

1849-01 Bensons Ferry

Summary (from historic landmark): This river ferry, established in 1849, was purchased by John A. Benson in 1850. In 1852, Benson laid out the then-principal wagon road between Sacramento and Stockton. Following Benson's murder in 1859, the ferry was operated by his son-in-law, Ed Gayetty.

The ferry was at the old Lower Sacramento Road (Franklin route) crossing, northeast of New Hope (Thornton).

Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benson%27s_Ferry

In the news:

Enterprise-Record Mon, Jan 12, 1857 ·Page 2

Sacramento earthquake felt as far as Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/897377981/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

San Andreas Independent Sat, Jan 24, 1857 ·Page 4

Effects of the earthquake along the line of the lower Stockton road: below Benson's ferry, the waters of the Mokelumne river, much swollen by recent rains, were thrown over the banks, leaving the bed of the river almost bare. The inhabitants of that section were terror-stricken, whilst dumb brutes appeared to be paralyzed.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/905450897/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Sun, Mar 15, 1857 ·Page 3

Near Benson's ferry, on the Cosumnes, an Indian named Manwell burned the old blue tent of a neighboring Indian named Dalman. The next day, Dalman shattered Manwell's head into a dozen pieces with rifle bullets. The culprit did not attempt to conceal his

crime, but seemed to think he had acted all right, and very willingly gave himself up. He will doubtless be hung eventually.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624039301/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Tue, Nov 30, 1858 ·Page 3

John Benson, proprietor of Benson's Ferry on the Cosumnes, files suit against Mathew Borland for defamation of character, claiming that Borland is spreading the rumor that Benson puts his brand on cattle that don't belong to him.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/836947867/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Thu, Feb 17, 1859 ·Page 2

Another homicide -- John A. Benson was shot by Greene Palmer and dies in about half an hour later. It is currently reported that Benson had recently been too familiar with the wife of Palmer, having taken her out riding frequently, visited this city [Marysville] with her, and continued the practice after being advised by Palmer to desist.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/836951778/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Fri, Aug 26, 1859 ·Page 2

It appears there is quite a commerce carried on between Mokelumne City and San Francisco. Mokelumne is situated at Benson's Ferry, has been surveyed, and many of the lots sold. Within a week, as we learn from the Alta, five vessels... left the Bay with hardware, etc., for Mokelumne, returning freighted with lumber and country produce.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624038420/?match=1&terms=%22mokelumne%20city%22>

The Sacramento Bee Mon, Nov 21, 1859 ·Page 2

Sale of John Benson's personal property and swamp lands, with buyers listed

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624103045/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Sat, Mar 31, 1860 ·Page 3

Sloop building at Benson's ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/608769553/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Wed, Oct 10, 1860 ·Page 4

Bodies of four men, tied to willows under the water, then much mutilated by hogs or other animals, found near Benson's Ferry. Believed to have been killed July 11th.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624043319/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Wed, Nov 21, 1860 ·Page 3

George Simons [Symonds] charged with murder of two of the men found in the slough. Simons had been arrested in Placer for highway robbery.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624044052/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Wed, Nov 13, 1861 ·Page 3

Symonds case has gone to the Supreme Court, who decides he will be given a new trial

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624040072/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Nevada Democrat Thu, Jun 26, 1862 ·Page 2

Symonds convicted, to be hung on July 24

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/897324330/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Wed, Mar 18, 1863 ·Page 2

State Assembly passes bill for toll road from Georgiana Slough to Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/836559582/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Sat, Dec 05, 1863 ·Page 3

Symonds, 28 years old, was hanged at 1:30 yesterday afternoon, making no confession and without any perceptible struggle

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/836561394/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Tue, Apr 12, 1864 ·Page 1

Wild geese, instead of flying north, are lingering near Benson's Ferry and ravaging the wheat and barley fields

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624063232/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Daily Evening Herald Fri, Dec 01, 1865 ·Page 3

Etna Benson [widow of John] applies for ferry license

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/488608634/?match=1&terms=bensons%20ferry>

The Sacramento Bee Wed, Nov 02, 1864 ·Page 3

Symonds's alleged accomplice, Munroe Crozier, after being arrested for those murders and escaping jail in Auburn, is arrested again for the Mountain Spring Robbery

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/624044989/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The San Francisco Examiner Sat, Jan 22, 1870 ·Page 2

The Mokelumne River at Benson's Ferry is very high, and along the old telegraph road it is impossible to reach the ferry without a boat

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/460976424/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Daily Evening Herald Thu, Aug 15, 1872 ·Page 3

Edna Pemberton will maintain a ferry at Benson's Ferry [renewed in 1873]

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/488530688/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

San Francisco Chronicle Sun, Nov 18, 1877 ·Page 8

Cattle thief arrested three miles from Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/27339464/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Morning Times Fri, Aug 02, 1878 ·Page 4

"The Chinese must go" A shrewd, long-headed Celestial leased 200 acres of rich bottom land on the Mokelumne river, paying cash rental of \$ per acre. Has leased it all out in tracts of 5 and 10 acres to white men who pay him \$10 an acre. Fresh evidence of the debasement of white labor.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/998147762/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Sacramento Bee Sat, Mar 08, 1879 ·Page 1

Girl loses her shoe from Benson's ferry-boat; sunken coal barge is obstructing navigation at that site

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/623364662/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Tue, Apr 06, 1880 ·Page 3

Son of Green Palmer, James R. Palmer, is arrested for stage-robbery. The Wells Fargo box was given up and Palmer blew the lock open with a shotgun but obtained only around \$6.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609458492/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Mar 18, 1882 ·Page 3

Mr. Watkins will repair the telephone wire that is down between Lodi and Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036197369/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Sep 09, 1882 ·Page 3

Hunter shoots his own arm 400 yards below Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036198512/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Weekly Galt Gazette Sat, Dec 22, 1883 ·Page 3

Mrs. Gaiety [Gayetty] of Benson's Ferry has been staying at the Sargent House in Lodi. When the proprietor told her she must leave, she procured a livery rig at the Fashion Stables and drove home for the purpose of getting her four children and taking them back with her. On the road she met her husband who suspicioned his wife's intention, borrowed a neighbor's buckboard, and headed her off at New Hope where the greatest excitement prevailed. Whether the wife returned home we are unable to say.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/931188986/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Valley Review Wed, Jan 23, 1884 ·Page 5

About three weeks ago Mrs. Gayetty left her husband, E.P. Gayetty, announcing her intention of getting a divorce. Gayetty caused the arrest of a young carpenter whom he

accused of furnishing Mrs. Gayetty with drugs and having criminal intimacy with his wife. The case has been dismissed out of consideration for the children. Mrs. Gayetty consented to live with Mr. Gayetty again but has now sworn out a complaint charging her husband with battery, saying that he choked and beat her and took away her clothes and shoes so that she could not leave.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1140755133/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Thu, Jun 19, 1884 ·Page 3

Chinese man drowned at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609401209/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Appeal-Democrat Thu, Nov 06, 1884 ·Page 1

Government snagboat Seizer and her barge have gone to the Mokelumne river to remove snags as far up as Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/836810863/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Wed, Aug 05, 1885 ·Page 3

New Warehouse opens with country dance near Benson's ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609431347/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Mon, Dec 12, 1887 ·Page 1

Citizens signing petition to get bridge over Mokelumne at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609886479/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Sat, Sep 15, 1888 ·Page 6

Notice to contractors to build bridge at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609790253/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Wed, Mar 06, 1889 ·Page 1

Road to be laid out at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609794320/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Thu, Apr 04, 1889 ·Page 1

Henry Koontz has built a fence obstructing the road between New Hope and Benson's Ferry; the overseer will remove it

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609794997/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Valley Review Thu, Oct 31, 1889 ·Page 3

Describes a disagreement between a the captain of a vessel chartered to bring SF goods to Woodbridge tries to deliver them instead at Benson's Ferry given the strong current

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1141004995/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Mon, May 12, 1890 ·Page 4

The Benson Ferry road is declared a public highway

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609818864/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Tue, Sep 06, 1898 ·Page 8

Proposal to convert the bridge at Benson's Ferry to a drawbridge

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609377937/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Mon, Mar 06, 1899 ·Page 5

F.H. Harvey says the current bridge was not authorized and that the river is navigable for 2.5 miles above Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609455964/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, May 09, 1903 ·Page 3

Longer article about why bridge must be converted to drawbridge

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036201851/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Thu, Jul 09, 1903 ·Page 1

District Attorneys of San Joaquin and Sacramento Counties disagree about Benson's Ferry bridge

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036202295/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Sat, Jul 25, 1903 ·Page 4

Picnic at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036202555/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Sat, Feb 06, 1904 ·Page 6

War Dept settles the drawbridge question: the current bridge is not a menace to navigation and will stay (later reverses decision)

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609657289/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Evening Mail Sat, Jun 11, 1904 ·Page 5

Sacramento Supervisors decide to remove current bridge and dredge upstream

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609643771/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Record Tue, Jun 28, 1904 ·Page 5

Current bridge for sale as scrap

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609745882/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Record Thu, Sep 26, 1907 ·Page 8

John Damonte murders Hom Bing Yin over turtles – both were living in remains of old Benson house and old Gayetty house

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609767030/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Record Mon, May 07, 1917 ·Page 7

John Benson Jr visits Lodi, was the first engineer on the narrow-gauge railroad that ran from Bracks Landing to Valley Springs

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/609809244/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Tue, Feb 19, 1924 ·Page 9

Bids invited for removing and replacing the floors on the Benson Ferry drawbridge

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036281588/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Thu, Oct 09, 1924 ·Page 2

John Benson story, as related by Rebecca Ivory

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036248460/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Tue, Oct 14, 1924 ·Page 4

Edward P. Gayetty story, as related by Rebecca Ivory

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1036248981/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

The Record Sat, Feb 02, 1935 ·Page 17

California state historic marker for Benson's Ferry (photos)

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/843486830/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel Thu, Nov 02, 1939 ·Page 6

SJC Board of Supervisors vote to remove bridge at Benson's Ferry

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1033565613/?match=1&terms=%22bensons%20ferry%22>

Lodi News-Sentinel May 3, 2014

Benson's Ferry sparks beginnings of Thornton (with illustration)

https://www.lodinews.com/features/vintage_lodi/article_4bbdc24e-1957-55fd-9e31-b1a0b6dc1e6e.html

Tinkham describes this Resource:

- Some years previous to the Staten Island affair, an effort was made to dismember the northern part of San Joaquin County and create a county to be known as Mokelumne County. And because of the proverbial slowness of the citizens of Stockton, it came near being successful. The scheme was engineered by John M. Benson, then the owner of Benson's Ferry over the Mokelumne River a short distance below the present town of New Hope. He planned to form a new county and make his land near the ferry the county seat. Benson was very active in the movement and by making the farmers believe that the value of their land would be increased and their taxes decreased, he obtained hundreds of signatures petitioning the legislature "that the south half of Sacramento County and the north half of San Joaquin, embracing 600 square miles and an agricultural population of between two and three thousand be formed into a county known as Mokelumne." It was a splendid scheme on the part of Benson, but unfortunately for him, just one month after the introduction of the bill into the assembly, he was shot and killed February, 1859, by Green Palmer, one of his employees.
- We must now travel north to the Mokelumne River and give a record of the three principal ferries across that river. They did more business than all of the Stanislaus ferries combined, because of the fact that they were the only routes of travel to Sacramento and the Northern mines. The first or the farthest west of these ferries crossed the Mokelumne River a short distance below the present town of New Hope. It was opened for business in 1849 by Edward Stokes and A. M. Woods; the following year the ferry was purchased by John A. Benson, who erected a house on the south side of the river and employed Green C. Palmer to attend the ferry. Benson was the leading spirit in seeking a division of the county in 1859, but before he succeeded he was killed by his employee, Palmer. The cause of the murder was the charge by Palmer that Benson, since '1854, had been intimate with his wife. It was said, however, that like a great many would-be heroes Benson was "more loose in his conversation than in his actions." On the day of the murder February 14. 1859, Palmer was at work plowing on the Benson place, but stopped work at noon-time. During the afternoon Palmer was in Parker's store, Benson came in accompanied by Dr. Hogaboom, and all three men took a drink at the bar. During this time Palmer's four children entered the store, and Benson as was his usual custom, gave them some nuts and candies. Leaving the store, all three men went to Palmer's home. In a short time Benson and the physician left the house and when a short distance away, Benson heard Palmer call out to Benson. Turning Benson saw Palmer running towards him with a revolver in his hand ; surmising Palmer's intentions Benson cried out, "Don't,

Green," but the murderer exclaimed, "There, you scoundrel you disgraced my children and now you must die." Palmer fired twice in rapid succession each shot hit Benson in a vital spot and he died while being conveyed to the house in a wagon. Palmer returned to the house, reloaded his revolver and started on a run for the tules. He was not pursued and the following day Andrew Benson, the brother of the victim, offered a reward of \$300 through the newspaper for his arrest. The fugitive was discovered about sunrise by a vaquero who was looking for some lost horses. Palmer was shaking and shivering with cold and hunger, having had nothing to eat since the murder. He gave himself up and taken to Stockton, was brought before Justice McCausland and remanded to jail. He there remained until the meeting of the grand jury in May. He was then indicted on the charge of murder and the trial took place August 4, 1859. There was considerable excitement and the court room was crowded, for each man had many friends. Money was freely spent by Benson's friends and they employed E. D. Baker, the most brilliant orator and attorney in California, to assist the prosecuting attorney. Judge Campljell. Samuel A. Booker defended Palmer. The trial looked crooked from beginning to end. The prosecution put on one witness only. Dr. Hogaboom ; the defense five witnesses to prove Palmer's charge. It was one of the shortest murder trials on record. At five o'clock Attorney Booker began his closing speech, ending at eight o'clock. Baker closed at 9:30, and Judge Creanor, delivering his charge, the jury were locked up for the night. Twenty-four hours later they were discharged unable to agree, the jury standing five for murder in the first degree, which meant death by hanging; five for murder in the second degree, and two for acquittal. The second trial took place December 12, with J. G. Jenkins and Judge Campbell for the prosecution and S. A. Booker for the defense. The case was given to the jury at 7:30 and at 1 o'clock the following day they were discharged, nine for acquittal and three for manslaughter. In the third trial, January 3, 1860, the defense found some new witnesses. They proved to be good ones, for the jury brought in a Verdict not guilty. After the acquittal Palmer's conscience must have greatly worried him. for on January 26. while in Mokelumne City, he committed suicide by taking strychnine' His friend, J. H. Veach, running into the house at Mrs. Palmer's call, exclaimed, "Why have you done this?" And like old Adam in the Garden of Eden he replied, "This woman is the cause of all my trouble. I wish to die and get out of my misery."

Lodi Historical Society newsletters that mention this Resource:

- [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.

Find A Grave:

John A Benson <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/31584616/john-a-benson>

Edna Kimsey Benson Pemberton

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/31584594/edna-benson_pemberton

Edward P Gayetty, son-in-law of John and Edna, accused of domestic violence

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/240117782/edward-p-gayetty>

Abbie B. Palmer Gayetty, possibly daughter of Green Palmer, mother's maiden name Clough possibly related to Gertie DeForce Cluff

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111635737/abbie-b-gayetty>

National Water Prediction Service:

Mokelumne River at Benson's Ferry

<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/thtc1>

Center for Sacramento History Photo Collection:

Benson's Ferry on the Mokelumne River

<https://calisphere.org/item/526455b1441684981e963f375f9f1df7/>

Mokelumne River, Benson's Ferry

<https://dp.la/item/15f5ba3f5e75671c8831d9e9d7b12b17>

Bill Beaver Project:

<https://thebillbeaverproject.com/2015/04/04/bensons-ferry/>

Historical Marker Database:

<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=244935>