Woodbridge and Cherokee lane ferries were replaced by bridges, the Staples ferry was abandoned, and for 40 years later only two bridges were in use. A few years ago the Victor bridge was built, some distance west of the old Staples ferry crossing.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036192923/?match=1&terms=%22staples%20ferry%22>

Tinkham describes this Resource

- The La-las were a small tribe later absorbed by the powerful Mo-kel-kos. They inhabited the land between what was known as Staples Ferry and Athearn's Ferry
- The Mo-kel-kos were the land grabbers of that day. They were a large tribe, numbering some twelve rancherias of about 3,000 Indians, and they held undisputed possession of all of the land between Lockeford and New Hope Dry creek and the Calaveras River. They had four chieftains, all brothers, and to hold this large tract of land, Sena-a-to lived at Staples Ferry, which was about four miles west of Lockeford ; Lowe-no at Woodbridge ; An-to-nio on the Calaveras, and Max-i-mo near Benedict's Ferry.
- Thomas Pyle and his family settled at what was later known as Staples Ferry on the Mokelumne River, but in 1848 they removed to San Jose. After Thomas Pyle left, the place was occupied by his brother, John F. Pyle, he and John W. Laird becoming partners. These two men sold to Staples, Nichols & Company in February, 1850, and then was established Staples Ferry.
- The ferry a few miles west of Lockeford was established in 1849 by John W. Laird, in order to accommodate the large number of settlers in that vicinity. It was a very popular ferry and on the direct trail from Sutter's Fort to San Jose. It became famous as Capt. John C. Fremont in 1844, crossed the Mokelumne River at that point. Laird sold the ferry in 1850, to Staples, Nichol & Company, and it took the name of Staples Ferry. Soon after Staples took over the ferry he was appointed postmaster of that district and the ferry was selected as a voting precinct. David J. Staples was a man too big for that place and the county too limited for a man of his ability. Joining the Republican party, he was chosen from his state as one of the Abraham Lincoln electors and visited the East to see him inaugurated. Returning to California in 1862, he assisted in the election of Leland Stanford and was appointed port warden. He became a member of the various secret and financial organizations of San Francisco, and president of the Underwriters Association. He was born in Medway, Mass., May 3, 1824, came to California around Cape Horn in 1849, and died in San Francisco April 3, 1900.
- Mass meetings and conventions of all of the state parties were held early in the year, something very unusual, and the Republicans holding no county convention, by appointment, sent I. S. Locke, a photographer and portrait painter,

C. C. Rynerson, George R. Choate, Dr. David Locke, of Lockeford, and D. J. Staples to represent them in the convention at Sacramento. Bancroft in writing of D. J. Staples says, "He was a man who had much to do with forming loyal sentiment in San Joaquin County. He used his influence to soften the hostility of his southern neighbors as well as his courageous will to repel the tyranny of their leaders. The first Republican speech in the county was delivered on his premises."

- Bridges were also built at Staples" ferry and at Lockeford before 1860.
- There were two routes to the Capital, one known as the Upper Sacramento Road, running about half way between the Cherokee Lane and Waterloo Road and the Lower Sacramento Road, skirting the tule lands passed Woodbridge. The upper road, crossing at Staples Ferry, the lower road then took all the travel. It was a horrible winter road, especially the first ten miles out of Stockton, and not until 1863 was any part of the road improved.
- The first county Republican convention met October 10, 1856, and organized by the election of David J. Staples as chairman
- Lockeford was one of the liveliest towns in the county, and a strong Union town during the Civil War. they hung Jeff Davis in effigy, and organized a military company called the Mokelumne Dragoons, with George C. Holman as captain. Settlers began locating on the river bottom and on the bluffs as early as 1849. D. J. Staples, Dr. D. J. and Elmer H. Locke coming at that time.
- The travel over the Upper Sacramento road crossed the Mokelumne River at Staples Ferry near Lockeford. This also was the stage road to the capital, but Woods, by making his place a stage station and giving the stage free ferriage, succeeded in getting the stage owners to route their travel by Woods Ferry.
- The committee of 1858 in reporting San Joaquin County said, "The farm of D. J. Staples on the Mokelumne River consists of 600 acres, all well fenced. He has 40 horses and mules, 3 yoke of oxen, 35 cows, a fine lot, of young cattle and' 100 hogs. He has 500 fruit trees and a well-arranged an a sufficient quantity of ornamentals. He has large, substantial buildings, smith shop, etc."
- Near Lodi, on January 1, 1885, Judge Norton was married to Miss Nellie F. Staples, also a native of San Joaquin County, the only child of Capt. John F. and Mary Emma (Simpson) Staples, natives of Maryland and Missouri, respectively, who crossed the plains to California in early days. Captain Staples located at Staples Ferry, established by his brother, D. J. Staples, and there he was married to Miss Mary Emma Simpson. He was a captain in the Civil War and came of Mayflower stock. Some years after Mr. Staples' death, his widow married Dr. J. L. Sargent, a prominent physician, and later a successful cattleman in this county.

- On March 17, 1867, on the Staples ranch near Lockeford, in a house that was brought around the Horn in sections, occurred the marriage of Miss Hannah Sturtevant Hammond and Thomas Bush Geffroy
- Dr. D. J. Locke, Mr. Holman and D. J. Staples erected a schoolhouse one mile west of Lockeford made of canvas with benches made out of logs flattened on one side and in this schoolhouse Isabella Epperly started to school at the age of six years, with Mr. Wheelock as teacher, the school term covering a period of about three months out of each year.

Lodi Historical Society newsletters:

- [Early Lockeford](#) - Winter 2003. This issue with many photos describes the founding and development of Lockeford, near Lodi. The first pioneers, brothers Dean and Elmer Locke, arrived in 1850 and purchased 320 acres of the Andres Pico Mexican Grant. When their father and Delia Hammond, Dean's wife, arrived, they helped start a farm with a ford that made crossing the Mokelumne River possible. Soon a store, the White House, appeared, followed by a hotel. Chinese workers molded and fired bricks for the new structures. The growing town had strict temperance views and was thought to be free of alcohol. In 1882 the new narrow-gauge railroad from Brack's Landing added Lockeford as a stop. Many of Lockeford's original structures are still visible today.
- [Early Woodbridge](#) - Fall 1996. This issue with many photos describes the early Pioneer settlement of Woodbridge, near Lodi. French Canadian fur trappers from the Hudson Bay Company first worked the Mokelumne River. In 1849 brothers, J.P. Sargent and Roswell Sargent, arrived and started farming. Two more Sargent brothers joined them along with other Pioneers. Woodbridge gets its name from Jeremiah Woods who built a cabin for his family in 1852. Woods created ferry service across the river and urged San Joaquin County to bring a road from San Jose to Sacramento through his property, which was then called Woods Ferry. This road was named Lower Sacramento Road. Woods replaced his ferry service with a toll bridge. A big flood carried off the bridge in 1861. Woods died at age 43 in a dispute over his dog. The town's growth continued until it was bypassed in 1869 by the Central Pacific Railroad, who chose Lodi's generous offer over Woodbridge's. The issue also describes the Woodbridge Fig Tree, which was planted in 1857 and grew to a 309-foot circumference, spreading 95 feet north to south. It was cut down to make Woodbridge's River Meadow subdivision.
- [Early Lodi Area Churches & Methodists](#) - Winter 1994. This issue with many photos describes the development of Christian churches in Greater Lodi. The Christian Church of Liberty Township was built between 1855 and 1857, with

John O. White as pastor. The Methodist Old Grove Church was built on Armstrong Road in 1860 with Henry B. Sheldon as Circuit Rider. The Harmony Grove Church was completed in 1861. The Calaveras Baptist Church was built on Cherokee Lane the same year. Lockeford built a Congregational Church in 1867 and Woodbridge completed the United Brethren Church eleven years later. A church was built on the northwest corner of School and Oak Streets, held three services and burned to the ground. It was rebuilt as the Lodi Methodist Church.

San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum newsletter:

- Vol. 15 No. 4 Winter 2002 Retracing Fremont's Trail Through San Joaquin County in March 1844
<http://sanjoaquinhistory.org.c25.sitepreviewer.com/documents/HistorianNS15-4.pdf>
- Summer 2016 The Native Peoples of San Joaquin County: Indian Pioneers, Immigrants, Innovators, Freedom Fighters, and Survivors
<http://sanjoaquinhistory.org.c25.sitepreviewer.com/documents/HistorianSummer2016.pdf>

Elk Grove Historical Society:

Early towns south of Elk Grove

<https://elkgrovehistoricalsociety.com/early-towns-south-of-eg/>

Find A Grave:

David Jackson Staples

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/143578304/david-jackson-staples>